

Jon Danzig's World

Stories, ideas, thoughts and videos of Jon Danzig

SUNDAY, 19 MAY 2013

What Nigel Farage told British expats in Spain



• [Nigel Farage on Talk Radio Europe - click to hear](#)

About two million Brits live, work, study or are retired in other EU countries. Over 800,000 of them are estimated to reside in Spain alone; over one million if you include those who

sojourn there for just part of each year.

The numbers might now be higher, as the [latest estimates](#)* were published in 2010. In addition, many tens of thousands of British own second homes right across the European Union – over 140,000 estimated to be in Spain and Italy.

Understandably, these British expatriates are concerned about what will happen to them, and their homes abroad, if Britain leaves the European Union. ['Expat Forums'](#) are replete with anxious postings about just this subject.

This month Nigel Farage, leader of the [anti-EU UKIP party](#), was [interviewed](#) by [Talk Radio Europe](#), which is based in Spain and broadcasts in English to British expats living there.

All Britons, together with all other EU citizens, have a right to live, work, study or retire in any other country of the European Union, as a direct benefit of EU membership. But Mr Farage not only wants Britain to leave the European Union, he told Talk Radio Europe he also wants to see '**Europe out of the European Union**' - in other words, the complete disintegration of the European Single Market.

During [the interview](#) Mr Farage was asked about the British expats in Spain, especially the pensioners. Clearly they are worried: what will happen to them if the UK leaves the EU? Mr Farage said the British in Spain make a significant contribution to the

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economy there, and a 'reciprocal deal' could be made

This implies that, if UKIP have their way, British expats could stay in Spain, but the Polish expats, and other EU migrants, could not stay in Britain.

• **Brits in Spain outnumber the Polish in Britain - but what will happen to them all if the UK exits the EU?**

Don't we call that 'double standards'? The Polish, for example, have also made a huge contribution to the British economy; they are mostly fully employed; very few are pensioned or ill or claiming benefits, and there are **fewer Polish in Britain** than British in Spain.

Yes, of course a 'reciprocal deal' could be made, but we already have a 'reciprocal deal' through the European Union. Why leave the EU only to have to re-negotiate similar 'reciprocal deals' with other countries in Europe, and the world, all over again?

There were other claims made by Mr Farage during his interview, the veracity of which demand closer scrutiny and wider debate. See below my challenges of just four of them. Maybe you can spot some more? I welcome comments and feedback, especially from British expats with a view on whether they, and their homeland, should stay in the European Union.

Farage claim: 'The European Union now makes 75% of UK laws'

FALSE

The percentage of British laws originating from the European Union is 8-10 per cent, as calculated by [The House of Commons Library](#), a non-partisan organisation:

'How much legislation comes from Europe?'

The oft-repeated assertion by Mr Farage and his UKIP party that 75% of UK legislation comes from the European Union seems to be made up; it has no evidence behind it, and no source to back it up. The claim was recently debunked in an article by [British Influence](#):

'Our laws – foreign laws?'

Studies in some other EU Member States found similar percentages for the share of their laws that originated in the EU. For example:

- Finland – 12 percent
- Austria – 10 per cent
- Lithuania – 12-19 per cent
- Sweden – 6 per cent

Farage claim: 'The European Union is run by people we cannot vote for'

FALSE

The [European Parliament](#) is democratically elected and decides

nearly all EU laws, and has the democratic power to dismiss the entire Commission of the European Union.

The Parliament is made up of 754 members, elected every five years by the citizens of all 27 member countries of the European Union. It's one of the world's largest democratic assemblies, representing over 500 million citizens. The Parliament has elected representatives from all the main political parties in Europe - conservatives, socialists, liberals, greens, variants of the extreme left and extreme right, as well as anti-European parties, such as UKIP.

The elections take place in each country on identical democratic grounds, requiring equality of sexes and secret ballots. The voting age is 18, except in Austria where it is 16. The seats are shared proportionately to the population of each member country. Members of the European Parliament discuss and decide vital issues aimed to improve the lives of all citizens of the EU, including consumer protection, the environment, transport, culture, education and health.



• Democracy at work at The European Parliament

Some MEPs have described the European Parliament as more effective than the Houses of Parliament. Liberal Democrat MEP, Chris Davies, said he has more influence in the European Parliament than he ever had as an MP in the House of

Commons. In his '[Notes from Brussels](#)' he wrote, 'In the House of Commons votes take about 20 minutes each. In the European Parliament, by a show of hands or use of the voting buttons, MEPs can easily get through a hundred votes in that time. The starting position for MEPs is not to try and score points against their opponents but to see if compromise positions can be forged. I would be loathe to swap this for the Westminster system.'

Ironically, Nigel Farage was democratically elected to the European Parliament in 1999, and therefore has a right to participate in its democratic procedures which he claims do not exist. His party, UKIP, has 11 seats in the European Parliament and has been reported as having '[the worst attendance, voting and work performance of any political party from anywhere across the EU.](#)'

Some assert that the European Parliament makes its decisions in secret, but in fact it's one of the world's most open democracies. Parliamentary sessions and committee meetings are televised on the internet live every day on [Europarl ITV](#). In addition, EU decisions, guides and laws are [openly accessible](#) in every EU language.

