THE FEDERAL TRUST for education & research

The European Union: What's the score?

PETER HAIN

A Definition of Federalism

Federalism is defined as 'a system of government in which central and regional authorities are linked in an interdependent political relationship, in which powers and functions are distributed to achieve a substantial degree of autonomy and integrity in the regional units. In theory, a federal system seeks to maintain a balance such that neither level of government becomes sufficiently dominant to dictate the decision of the other, unlike in a unitary system, in which the central authorities hold primacy to the extent even of redesigning or abolishing regional and local units of government at will.'

(New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought)

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The European Union: What's the Score?

PETER HAIN

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Introduction

What marks would you give the European Union? Ten out of ten and thumbs up? Or nothing at all and thumbs down? This *European Essay* lets you know what score the government gives it.

This is a robust statement of the case for the European Union, and particularly for Britain's engagement in it. The Minister for Europe, Peter Hain, whose recent speech on this theme to a business audience in London we reproduce as this *European Essay*, builds up his scoresheet carefully, reviewing the recent record of the EU – and the British government – on major policy areas: CAP, Structural Funds, the Single Market, Crime, Justice and Home Affairs, the Environment, World Trade, Foreign Policy and the Euro. He even marks the performance of the institutions of the EU – Commission, Council, Parliament and Court – giving them 'high marks for fairness and accountability. And for efficiency, too. They deserve a 7 out of 10.'

But it is not all as generous. Read the text to see where the EU does best and where it does worst in his eyes. The CAP in particular comes in for deservedly strong criticism. Yet note on the way some of the small surprises, such as the 'redeeming features' that save the CAP from total condemnation. Expensive it certainly is; wasteful it may

well be. But even the Common Agricultural Policy has some characteristics that are more to be praised than to be blamed.

Not surprisingly, there is praise for the Internal Market, one of the success stories of British influence in the Union. Increased prosperity, yes, and even more: the four freedoms – for goods, services, people and capital to move freely across the continent – so securely anchored now that they have transcended the status of economic liberties and become 'human rights.'

And there is praise for the Community method – specifically in the area of environmental legislation – where it has brought benefits that would have been denied the member states acting alone. It demonstrates – as the Minister puts it – the argument for the Commission, for Qualified Majority Voting and for the EU itself 'in a nutshell.'

Speaking of the institutions of the Union, the speech neatly knocks down the old Aunt Sally of the 'Brussels bureaucracy'. Given the small resources at its disposal, it is out of the question that the Commission or any other institution could be in a position to 'drive us relentlessly to a federal superstate.' The Minister goes on to quote approvingly the Laeken Declaration that Tony Blair and Jack Straw agreed in December and which explicitly states that the EU is *not* about 'a European superstate or European institutions inveigling their way into every nook and cranny of life.'

We may regret that the Minister did not at this point take the opportunity to offer a defence of federalism as it is rightly understood – different levels of legislative authority constitutionally entrenched – but that was not the purpose of this speech, and it has been done elsewhere and at greater length by the Federal Trust in a book of timely

European Essay No. 20

5

essays published last year. Read *Federal Britain in Federal Europe?* and in particular the essay in it by Geoffrey Denton entitled 'The Federalist Vision.'

It is nonetheless refreshing and heartening to read a government statement that so strongly makes the case for British engagement in the European Union, that does not beat about the bush when it comes to what needs criticising, and which sets out the government's assessment in such clear and straightforward language.

Martyn Bond Director of The Federal Trust February 2002

The European Union: What's the Score?

Peter Hain London, January 2002

When I became Minister for Europe I promised no spin, no slogans. Just the facts about Europe: telling it like it is. An honest debate about Europe and Britain's place in it.

So how should we rate the European Union, its major policies and its main institutions? And how should we rate the Government's performance in Europe – and the Opposition's for the matter?

Tonight I want to attempt this without the techiespeak that Eurowonks use when they want to impress but can't be bothered to explain.

So I thought I'd do it with numbers. By giving you an end of term report for the EU in 2001 - by marking the EU out of ten on its main activities.

