

# So, what has Europe ever done for us? Apart from...

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## 1. The end of war between European nations

While rows between England, France and Germany have been a feature of EU summits, war between Europe's major powers is now unthinkable. The fact that the two world wars that shaped the last century now seem so remote is, in itself, tribute to a visionary project that has permanently changed the landscape. As the EU celebrates the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome it is clear that while the detailed topography will always be difficult to agree, it is an extraordinary achievement that we are standing on common ground.

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## 2. Democracy is flourishing in 27 countries

Spain, Portugal, Greece, and the EU's 10 ex-Communist countries are parliamentary democracies. None of these nations were truly free in the decades following the Second World War. Each is now a democracy anchored within the EU and is unlikely to change course.

## 3. Once poor countries like Ireland, Greece and Portugal prospering

EU subsidies well spent have been crucial to the lift-off of the Irish economy. Once firmly in Britain's economic shadow, the Celtic tiger has emerged. Gross domestic product per capita in Ireland in 2005 was 137.1 per cent of the EU average, compared to 116.8 per cent in the UK.

## 4. The creation of the world's largest internal trading market

The 27-nation EU now around 500m people making it the world's largest economic trading bloc. By comparison the US has a population of around 300m. The old EU 25 had 19.2 per cent of the World's exports as compared with 14.4 per cent from the US. This gap is set to grow following the last enlargement in January to 27 member states.

## 5. Shopping without frontiers has given consumers more power

European consumers can buy goods for their own use in whichever EU country they choose - in person, on the internet, over the telephone, or by mail order - without paying additional taxes. This competition is driving down prices and increasing quality

## 6. Co-operation on continent-wide immigration policy

Though EU countries set immigration levels the EU is increasingly active in the fight against illegal migration and in trying to match the labour needs of European countries to the supply of migrants. On the downside, the EU is increasingly an impregnable fortress and many lose their lives trying to get here by boat from Africa

## 7. Crime-busting co-operation, through Europol

This provides a clearing house for EU police forces. The police in EU member states can now use an EU arrest warrant to get suspects moved from one country to another where they will face serious charges without lengthy extradition procedures.

## 8. Laws which make it easier for British people to buy property in Europe

It may not be good for the environment but access to second homes a short-haul flight away has fulfilled the dreams of millions of Britons. Retirement or regular holidays from the south of Spain to the east of Bulgaria has become a reality for many and a legally safeguarded one at that.

## 9. Cleaner beaches and rivers throughout Europe

EU law and peer pressure - including annual reports - have forced the UK to clean up its act, for example bringing the once-dirty waters off Blackpool beach up to standard. The first EU legislation was passed in 1976 with two more pieces in 2002 and 2006. Now you can monitor the quality of bathing water by checking on a website.

## 10. Four weeks statutory paid holiday a year for workers in Europe

The EU Working Time Directive ensures that all Europeans get at least four weeks of paid holiday per year. In the US many workers get a fortnight. The same directive provides for 11 hours rest in every 24 and one day of rest per week plus a rest break if the working day is longer than six hours. Minimum standards are set for paid maternity and paternity leave.

## 11. No death penalty (incompatible with EU membership)

No EU member state has the death penalty and reintroduction of capital punishment would not be compatible with EU membership. Even countries outside the EU are having to review their policies if they want to be considered for membership of the club, most notably Turkey.

#### **12. Competition means cheaper phone calls**

Since the liberalisation of telecommunications in the 1980s loosened the grip of the monopolies, prices have plummeted. The European Commission says the cost of international calls in the EU has fallen by 80 per cent since 1984.

#### **13. Small EU bureaucracy (24,000 employees, fewer than the BBC)**

Despite the eurosceptic claims, the number of EU officials is surprisingly small. After the scandal of 1999 when the Brussels based European Commission resigned, strict new rules were imposed on spending.

#### **14. Making the French eat British beef again**

When the BSE crisis subsided and British meat was judged safe, the European Court of Justice ordered France to resume imports. France contested the ruling but had no alternative in the end. By contrast, the US retains an embargo.

#### **15. Minority languages, like Irish, Welsh and Catalan recognised and protected**

Minority languages are gaining recognition. Be it Irish, Welsh or Catalan, minority languages are getting a greater role thanks to the EU which even has a Commissioner for Multilingualism. Irish became an official language of the EU this year. Catalans have lesser language rights because their tongue is official only in one part of Spain, their member states. The EU - with 23 official languages - is doing more to keep lesser tongues alive than some individual member states.