Furthermore, all EU citizens, businesses and organisations have the 'fundamental right' to [personally petition the European Parliament](#) if they believe an EU law or regulation has been broken. In addition, EU citizens have the right to call for new laws themselves under the new '[EU Citizen's Initiative](#)'

Why don't we hear more about EU Parliamentary democracy at work? One reason is that the discussions, actions and decisions of the EU Parliament are rarely reported by the UK media, and often what's reported is, to put it bluntly, [completely false](#). That's maybe not surprising, when one considers the number of UK newspapers that appear to be against UK membership of the European Union: the [Daily Express](#)



• Many UK papers want UK out of EU

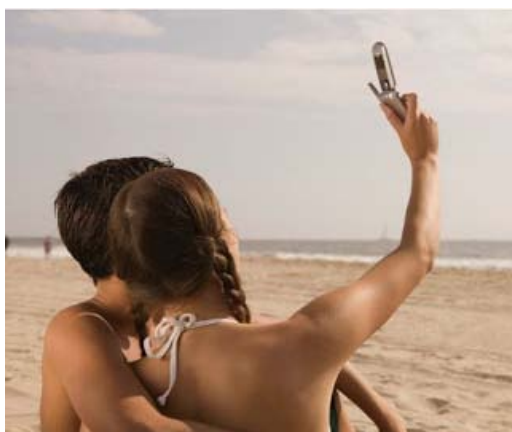
(primarily), the [Daily Mail](#), [The Sun](#), [Telegraph](#) and [The Times](#). That's a [combined readership](#) of almost 20 millions, by far the majority of British newspaper readers, and double the circulation of all the other national daily UK newspapers put together.

In concert with the European Parliament, EU laws are decided by [The Council of the European Union](#), where each member state is represented by their government ministers. This is considered a democratic process, as all governments across the EU are democratically elected, with their ministers acting for us at an international level in their elected capacity as our representatives. It's true that the meetings of the Council are held in private, but their decisions are made public.

The European Union is a democracy of nations, and so has to be looked at differently to individual countries. No statespeoples are forced into membership of the EU, exit is possible, and every state has a right to veto new treaty rules. It's true that the European Union, like all nation states, is an imperfect democracy, but it has evolved, grown and matured since its inception. Over the years, considerably more powers have devolved to the European Parliament, making it more democratic. This process should continue, but only countries who are members of the EU will be able to influence and decide how this goes.

EU laws help to create a level playing field for trade, making business across Europe simpler, less expensive and with decreased bureaucracy, helping to achieve greater profitability. This isn't just beneficial for EU members. Non-EU country [Norway](#) has chosen to adopt all EU single market laws, and [Switzerland](#) most of them, because it allows easier access to the lucrative EU market. Similarly, China has adopted many [EU standards](#) and regulations to facilitate trade with Europe, it's [biggest export market](#) next to the USA.

Democratically decided EU laws have benefitted its citizens, and many of these laws could only have been achieved at a trans-European level, with the combined power, leverage and sweep of nations working and acting together.



• Mobile calls abroad - 75% cheaper thanks to EU

For example, because of an [EU single market law](#), 140 million citizens have seen the price of international mobile phone calls fall by 75%, after the EU banned mobile phone companies from charging four times the actual cost of the call. Such a law could never have worked if passed by a single national parliament.

Passengers who were refunded for cancelled flights after the eruption of the Icelandic volcano can also thank [EU legislation](#). Again, such a law passed by a single European

state would not have been effective; it needed the power of the European Union to make the law stick.

In addition, EU law has ensured that medicines across the Union are amongst the safest in the world, with **strict licensing laws** covering all drug companies, which could not have been so widely or effectively achieved if a single country had tried similar legislation on its own.

Farage claim:
'Waiting times for hospital A&E departments are so long because populations in many parts of England have exploded'

FALSE

It's too easy to blame longer waiting times at hospital A&E departments on increased populations (i.e. more immigrants, which Mr Farage mostly means when he complains of 'increased populations').

However, the reasons behind the current A&E crisis are more complicated, and no serious research or credible commentary has proved or blamed increased immigrant population for long waiting times.

Research by the **Nuffield Trust**, for example, demonstrated that immigrants from other EU countries are mostly young, fit and less likely to be ill or to have started a family. Subsequently they make considerably lower use of our health service, costing a smaller amount proportionally to the NHS than Britons.



• **A&E - immigrants less likely to use it, more likely to be working for it as nurses or doctors**

Furthermore, many Polish immigrants prefer to pay to visit private **Polish health clinics** than use the NHS. Since 2007, such private clinics have mushroomed throughout the UK, with at least 20 in London.

As Guardian columnist Zoe Williams concluded, '..if we think people are travelling here to make the most of our health service, we're dreaming.' See The Guardian's report of last Friday:

NHS: Poles, paracetamol and the myth of health tourism

Another study by the **Nuffield Trust** found that up to 40% of the increased use of Accident and Emergency Departments come from the over-85s, who are 10 times more likely to end up in A&E than people in their 20s, 30s and 40s (the age group of most immigrants).

This was also confirmed last week by Chris Hopson, Chief Executive of the **Foundation Trust Network**, who commented on the A&E crisis, '..the number of frail elderly patients with complex conditions is increasing so more patients are being admitted.'