The Common Agricultural Policy

First up, the notorious Common Agricultural Policy, which for many people represents the worst of the EU. We still spend more of the EU's money – your money – on the CAP than on any other single policy.

My verdict: 4 out of 10. The CAP needs major reform. It makes our food cost more than it should. It causes waste. It's bureaucratic. It distorts world markets – hurting people in the third world and getting in the way of a freer trade with the US. And in return for these dubious privileges, it costs the EU more than 40 billion euros – or £25 billion - per year. That is why CAP reform is a top priority for the government.

So why not a round nought out of ten? Because the CAP does have some redeeming features.

First, the original conception was good: to prevent food shortages after the war. Second, we do need to support our rural communities if we want to maintain them. Without some subsidies, the green and clean countryside we cherish will disappear. Third, a collective EU policy is the only sensible basis for running agriculture in Europe in the 21st century. In a Single Market, you can't have free trade in goods in everything except agricultural products. And you can't run purely national policies on animal health when a shift in the breeze or a truck movement or a tourist can spread disease throughout the whole of the UK and continental Europe.

And another reason the CAP doesn't justify a zero is that it is getting better. The reforms Tony Blair and other EU leaders agreed in 1999 are already having an effect. The food mountains and wine lakes have gone. We now spend a good deal less on the CAP than we did: it used to take up two-thirds of the EU's entire budget – now it's less than half. And there is the prospect of further reform in the next few years. This government is committed to achieving that.

Structural Funds

Second, Structural Funds. A boring name, but the second biggest item of EU expenditure after the CAP which support the development of disadvantaged regions of the UK and other parts of the EU. They will deliver some £10 billion to the UK between 2000 and 2006, the highest amounts to Wales, Cornwall, South Yorkshire and Merseyside.

Seven out of 10. I rate the programme because I have seen the benefits. In Wales, where hundreds of small businesses are being helped to flower where there was once industrial desolation. In Western Scotland, where the funds are helping create 53,000 jobs.

The principle underpinning the structural funds is right: the EU and its member states should join together to help each other's regions develop successfully. Yes, some other member states get more than we do. But that is because we are richer than them. And let us remember: this isn't a favour we are doing them. It is a favour we are doing ourselves.

Because by helping develop all of Europe's regions we make ourselves richer. We create more prosperous consumers wanting more British goods and services. We deliver better infrastructure for us when we travel around Europe, whether as tourists or hauliers. And we reduce the numbers of unemployed and unhappy people gravitating towards richer industrialised centres which can't support them.

But good though they are, I don't give the Structural Funds top marks. First, because they aren't the most efficient way to transfer resources between member states: we need to look at that when we come to review them in 2006. And second, because they still aren't administered as efficiently as we would like. That too needs improvement.

Single Market

Almost top marks: 8 out of 10. An A for effort and for achievement.

'A' for effort: consider the practical difficulties in removing all barriers to trade across a continent the size of Europe. A continent which has had those barriers in one shape or form ever since the first Phoenician merchant stepped ashore 2000 years ago and met some local tribesman with a big spear demanding a cut.

And 'A' for achievement. The Single Market has helped deliver the highest standard of living in European history. The biggest choice and the cheapest prices for consumers ever. More than three million jobs in 800,000 companies in the UK dependent upon it.

So the economics are vast and hugely successful. But the Single Market is more important even than the colossal prosperity it has brought. Because the Four Freedoms it embodies – freedom of goods, services, capital and people to move anywhere throughout Europe – have transcended economic liberties. They have become human rights.

They mean that if you don't like life in Britain you can move to Portugal. That if you don't like working in Liege you can try a job in Madrid. That if you can't find the car you want at the price you're prepared to pay in the UK, you can buy a cheaper one or a different one in Denmark or Germany. That whatever your profession – doctor, teacher, plumber – you can offer your services in any country in the EU. That you can invest your money or open a savings account where it works best for you.

In fact there are only two things wrong with the Single Market. It isn't yet single, and it isn't yet a market – at least not a perfect one.