#### **16. Europe is helping to save the planet with regulatory cuts in CO2**

The EU has announced the most ambitious targets for curbing carbon emissions, promising a cut of at least one-fifth on 1990 levels by 2020. Other parts of the world are being challenged to follow suit. The EU also has blazed a trail with its carbon emissions trading system which, despite teething troubles, is still a model for other parts of the world.

#### **17. One currency from Bantry to Berlin (but not Britain)**

The Euro is now the only real alternative to the dollar on the international stage. You can travel throughout 13 countries and use one currency. Slovenia became the 13th and latest nation to join the single currency this year. Several more nations have yet to meet the necessary criteria.

#### **18. Europe wide bans on tyrants like Robert Mugabe**

Smart sanctions on the Zimbabwean President and his cronies have been negotiated through the EU and prevent those on a list from visiting all 27 nations. Though countries differ in the way they believe the EU should treat the government in Harare, they all agreed to renew the sanctions for another year.

#### **19. The EU gives twice as much aid to developing countries as the US**

The European Union and its member states paid out more than €43bn in 2005 in public aid to developing countries. This is the equivalent of 0.34 per cent of GNP of the 25 member states, and is higher than the per capita aid levels of the United States at around 0.2 per cent. More than €7bn is channelled through the EU.

#### **20. Strict safety standards for aircraft**

Airlines deemed to be unsafe are now banned from travelling into any EU country. Recently some of Pakistan's national carrier were barred because of safety fears.

#### **21. Free medical help for tourists**

Any citizen of a European country is entitled to free medical treatment if he or she is taken ill or suffers an accident in another member state. So long as you carry the correct form from your national health service, no questions will be asked.

#### **22. EU peace-keepers operate throughout the world**

The EU is building its crisis intervention force and has taken over operations in Bosnia from Nato. EU forces have also been in action in Africa helping avert humanitarian crises. In addition the EU has a big policing project.

#### **23. easyJet and Ryanair can fly anywhere without national rules protecting high cost flag carriers due to liberalisation of air travel**

easyJet and Ryanair can fly anywhere without the national rules protecting high-cost flag carriers due to liberalisation of air travel. Any airlines granted a licence in an EU country - meeting safety standards and other conditions - can operate services anywhere within the EU. Between 1992 and 2000 prices at the cheaper end of the market fell by 40 per cent.

#### **24. Introduction of pet passports**

Since 2004 travelling across borders with pets has been easier. In addition to pet passports with a vaccination certificate pets require permanent identification which can be either a tattooed code on the skin or a microchip which can be read by a special machine. In the future the microchip is likely to be obligatory.

#### **25. It will soon take only two hours from London to Paris by Eurostar**

The Channel Tunnel, and high-speed lines in France and now Britain are not, properly speaking, EU projects. However, the tunnel was built partly as a means

of reducing the mental barriers between Britain and the Continent. With the opening of the final section of Britain's fast line to St Pancras this year, trains will travel to Paris in two hours.

#### **26. Prospect of EU membership has forced modernisation on Turkey**

The presence of an affluent and stable bloc to its west has given the modernisers in Turkey the ally they needed to create a democratic constituency for change. That change has been pushed through with the promise of a European future.

#### **27. Unparalleled rights for European consumers**

Any consumer can send back a product if it breaks down within two years of purchase. Manufacturers often claim that they offer only a 12 month guarantee, but EU law states otherwise and consumers are demanding their rights.

#### **28. Study programmes and cheap travel means greater mobility for Europe's youth**

Through the Erasmus programme, in the 2003-4 academic year, 7,500 UK students spent between three and 12 months at a university in one of the other member states.

#### **29. Food labelling is much clearer**

All ingredients used in food products must be listed. Any GM ingredients must be mentioned as must colouring, preservatives and other chemical additives.

#### **30. End of the road for border crossings (apart from in the UK)**

Frontier posts have been abandoned between the 15 countries that have implemented the Schengen accords. This agreement means that EU nationals crossing most borders in continental western Europe do not need to show passports. The newer nations plan to join in soon.

#### **31. Compensation for air delays**

Passengers must get immediate help if their flight is delayed by more than a few hours, cancelled without notice or if they are denied boarding because the plane is overbooked. The carrier must make alternative travel arrangements unless the passenger asks for their money back instead. Depending on the length of the delay they must provide food and refreshments and accommodation if necessary.

#### **32. Strict ban on animal testing for the cosmetic industry**

Since November 2004 the EU has banned animal testing on finished cosmetic products entirely. Remaining safety testing on animals of ingredients for cosmetics will be ended.

#### **33. Greater protection for Europe's wildlife**

Tough European laws protect birds, flora and fauna, although the EU bird directive is widely flouted in southern Europe, particularly in Malta where 2m migratory birds are shot each year, including 80 protected species which are shot or trapped by hunters.