The population of elderly in the UK is rapidly increasing, which is not the fault of immigration, but a measure of success of living in a modern rich economy. Life expectancy is rising, which



• **More elderly, not immigrants, mostly to blame** for increased demand on A&E departments

ironically is partly why we need more immigrants – as we don't have enough young to care for and support our old.

According to the Foundation Trust Network, up to 30% of people attending A&E departments were

only there because, 'patients can't get the GP appointments they need', especially out of hours. That's also hardly the fault of immigrants. Another major problem, claims FTN, is that the government is 'only paying hospitals 30% of the cost of treating some admitted A&E patients'.

It can also be argued that immigrants to the UK put far more into the NHS than they take out. Around 30% of NHS doctors and 40% of nurses were **born overseas**. We rely on these foreign born professionals. Without them, the NHS would likely come to a standstill.

Farage claim: 'If just 4% from Romania and Bulgaria come to Britain over the next five years that's one million people'

TRUE

Yes, surprise surprise, it's true: 4% of the populations of Romania and Bulgaria equals 1 million (well, 1.15 million to be precise.) But just because 4% equals one million doesn't mean that such numbers of Romanians and Bulgarians are coming here next year, or over the next five years, or ever.

Some newspapers have made bigger predictions. Last October the Daily Express ran the headline: '[Now 29m Bulgarians and Romanians can soon move to Britain](#)'. Other newspapers published similar stories. The entire population of Romania and Bulgaria is 29 million - it's impossible that they would all move to the UK, and such ridiculous proposals represent an affront to responsible journalism.

All such headlines are misleading and have only furthered animosity and alarm towards immigration and immigrants. The reality is likely to be somewhat different to the hyperbole, which represents no more than guesses, without the backing of any methodology or evidence.

There is no comparison to 2004, when only Britain, the Republic of Ireland and Sweden, opened their labour markets to Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the other 'A8' countries, who were then joining the European Union.

This time, on 1st January 2014, the 'A2' citizens of Romania and Bulgaria will be allowed to work in the entire EU. Given such a choice, Britain is unlikely to be top of their list, as confirmed by President of



Romania, Victor Ponta, to **Channel Four**

news. He said, "The United

Kingdom is not among the preferred destinations for Romanians, and no massive flows of Romanians will be recorded after the lifting of the working restrictions at the beginning of next year."

• **Anti immigrant stories - with little evidence to support the fear they create**

According to **Migration Observatory**, so far, Romanian-born emigrants have preferred Spain and Italy, and have been less likely to consider Britain.

A BBC **Newsnight** survey revealed that most Romanians and Bulgarians who are considering moving to the UK would only do so if they had 'a firm offer of employment'. Another **BBC report** stated that Romanians and Bulgarians have in the past tended to emigrate to 'places they can reach by car or where the culture and language are closer to their own.'

It's also a widely-publicised fiction that EU immigrants can, or will, come to the UK simply to claim benefits. This was confirmed by the **European Commission** earlier this year when it exposed two key myths about benefits:

- First, it is a myth that EU law gives all EU citizens an unconditional right to reside freely in the UK or another Member State. In reality, the right is subject to important restrictions.
- Second, it is a myth that EU laws means that EU migrants are automatically entitled to claim benefits in the UK or another Member State.

It's also an anti-EU fabrication that immigrants here who are entitled to benefits take excessive advantage of them. In February **New Society** magazine reported that there are '*fewer than 7,000 Poles claiming the Job Seekers' Allowance*'. That's a tiny fraction of the number of Poles now living in the UK and who are, actually, mostly in gainful employment.

Indeed, **academic research** by a team of leading economists discovered that the 'A8 immigrants' – from Poland, Slovakia, Latvia, Hungary, Estonia, Czech Republic, etc – '*are about 60% less likely than natives to receive state benefits or tax credits, and to live in social housing*'.

So, there is no actual evidence that huge numbers of Romanians and Bulgarians are going to descend on the UK come 1st January 2014, or even that those who arrive will be automatically entitled to, or even inclined to, take advantage of our benefits system. Most of them will do what most Brits, Polish, German, French, Czech and other nationalities do - stay at home.

Yet, in the absence of evidence, the comments by Mr Farage warning of enormous numbers of Romanians and Bulgarians moving to the UK seem only designed to promote anxiety and xenophobia, and to demean one of the primary principles and benefits of EU membership: the free movement of all EU citizens across all of the EU.

Because, as it needs to be reminded again and again: it works both ways. As a benefit of EU citizenship, Britons are also allowed to live, work, study or retire in Bulgaria and Romania – and already an estimated 25,000 Brits do so.



• **UK opportunities in Bulgaria and Romania**

As the Romanian and Bulgarian economies grow, more British will be moving, working, sojourning and visiting there – and most importantly, many more British businesses will be taking advantages of their huge export potential. Already, almost **5,000 British businesses** have established a presence in Romania, with our exports there **now exceeding £1 billion**. And

many **British businesses** are now setting up in Bulgaria, including giants Glaxo Wellcome and Tate and Lyle. This is all specifically facilitated through the direct benefits of our membership of the European Union.