There remain invisible barriers to trade in some goods and services. In particular, we need to open up the energy and financial services sectors to real competition. When we do, the key beneficiaries will be British consumers, who will get cheaper gas and electricity, and British companies and their workers in these two big sectors. That's why we are pressing for concrete commitments in these areas at the Barcelona summit in March.

Crime, Justice and Home Affairs

The 11 September terrorist attack on New York and Washington underlined how vulnerable we all are. Terrorism knows no frontier posts or border guards. So it is vital Britain works together with other nations, especially our neighbours in Europe. And the EU responded immediately, agreeing a whole raft of measures from identifying terrorist money laundering and freezing their assets to sharing intelligence. If the EU's institutions and procedures had not been in place, the response to 11 September in our part of the globe could not have been as efficient and effective.

Most people put fighting crime near the top of their priorities. So has the EU. That's why we are developing cooperation between our police forces, so a policeman in one EU country can arrest a wanted criminal on behalf of another EU country. That's why we are setting up a network of prosecutors from each country in Europe, so a magistrate in London can get the evidence she needs from her colleague in Helsinki to nail a drug lord or a bank robber.

And this works. The seizures of drugs our customs officers make at Dover don't happen by themselves. Many of those drug busts are made possible by quiet and effective cooperation with other European countries. The regularity with which our immigration officers at

Heathrow stop people traffickers and illegal immigrants isn't always down to UK law enforcement alone: its success often depends on information from other EU services elsewhere in Europe.

There is a lot more to do, but another high mark: 7 out of 10.

Environment

Clear skies, pure water, clean beaches and a healthy environment. Those come pretty high on most people's priorities too. That's why the EU is tackling them.

My mark? A high 8 out of 10. Environment is one area where even the Eurosceptics can't pretend the UK is an island. Acid rain and global warming don't stop at Calais. They are the most insidious of all crossborder threats. Only by co-operating with other European countries can we fight them and win.

And – another point the Eurosceptics don't like much, because it's true – we can only raise environmental standards across Europe by our old friend Qualified Majority Voting. Britain's standards are already high. But consider the mess if we had to agree each European environmental measure by unanimity – with everyone having a veto.

Two things would happen. First, it would take forever to agree anything. The reluctant or slow would 'Just Say No.' Acid rain would have stripped bare our trees and poisoned our lakes long before we agreed any measures to stop it.

And second, when we did finally agree measures, they would almost certainly be too toothless to make much difference. Because the dirty men of Europe would be able to insist on their own inadequate

standards. And if everyone had a veto the rest of us would just have to settle on that. Every debate would be a race to the bottom.

But this is where the so-called Community method really scores. The Commission makes a proposal - pushing for genuinely clean air, water or soil. Member states decide on it by QMV, preventing the reluctant environmentalists and the polluters from blocking sensible agreements. And the European Parliament provides a reality check. The result: tough action to build a cleaner, greener Europe, in a way the member states acting alone could never achieve.

And there in a nutshell you have the argument for the Commission, for QMV, and for the EU itself.

World Trade

The same applies to trade with the rest of the world. We don't have just a British trade policy any more. We have a European Community policy. And a good thing too.

In international trade talks, the Commission negotiates on behalf of all the member states, including Britain. The strategic approach to a set of trade negotiations is decided by the member states, usually by unanimity. But the details are usually agreed by QMV. And the Community as a whole does the deal.

What this means is that we get what we want, quicker and better. We are a trading nation. So it's in our interests to have an outward looking, liberalising EU. To open up world trade wherever possible. And to maximise our own influence in those negotiations.

The Community method delivers all that. It encourages the Commission to keep looking for ways to open up international trade. It makes it

harder for protectionist member states to prevent the deals we want. It makes it harder for those protectionists to make a deal we want hostage to their own special interests. It gives us far more leverage on the world stage, because negotiating as part of the world's biggest single market means we have the real clout we'd lack if we negotiated on our own. And in Pascal Lamy, who leads for the Commission on trade, it has given us one of the best negotiators in the world.