#### **34. Regional development fund has aided the deprived parts of Britain**

Some of the UK's poorest regions have benefited from massive handouts from the EU which has been used to regenerate some of the country's most run-down areas. Scotland's Highland and Islands have benefited enormously as have the Welsh mining valleys, Cornwall and deprived inner cities like Liverpool.

#### **35. European driving licences recognised**

Driving licences issued in one EU country are valid in any other, providing they are modern, EU-standard, ones with a photo identity. This means that the old days of having to gain translations for a UK permit to drive in Italy are over.

#### **36. Britons now feel a lot less insular**

A famous newspaper headline (perhaps apocryphal) once read "Fog in Channel; Continent Cut Off". Remember the 1960s, when Ostend seemed like an exotic destination? EU membership has not dried up the English Channel but it has helped to remove the psychological barriers between Britain and the continent.

#### **37. Europe's bananas remain bent, despite sceptics' fears**

The suggestion that the EU wanted to impose straight bananas, or blue bananas, or ban all but Caribbean bananas, is one of the oldest of Euro-myths. Obsessive euro-harmonisation of rules is a thing of the past.

#### **38. Strong economic growth - greater than the US last year**

The EU's ambition to overtake America economically by 2010 has been ridiculed. The German economy has picked up with the UK and Nordic nations are performing strongly. Even Italy, thought to be in dire straits last year, is clocking up reasonable growth. The European Commission said it expects the economy of the 27-nation European Union to grow 2.7 per cent this year, ahead of the US's estimated 2.5 per cent

#### **39. Single market has brought the best continental footballers to Britain**

The Bosman ruling, based on European law, and other decisions, have freed up football transfers. From Eric Cantona to Thierry Henry and Cristiano Ronaldo, British fans have been enjoying watching Europe's finest talent for the past 15 years.

#### **40. Human rights legislation has protected the rights of the individual**

The introduction of the Human Rights Acts has provided a legal framework to prevent abuses of power.

#### **41. European parliament provides democratic checks on all EU laws**

The European Parliament, directly elected since 1979, has been given increased powers over the years. The parliament has made a significant impact in areas ranging from the environment to animal rights.

#### **42. EU gives more, not less, sovereignty to nation states**

Switzerland and Norway, two independent countries have little or no negotiating leverage when they deal with the EU. In fact they have less sovereignty than member states who decide the policy. Britons are more able to control their own destiny - in areas from international trade, to environmental protection, to consumer rights - because they are part of a 27 nation, democratic bloc. Real sovereignty, rather than theoretical sovereignty, is enhanced by EU membership.

#### **43. Maturing EU is a proper counterweight to the power of US and China**

As it develops common foreign and defence policies, the EU is finding its voice. Europe's interests and those of America and the emerging powers, such as China and India, will sometimes coincide, sometimes conflict. Could Britain's interests be protected if we stood alone or if we became a junior partner of the US?

#### **44. European immigration has boosted the British economy**

Hundreds of thousands of Poles commute between Poland and Britain. More surprisingly the economies of both countries are booming. The UK economy has benefited from a surge of well-qualified, highly motivated workers.

#### **45. EU common research programme**

Job opportunities and Europe-wide access to education mean there really are Europeans now who see the need to speak at least three modern languages.

#### **46. Europe has set Britain an example how properly to fund a national health service**

Some continental countries have health funding problems but several, the Dutch in particular, provide quality care while keeping down costs. It took the EU to rule that British patients had a right to seek care abroad.

#### **47. British restaurants now much more cosmopolitan because of European influences**

Britain has become - let us admit it - a more continental country in the last 34 years. We now care about what we eat. Nowhere has this been more marked than in the quality and variety of food being offered in our restaurants.

#### **48. Mobility for career professionals throughout Europe**

Professionals from doctors to architects now have a right to have their national qualifications recognised across the EU. Language and cultural barriers will always remain a problem for professionals but there are can no longer be purely protectionist obstacles to a career in another EU country.

#### **49. Europe has revolutionised British attitudes to food and cooking**

Despite major drawbacks, the bloated Common Agricultural Policy has enabled small family farmers to flourish in Europe. Its support has led to the birth of the Slow Food movement and arrival in British towns of farmers markets, growing with quality organics produce. Bon appetit!

#### **50. Lists like this drive Eurosceptics mad**

In the Daily Mail-Sun universe, the EU can never do any good. Brussels is an insane bureaucracy, which secretly plots to have all donkeys painted blue (with yellow stars). The 50th birthday of the European project is a time to celebrate the many positive things which the EU has brought us.

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