But that appears to be off-message according to the anti-EU agenda of Mr Farage and his UKIP party.

See also: '**Brits should recognise the value of being 'citizens of Europe'**' by Jon Danzig, in Public Service Europe



My blog for the The Academic Association for contemporary European Studies:



And:

- **The EU: Should we stay or go?**
- Questions about the debate about Europe
- **My vote for Europe**
- Can't vote or don't vote?
- **Why we must never abandon human rights**
- **The Brotherhood of Europe**

ESTIMATES OF BRITS LIVING IN OTHER EU COUNTRIES

Destination	Abroad one year or longer	Including for part of the year
Spain	808,000	1,050,000
France	253,000	330,000
Ireland	299,000	329,000
Germany	97,000	107,000
Cyprus	59,000	65,000
Netherlands	44,000	48,000
Greece	35,000	45,000
Portugal	30,000	39,000
Italy	28,000	37,000
Belgium	28,000	31,000
Sweden	26,000	29,000
Bulgaria	18,000	18,000
Denmark	11,000	12,000
Malta	9,000	11,000
Luxembourg	7,000	8,000
Czech Republic	7,000	7,000
Austria	6,000	7,000
Romania	6,000	7,000
Poland	5,000	6,000
Hungary	5,000	5,000
Finland	4,000	4,000
Gibraltar	4,000	4,000
Slovakia	900	1,000
Estonia	700	700
Latvia	400	400
Slovenia	300	400
Lithuania	300	300
TOTAL	1,791,600	2,201,800

***Table prepared by Jon Danzig from data contained in:
[Global Brit: Making the most of the British diaspora](#)
Published by the Institute of Public Policy Research, June 2010**

Posted by [Jon Danzig](#) 

Labels: [British abroad](#), [Daily Express](#), [EU](#), [EU democracy](#), [EU law](#), [Europe](#), [European Parliament](#), [European Union](#), [Expatriates](#), [Expats](#), [in out Europe](#), [Jon Danzig](#), [Nigel Farage](#), [referendum](#), [single market](#), [Talk Radio Europe](#), [UKIP](#)

35 comments:



[Trisha Macnair](#) 19 May 2013 18:09

working in an A&E in a busy District General Hospital for part of the week, the rise in demands seem to me to be made up of three particular groups:

- an increased number of people using it as a walk-in service because GPs are harder to access especially out of hours - most of these people can be dealt with fairly swiftly and walk out again
- the increased number of frail elderly with complex diseases - most of these people

need some investigation and review taking a number of hours at the least and many need admission for overnight or longer

- the increased number of people especially at night and weekends, attending with problems where alcohol or drugs are a factor - as many as 70% of attendees on a Saturday according to some studies.
http://www.alcoholpolicy.net/files/alcohol_problems_in_ae.pdf

[Reply](#)



Anonymous 20 May 2013 09:09

Maybe Mr.Danzig should create his own party "anti ukip".

Why don't we just come out of Europe, pay the fee to have its trade benefits and join the USA as a united state Britain?

[Reply](#)



Rod Harper 20 May 2013 10:06

Surprised that Mr Farage doesn't seem to have fully thought through the implications for EU resident British expatriates in defending his case for a British withdrawal. With more attention to the accuracy of his assertions which you show rather easy to disprove and a more compelling vision of what ideal world awaits the UK outside the EU, perhaps he could count on more expat Brits voting "out" in an "In/Out" EU referendum (those still able to vote that is after less than 15 years non-resident in the UK)?

Rod Harper

Administrator

<http://www.votes-for-expat-brits.com>

<http://votes-for-expat-brits-blog.com>

[Reply](#)



Anonymous 20 May 2013 12:39

If the majority of the British people wish to remain British and not join the United States of Europe (which is the aim of the EU) then who do you suggest they vote for?

There is only one party that wants to maintain British sovereignty and that is the UKIP.

I like being British and I will stand up against anyone who takes my country away from me without asking the permission of the people first.

Would you be willing to accept a democratic vote if the majority want out?

[Reply](#)

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Anonymous 20 May 2013 15:28

Being in the EU doesn't stop us being British, it doesn't stop our country being British and it doesn't take our country away from us.



Rod Harper 20 May 2013 15:55

Being also British and comfortable with the concept of democracy of course I'd accept a democratic vote if the majority want out, even though as things stand being more than 15 years outside the UK, and now living in France, I no longer retain that democratic right to vote in such a referendum. You will find that other EU nationals eg the French are equally as proud of their nationality and want to maintain their country's sovereignty but are more imaginative in taking benefit from membership of the EU. The latest polls in the UK by the way indicate that if certain powers can be renegotiated back to the UK, a majority would vote to remain "In" the EU and, in this event, I assume you would also

democratically accept such a result.



Anonymous 20 May 2013 16:59

UKIP is not anti-EU. You cannot advocate capitalism and sovereignty. Capitalism cannot work within an existed territory. It needs to expand always. UKIP is a big contradiction. If you want to exit the EU vote for a left-wing party, but I am not sure that you don't have that in the UK.

Reply



surreywebmaster 20 May 2013 13:00

Well done Jon, we have seen plenty of anti EU rhetoric so it is good to see such an excellent article debunking the myths. For too many years now successive UK governments have blamed the EU for their own mismanagement of the UK economy and it is time that the truth be told.