Look at the results. In the last few years we've struck new trade deals with the developing countries, which will also help them develop their own economies. We've avoided any huge trade wars. We've agreed to work with the US on new ways to liberalise transatlantic commerce. We've built new open trading relationships with the countries of central and eastern Europe and with Russia.

And, most recently, at Doha we succeeded in launching a new round of global trade talks: the best possible response to the world economic downturn and the terrorists who attacked us all on 11 September. Better still, the mandate for those talks includes something the UK has long wanted: a commitment on reducing CAP subsidies.

Marking? Seven out of 10. And an 8 if Pascal Lamy concludes a good world trade deal. I'm betting he will.

Foreign Policy

Foreign policy isn't like trade. The Community method wouldn't work here. Events on the ground require instant responses. When a corrupt President falls or a war starts, we can't sit around waiting for a Commission proposal in 12 different languages or consulting the European Parliament over what to do. We need instant action.

That's where the intergovernmental cooperation at the heart of our Common Foreign and Security Policy comes into its own. When something happens abroad, the 15 member states can get round a table and settle their approach in half an hour. They can agree a public statement over the internet even quicker. The new machinery we have set up in Brussels means EU governments now have the capacity to run international crises in real time.

But there's one thing even more important than speed for successful foreign policy: common purpose. Which is another reason why you can't make good foreign policy by Qualified Majority Voting. Successful policies require credibility and commitment. You wouldn't get that credibility if some member states had been outvoted. You wouldn't get that commitment – of money, or troops, or whatever, if the policy that France or Britain had wanted was not adopted.

That's why our current system – foreign policy decisions by the member states, by unanimity – is the right one.

And it delivers. EU action has helped topple Milosevic and stabilise Macedonia. Helped promote a broad based government in Afghanistan. Helped establish a strong relationship with Russia. Helped keep alive the Middle East Peace process. Helped support the African democrats and undermine the dictators.

As the richest bloc in the world, the EU has the potential to be a huge and progressive influence in global affairs. But it's not sufficient to pass resolutions at Council meetings. An awful lot more needs doing – and delivering. So, an 'A' for effort and 6 out of 10 for achievement.

The Euro

There's only one mark that matters on the Euro – the number 5. The Chancellor has set out five tests to judge whether it is in our interests to join. If those five tests are met, and the Government decides in favour and Parliament approves, we will put the final decision to the British people in a referendum. And if they aren't met, we won't. It is as simple as that.

Institutions

To finish off my report card, let's turn to another of our old friends, the unelected and unaccountable Brussels bureaucracy - which, as we are all told is some dark continental plot to dictate to Britain and drive us relentlessly to a federal superstate.

There is a Euro bureaucracy: an independent Commission, a Council of the governments of the 15 member states, a European Parliament with 87 MEPs elected by the British people, and an independent Court to ensure everyone abides by the law.

The Commission makes proposals for new laws: it doesn't make the laws. And it monitors existing law to ensure the member states all play by the rule. If you want a level playing field, you have to have a heavy roller.

The Commission has a good many Brits working for it – far too many, say some of our partners. Those Brits include such federalist conspirators as Chris Patten and Neil Kinnock – respected and patriotic men from our two major parties, neither known for their desire to abolish the United Kingdom.

Remember too that the Commission has fewer employees than Birmingham City Council. And that many of those who do work for the Commission are actually translators or interpreters. Pretty hard to run a superstate with those numbers.

Moreover, the Commission doesn't take the big decisions. They are taken by the Council – the Ministers of the member states. The biggest decisions of all are taken by the European Council – the leaders of the member states. And when the Council makes laws, they are usually made jointly with the European Parliament.

Not much lack of accountability here. The Council is made up of representatives of democratically elected governments. They are accountable to their parliaments and their electorates. They can be sacked by them. The Parliament is made up of democratically elected MEPs also at the mercy of their electorates every five years.

The Commission isn't elected: and that's right, because, like civil servants, they must be independent, acting for the good of everyone in Europe. Politicise them and they couldn't do that. But they are accountable – to the European Parliament directly and to the Council indirectly. And they are eminently sackable – as the whole Commission found out in 1999.