A very well thought out and correctly evidenced article and, as a retired police officer living in France for the past nine years, one I heartily recommend. I am one of the many who took up the option to move freely within Europe but this government now proposes to take that option away from me.

I hope to see more of what you have published above instead of the hype being published by many of the UK newspapers that you mention.

At least the Independent has published an open letter today from top UK business people that also supports all you say above.

See - <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/british-business-we-need-to-stay-in-the-european-union--or-risk-losing-up-to-92bn-a-year-8622925.html>

Reply



Anonymous 20 May 2013 14:22

The European Union is, ultimately, run by Barroso and Van Rompuy. Perhaps you wouldn't mind telling us when and how they were elected and when they're up for re-election.

And your assertion that Polish immigrants have "made a huge contribution to the British economy" does your credibility no favours.

Reply

▼ Replies



Jon Danzig 4 June 2013 19:04

Regarding your comments:

The EU is not run 'run by' José Manuel Barroso, the President of the European Commission. His role is to make proposals, based mostly on what EU leaders have collectively requested at summits. Then the elected European Parliament and our elected government representatives decide and vote.

Neither is the EU 'run by' Herman Van Rompuy, the president of the Council of the European Union. He is chosen by a vote of the elected heads of state, and his job is to facilitate negotiations on the key issues and achieve agreement, with the main role of chairing summits. He does not have any power to pass laws.

Both Barros and Van Rompuy have important but certainly not dominant roles. They were both nominated by 27 elected heads of government – so a clear mandate. Furthermore, the appointment of Barroso was endorsed by the democratically elected European Parliament: by 413 votes to 215 in

2004, and by 382 votes to 219 in 2009.

As I explained in my blog, 'The European Parliament is democratically elected and decides nearly all EU laws, and has the democratic power to dismiss the entire Commission of the European Union.' That power includes the right to reject the President of the European Commission, who is beholden to the elected European Parliament.

On Polish migrants, it is not an 'assertion', but clearly demonstrable, from Department of Work and Pension statistics, that Polish immigrants in the UK pay far more in taxes than they take out. They are far less likely to claim benefits than native Brits, as I also explained (with evidence) in my blog. Also numerous studies have shown that they have not 'taken British people's jobs'. Usually Polish, along with other EU migrants, have filled 'pockets of labour shortages', which can and do occur even during times of unemployment.

Reply



Anonymous 20 May 2013 16:29

UK citizens living in Spain will have plenty of time to adopt Spanish nationality before Britain leaves(they are entitled to do so under EU law), and Britain recognises dual nationality, so they will not have any problems. Next!

Reply



Anonymous 20 May 2013 17:02

We in Spain are thinking of deporting all the British citizens who live here. We almost have 6 millions of unemployed. The last thing we want is the rich Northerners coming here making things worse, contributing zero with no working or paying taxes... deport them all.

Reply



David R. Burrage 20 May 2013 17:41

Having witnessed Nigel Farage belicosing in the European Parliament I find him to be crude, rude and socially indigestible. It is not Farage I fear, but rather those with a lemming like mentality who embrace his views. It is reminiscent of the 'brown shirts' who were also carried along with the tide. Unfortunately, I have already seen neo fascism at close hand in my own lifetime, when we slept night after night underground in our Metropolis.

Farage is merely an offshoot of the BNP and those who would choose to follow him should wake up to what they are about..

The only issue where I share his opinion and that is where sadly the European Parliament although elected through the ballot box, unfortunately my experience when dealing at close hand with Brussels is where the unelected Commissions wield the real power with the Parliament paying lip service to them.

Unfortunately one cannot even protest to the Committee on Petitions at the Parliament because they in turn rely on the advice of the Commissions who will not hesitate in deceiving them or the Parliament itself. Should anyone wish to challenge me then we have the documentary evidence, plus the jurisprudence of the Ct.JEU to substantiate what we say.

The EU arose from the ashes of WWII, but as a pro Union citizen I do not like the direction it has taken over the years where it can now be likened to one enormous quango out of control. It is in urgent need of serious reforms, but that does not mean we should shoot the animal, but rather all Member States should make a concerted effort to bring about reform and to restore democracy in that place.

At this moment in time The UK is being subjected to the I. Pavlov syndrome (conditioning) through our 2nd rate newspaper tabloids, who earn their living by preying on the weaknesses of the proletariat.

David R. Burrage (you can Google me).

Reply



Anonymous 20 May 2013 17:59

EU Parliament? LOL. Come on. You can maybe vote them. But they no useful at all. The one's ruling aren't elected and the one elected have nothing to say in real big matters!!

Farage IS in the EU parliament and he well know what f*cked up shit is going on there! (Lobbyism etc.)

[Reply](#)

▼ [Replies](#)



Anonymous 20 May 2013 19:11

While Farage is not a lobbyist! You know that he is right-wing libertarian who wants cut-taxes for big businesses, so fat cats can earn as more as they want behind the backs of the hard-working people.

Simply you can't sort out a problem prescribing the same medicine that has created it: capitalism. We need a new system, beyond the old fashioned bankrupt ideologies: capitalism, communism, nationalism etc etc

[Reply](#)



Anonymous 20 May 2013 22:43

Dear Sir,

I'm really sorry for this poor article of yours. We all know the EU is gathering all the legislative power from the nation-states. Every law approved at the parliament is mandatory for all countries. It's just a question of time before no country has laws of it's own. Being portuguese, I know that Mr. Barroso wasn't quite "elected" as president of the comission. Neither was Mr. Van Rompuy! They were placed there. The European parliament is allready working like the US congress. The game is rigged. In the front they all seem very honest and competent, but the reality is very diferent.

I know this, lot's of europeans know this and YOU know this.

[Reply](#)

▼ [Replies](#)



Jon Danzig  20 May 2013 23:01

If you're suggesting that I would write something contrary to what I know and believe, you are most certainly wrong. Also, it's not a good way to debate by making personal attacks. I only write what I believe and have researched. I have no reason at all to do otherwise. However, my mind is open to change upon receipt of evidence.

Both Barros and Van Rompuy have important but certainly not dominant roles. They were both nominated by 27 elected heads of government – so a clear mandate. Furthermore, the appointment of Barroso was endorsed by the democratically elected European Parliament: by 413 votes to 215 in 2004, and by 382 votes to 219 in 2009.

As I explained in my blog, 'The European Parliament is democratically elected and decides nearly all EU laws, and has the democratic power to dismiss the entire Commission of the European Union.' That power includes the right to reject the President of the European Commission, Barroso.

If you have alternative evidence, please provide it, I am keen to know, and actively welcome intelligent, respectful, well resourced comments and contributions. However, please have the conviction to post under your own name rather than anonymously. The source of information is

important.



Anonymous 21 May 2013 17:46

Hi - Just to correct you. MEPs do not have the power to create law - that's up to the EU commissioners. (They can only amend what's been dictated by the Commissioners)

Source: "While Parliament can change a law, it cannot start a new one, it has to ask the European Commission to do that."
http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Parliament

Also - you make the point that 75% of our laws are not created by the EU, but many can see that important areas of life and law which people are concerned about - like voting against Mass Immigration for example, are controlled by the EU, and they have no say.

They have no say because the EU is a hierarchical structure, in which directives come from the top only.



Jon Danzig 21 May 2013 18:47

As I wrote in my blog, the European Parliament is democratically elected and decides nearly all EU laws, and has the democratic power to dismiss the entire Commission of the European Union. It also has the power to reject the budget of the Commission.

Furthermore, the European Parliament has to approve the appointment of President of the Commission by a majority of MEPs. The Commissioners are chosen by the President from candidates put forward by the elected governments of the EU. The Commission presents proposed laws to Parliament, in much the same way that our government proposes laws to Parliament, for the members to discuss and vote upon.

This is a form of democracy. I agree it's not perfect, but surely better than our House of Lords.

I would support initiatives to make the European Union more democratic. This, however, means staying a member of the EU and influencing its future, democratic, evolution. One new recent initiative is the 'European Citizen's Initiative'. This gives a right for European citizens to propose new laws to the Commission. This has to come from a million EU citizens from at least 7 of the 27 member states.

Reply



Anonymous 21 May 2013 05:13

What I find extremely annoying is the continuous misrepresentation and distortion of EU legislation. The laws aren't being "forced" upon us, they are passed through many checks and have been signed off many times by our elected representatives.

First of all, the EU Commission has the prerogative to initiate legislation but only when it conforms to the principle of Subsidiarity. That is, it can only propose laws when it is clear that member states cannot do it on their own and can only be effective if done at a European level. If the parliaments or anyone else believes that this was not the case, the law can be challenged and rendered null.

Secondly, the proposed legislation goes to the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament (if it concerns regular topics) where the process of co-decision happens. This is where both the Council of Ministers (which comprises of the

relevant, elected government ministers of each member state) and the European Parliament (comprised of elected representatives of the people of the EU), both scrutinise the legislation, add amendments and then ultimately pass or block it. Therefore, each member state has many opportunities to scupper or amend a law before it is passed as both the Council and Parliament have to agree on the same text. Each member state in the Council has its say and only rarely are any member states outvoted by the Qualified Majority Voting. Even then, they can call for an "Ioannina compromise" which compels the Council to acknowledge their disagreement with the majority ruling and try and find a compromise solution.

Thirdly, many important competences such as Foreign Policy and Defence are governed strictly on an intergovernmental basis where unanimity is required and where every country has a veto so nothing in these areas are "forced" upon us.

And finally, just a remark about the belief that Parliament does not represent the people or that it is powerless. The way I see things, it's powerlessness is due to a low turnout among voters who don't know what it does. In any situation, it is preferable to negotiate from more power from a position of strength. In a democracy, a clear position of strength is in high voter turnout. If voters don't bother to inform themselves about the Parliament, don't bother to express concerns to MEPs and don't bother to vote for them, why would anyone take them seriously and how would they ever become useful?

You're then stuck in a self-perpetuating cycle where the most democratic institution of the EU sits there emasculated and then you harp on about the undemocratic nature of the EU. The idea just boggles my mind. Political apathy is democracy's worst enemy. That is what we should focus on and what we should combat, we need to get people out to vote and to re-invigorate this institution which could serve as a crucial component of the checks-and-balances of the EU.