And the Court. The sceptics like to rant about foreign judges. Wrong: the Court contains a British judge. They like to say that the Court is biased. Wrong: the Court has often ruled in our favour. The best recent example is the 13 December judgement that the French must lift their ban on our beef. The system works.

When necessary – like on the reaction to 11 September - the EU institutions can agree policies quicker than many national governments or legislatures. Not bad when you consider all the different perspectives

and interests involved. And rather better, as Jack Straw has remarked, than the previous European method of deciding things – warfare.

So I give the institutions pretty high marks for fairness and accountability. And for efficiency too. They deserve a 7 out of 10.

But they are very far from perfect. For instance I dock them marks is on transparency. Nobody understands what's going on. In one sense this isn't the institutions' fault. The idea that Brussels is secretive is – to any journalist based there – a complete joke. Everything the EU is doing or planning is in the public domain: almost all of it deliberately. Try http://www.europa.eu.int.

The problem isn't lack of information. It is rather that the institutions, and we, the member states, have failed to convey the information that exists simply, and failed to explain what it means. That's why I am encouraging simple language and plain speaking about Europe, in Brussels as well as here.

The Government

So what about us? How do I rate the Government's own performance on Europe? I'll leave it to others to give us marks. But not even Alastair Campbell would try to claim 10 out of 10!

We've done well by getting away from the old story of Britain alone and powerless in Europe. Which we were. We were isolated and ignored. It didn't do Britain any good. If you don't win friends you lose arguments. If you don't start out positive about Europe, you end up with negative outcomes for Britain.

That's where this Government has scored. By rebuilding our relationships with other Europeans, we have rebuilt Britain's strength in Europe.

Look at the facts. The Nice Treaty on enlargement wasn't an argument between the UK and the others. Nor was it a debate we lost. On the contrary, at Nice we won. More power for Britain, a reformed Commission, a more flexible Europe. Because we had friends and a positive attitude. The same was true of Laeken. Tony Blair and Jack Straw managed to get an EU declaration explicitly saying that the EU is not about, and I quote, 'a European superstate or European institutions inveigling their way into every nook and cranny of life.'

And it's that approach that has helped us make Britain's priorities the EU's priorities. The fight against crime and illegal immigration, with the action plan we agreed in Tampere in 1999. Economic reform for more jobs and greater prosperity, with the programme Tony Blair promoted at Lisbon in March 2000. The enlargement of the EU, to make us all richer and safer, unlocked by the deal we secured at Nice in December 2000. European solidarity with the US in rebuilding Afghanistan and prosecuting the new war against terror, reaffirmed at the Laeken Summit in December 2001.

So our approach is working. But we need to do more to explain the EU in terms the British people can understand. And we need to do more to convince many of them that the EU matters, and that it works for us.

Conclusion: The EU Score

So where does the European Union come out overall? I think an 8 out of 10.

It's not perfect. No level of government is. Not Westminster. Not the Scottish or Welsh devolved authorities. Not even your local council. But as Fred Astaire said when he was asked how he felt about old age, it's better than the alternative.

And I mark high for contributing to the longest period of peace our continent has ever known. For delivering the highest standard of living our citizens have ever had. For liberating our citizens to live, work and play wherever they want inside the Union's borders. And for making each nation state safer and stronger in the world we now live in.

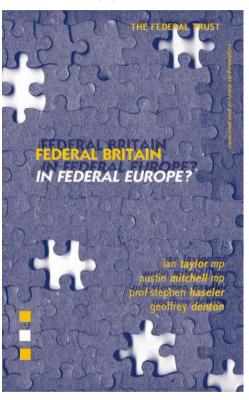
Others will no doubt dispute my markings. Fine. Let's have a debate. But let's have one based on the facts. Let's conduct it in clear language. And let's centre it on the interests of Britain and the British people. Because when we do that, the case for a strong Britain in a strong Europe gets an unequivocal 10 out of 10.

FEDERAL BRITAIN IN FEDERAL EUROPE?