[Reply](#)



Anonymous 21 May 2013 07:11

As a British pensioner who took up the right 8 years ago to move freely within the EU (permanently resident in France), please Jon could you tell me what I should do now? With the referendum now firmly fixed and the very real threat of Britain opting out, are there likely to be property price issues if we decide to move back to Britain, i.e. property price dives in France and property price increases in Britain leaving us high and dry? Should we move back now?

[Reply](#)

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Jon Danzig  21 May 2013 07:51

I empathise with your situation.

UKIP don't have any policies, except leave EU. But then what? They don't know. Ask them and see. Leaving the EU would be a leap in the dark, because nobody can say for sure what would happen and how it would work. No country has ever left the EU before.

Voters prefer certainty, so I believe if there is a referendum, the British electorate will vote for the UK to stay in the EU. Usually people do vote to keep the status quo. That's what happened at the first referendum on British membership back in the 1970s. Just before the vote, polls showed most voters wanted Britain to leave the Common Market (as it was called then). But when it came to it, the vote was 2-to-1 in favour of keeping our membership.

A referendum on this issue is also not a certainty; it's not 'firmly fixed' as you wrote. If there is a referendum, it won't be for at least another four or five years. A lot can happen in that time. If the economy of Europe significantly improves within that time, as I hope and anticipate, then the idea of having a referendum may lose appeal, along with the ideas of UKIP.

If I were you, I wouldn't panic, and just continue to enjoy your rights as a

Citizen of Europe, and retirement in France. What's the weather like?

Reply



Popper 21 May 2013 09:32

Your just as bad as the immigration will destroy the nation crowd. dressed up nicer clothing.

10k UK ppl live in Fethiye in Turkey alone. Does not being in the UK present a problem for UK expats there? A few inconveniences but no.

My Grandparents moved to Tenerife well before EU joined the EU or the single market.

what are u suggesting the EU nations will ethnically cleanse the EUro sceptic Brits?

And no the economies of EUro land are not going to recover. They dont have the demographic profile to recover. Italy has not registered any growth this century.

utter scaremongering.

Reply

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Jon Danzig 21 May 2013 12:07

I could not possibly propose that EU sceptics should be 'ethnically cleansed'. In a modern, democratic society your opinion is as important as anyone else's, and deserves to be listened to carefully and politely. Without pro and anti EU supporters, there would be no debate. And we need a good, open debate to fully understand the issues and make up our minds.

I acknowledge this is how you feel, and there is no point arguing with someone's feelings. Regarding facts, figures and evidence, however, they can be challenged, and should be. If you have evidence that any factual content I have presented is incorrect, please tell me, and present it here, with empirically sourced material. It's vital that we are led by evidence, rather than emotions, as the result of any referendum, if there is one, could affect the country for a long time.

It seems you are suggesting that, if we leave the European Union, other countries should still accept British immigrants to their lands, but we should not accept foreign immigrants to ours. This seems to me to be a double standard. Why should we, and other countries, benefit from our emigration to them, whilst disallowing the benefits of immigration to Britain?

Finally, I would urge both sides of this debate not to make personal attacks: it simply isn't the way to win hearts and minds. Neither side can afford to be so complacent as to think they already have sufficient votes to decisively win a referendum. In our democracy, all we have is the power of persuasion, and it is far more effective to attack people's arguments than to attack them personally. We need this to be civil; not a civil war.



John O'Connell 22 May 2013 06:32

The loss of EU membership will have no bearing on Britons living in Europe. I have lived in the Philippines for three years. There are thousands of Brits here. We are welcome because we bring currency and investment into this country, boosting the economy and providing jobs! Also, of course we get no welfare benefits either so the Philippines has nothing to lose by our presence and everything to gain! Do you really think Spain would want to risk 500,000 extra properties coming onto the market simultaneously in the event they were to force the Brits to leave, let alone

the the fall in revenues from their spending?



Jon Danzig  22 May 2013 12:26

It's interesting, but in my view illogical, that some people think British immigration to other countries benefits those countries and the British expats, whereas immigration to Britain is unacceptable and not beneficial.

There is considerable evidence that immigration has generally benefitted the UK economy. As we have seen from the statistics, with about two million Brits already living in other parts of the EU, and millions of other Brits living in other parts of the world, the free movement of people is generally a good thing for both host and guest. Of course British people went to live in other parts of Europe before our membership, but the EU has made the process so much easier.

No one can say for sure what the attitude of host EU countries will be to British expats should we leave the EU. Attitudes may change if we say EU migrants are not welcome in the UK, whilst still expecting British expats to be welcome in other parts of Europe.

Reply



Anonymous 21 May 2013 11:41

It appears to me that Farage and his henchmen are extreme right-wing reactionaries who get their support by peddling totally false populist propaganda, which is basically rabble-rousing nonsense. An unpleasant character, please continue to expose his lies.

Reply



Anonymous 21 May 2013 11:46

It is interesting that Farage describes the EU as undemocratic. Personally, myself and my family and all our friends always vote for our MEPs, but on the other hand I have absolutely no say whatever in that totally undemocratic, home-grown law-making body the House of so-called Lords.

Reply



Popper 21 May 2013 12:42

>British immigrants to their lands, but we should not accept foreign immigrants to ours< Where did I say that. You set up a straw man and pretend to knock it down.

It will of course all depend on economics. Economics is never a zero sum game. UK expat communities have always been welcomed, I am pretty sure Spain will not want a big chunk of ppl to up sticks and walk away.

UK at 80M plus midC is going to be the biggest market in Europe if not the EU. We can deal with trade issues 2 ways either unilateral free trade (pref option) or a reflective trade policy (our rules to your goods are the same as our goods to your rules) Trade is not a problem it will continue and so will the flow of ppl.

If a nation is stupid enough to subsidise goods and send them to us, thats the same as sending us free money. I will take it.

Australian points system is a good starting point to manage the migration we need into the UK. Get rid of the welfare state and replace with minimum income should sort all other problems out

Reply

▼ Replies





Jon Danzig 21 May 2013 13:27

I could not quite understand your posting, which is why I wrote, 'It seems you are suggesting..' That was in response to you writing, 'the immigration will destroy the nation' but also adding that UK people live in Turkey and your grandparents moved to Tenerife. You argued that UK expats are welcome in other countries and both sides benefit; I argue the same is true of Polish and other expats living in the UK. They are welcome, have enriched our society, and we have both benefitted.

We can agree to disagree, but I am willing to listen to your arguments, and I hope others will too.

However, I believe that staying in the European Union provides us with special access to the world's richest trading area on terms we could never match completely outside of the EU. Even Norway and Switzerland have to accept EU rules, and contribute heavily to the EU budget, for the privilege of trading access to the EU market. But as non-members, they don't have any say in the future of the EU or any vote in the European Parliament. I don't think that's good enough for the UK.

Furthermore, through the EU, we have preferential trading agreements with countries like China, USA, Brazil, etc. I don't think there's any evidence we could negotiate such similar advantageous trading arrangements with those and all the world's other countries on our own, as a small island, without the powerful benefit and leverage of being a member of the EU.

Unfortunately, we only have evidence of what things have been like as a nation since we joined the European Economic Community in 1973. You or I cannot provide evidence of what things would have been like if we had not joined. So, you may be asking people to take a big leap of faith to vote us out of the European Union, without really knowing how we would fare or what life would be like.

Eurosceptics have a considerable burden of proof to demonstrate that life would be much better on our own, outside of the European Union.

In my lifetime, since we have been members of the European Union, I have seen the nation's general standard of living considerably improve. Back in the 1970s this country was considerably poorer. I know we have a huge debt mountain, and I know we have too many unemployed and people who are unfairly struggling and poor. Yet, despite that, as a nation, our population as a whole has never known any time in history when we've generally had a better standard of living, been healthier, more educated, or lived longer.



Anonymous 21 May 2013 18:25

You say the standard of living has improved under the EU, but that's not so - the EU policy of MASS immigration has seen steep declines in purchasing power for working incomes.

Can a working man buy a home today like my father did on 3 times earnings? No. There are 5000 people arriving to settle in the UK but only 200 homes built per week. Employment for native Brits has gone DOWN over the years of EU MASS immigration. Wages as part of national income (GDP/GDI) are the lowest in history, while profits and rents are the highest.



Natalie Graham 3 June 2013 23:04

I see the 'argument' that we should have a points based immigration system like Australia has been raised once again. Strange really as the current UK points based immigration system introduced by the last labour government was modelled directly on the Australian one. We don't need to adopt the Australian system as we already have. Interestingly the 2011 Australian census showed that more than a quarter of Australian citizens

were born abroad, a third had both parent born abroad and more than half had one parent born abroad. If that is the kind of immigration figures UKIP has in mind for the UK I do think we should be told.



Jon Danzig 4 June 2013 19:09

Regarding our standard of living in the UK...

This needs to be put into a global perspective. According to www.GlobalRichList.com, if you earn the UK's average income of £26,500 you're in the top 0.64% of world's richest people by income. If you have £25,000 of assets, you're in the top 18% of the world's richest people.

The UK is the seventh largest economy in the world. Can we name a time in history when the general population had a higher standard of living, was more educated, healthier or lived longer than now?

I agree that this is hardly any comfort if you're unemployed and poor in the UK. But for most of the population, living in the UK represents undreamed of luxury compared to most others on the planet.

Reply



Anonymous 22 May 2013 20:35

Really great material Jon, congratulations. I am proud to call myself a citizen of Europe and of everything that comes with this. We need to do more to make people aware in the UK that they are citizens of Europe as well as British citizens. If people want to attack this concept of EU citizenship, in my view they are simply helping us to make the case by giving us the opportunity to have the debate.

It really is time for those of us who I believe in Europe and identify with Europe to stand up and be counted, The EU is far from perfect but would be much worse off without and I for one do not want to give up my European citizenship rights without a fight! Roger Casale, New Europeans

Reply



Anonymous 23 July 2013 16:59

Yes, a very, very good blog - providing actual facts. Unfortunately, most anti-EU people aren't interested in facts. Their views come from ignorance and fear, and is fuelled by the xenophobic parts of the British press. I will try to send other people to this page.

Keep up the good work!

Reply

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