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IAN TAYLOR MP AUSTIN MITCHELL MP STEPHEN HASELER GEOFFREY DENTON

This book is about how we govern ourselves. Recent developments in politics, economics and administration appear all to lead in one direction, and that is federal. Federalism can mean many different things to different people, and it needs to be nailed down. This book does just that, pinning down its relevance to the changing structure of regional government in Britain and to the changing role that Britain plays in the developing federal structure of the European Union.



These four essays from outspoken politicians and commentators ask the federal questions about Britain's changing constitution and our greater integration with the continent, and offer various answers. Their cogent arguments reflect the deep-seated hopes and fears of millions about how we are governed, showing how getting decision-making down as near as can be to the citizen may carry costs as far as efficiency is concerned, but brings benefits for democracy. Wherever you stand on the political spectrum, or on the constitutional issues that often divide the parties, this book will help to clarify the arguments about the right way to govern the country.

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Persuading the People

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Few decisions will be as important as the forthcoming decision on the Euro. Whether the referendum is next year or later, the debate is already underway, and passions run high.

Is it simply an economic decision to do with optimum currency areas, or is it a fundamental shift of sovereignty that spells the end of national government as we know it? Is it a sensible response to the pressures of globalisation in monetary affairs or is it an interest rate straitjacket from which there is no escape? Above all, have the people had a chance to understand and discuss the implications of a decision of this magnitude?

Well-informed commentators put different points of view in this book, some for, some against Britain's entry into the Euro. They speak with authority and experience. What they have in common is a desire to see the debate carried to the people, and for the people to make an informed choice when the time comes. Only through a popular vote will the issue be settled once and for all. Nobody will have the excuse of saying that they did not know what it was all about.



edited by Stephen Haseler and Jacques Reland

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'These essays provide a very broad sweep of analysis of the contemporary challenges: they are outstanding contributions with many fascinating insights.'

Lord Simon of Highbury

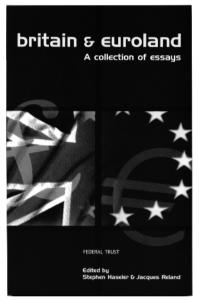
CONTENTS

Howard Davies – The Euro and Financial Services
Dick Taverne – The Euro and Taxes
Stephen Haseler – The Politics of the Euro
Robert Worcester – The British: Reluctant
Europeans

Christopher Johnson – New Labour and the Euro: the Five Tests

John Stevens – The Foreign Policy of the Euro Valerio Lintner – Euroland and National Sovereignty Jacques Reland – The Euro Contest: a Franco-German Affair?

Brian Kettell – The Fault Lines that could destroy the Euro Robert Kissack – The Third Way and the Euro.



Since the introduction of the Euro on 1 January 1999, there has been lively debate in the UK among politicians and the media as to the pros and cons of Economic and Monetary Union. Should the UK join Euroland or not? What does EMU really mean for our economy and national sovereignty? And what voice do citizens of Britain or elsewhere in Europe have in running their currency?

One thing is clear: more information is needed. People from the world of politics, economics and the general public need impartial information to have a reasoned debate on the Euro. People want to make up their own minds. This book, edited by Stephen Haseler and Jacques Reland, professors at London Guildhall University and with an introduction by Lord Simon, former Minister for the Single Market, does just that, collecting together essays from respected practitioners on many aspects of the Euro in a way that is accessible to the general reader, Europhile and Eurosceptic alike.



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debate about good governance both at national and international level. As a charitable educational trust, we organise seminars, conferences and study panels, publishing the results of our investigations

and discussions. We like to think that the output of the Trust supplies the underpinnings for an informed debate on governance.

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The Trust conducts enquiries, promotes seminars and conferences and publishes reports, books and teaching materials.

The Trust is the UK member of the Trans-European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA), a grouping of fifteen think-tanks from Member States of the European Union.

The Federal Trust launched its series of *European Essays* in the autumn of 1999 with the aim of providing its wide circle of Friends with regular thought provoking information on a broad range of European issues.

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