

Opinion piece by Tim Lewis: To be EU or not EU? That is the question

Opinion Piece: To be EU or not EU? That is the question

Ok, it's no secret. I am a europhile with strong eurosceptic leanings but, I am still going to vote to remain in the EU on the 23rd June.

I am not saying this because the trade union movement backs the remain side, or various national and international politicians, economists, businessmen, popstars or even next door's cat say so, and I am certainly not going to try and tell you which way to vote. But, if you have a few minutes to spare, I would like to outline my thoughts on what I believe is an issue of global importance.

Economics – The arguments put forward by both sides seem to be either speculative or partisan (Boris' 'battlebus whopper' for example). The only certainty is that whatever the outcome, Dave, Boris and their mates will not be struggling to pay the rent; the real economic cost of whichever decision is made will, as ever, be borne by the poorer sections of the community.

Sovereignty – More smoke and mirrors. Every time we sign a treaty (and the Brexiteers are promising us plenty of treaties in the coming years) we concede part of our precious sovereignty. Just look at the Norwegian Government being found guilty in its own courts under the ECHR.

Immigration – Migration is a natural phenomenon that has been going on for millennia. The same scare stories you hear/read about migrants in the media were being bandied about before we ever joined the EU. Whether we are in or out, the UK will continue to attract migrants, simply because it is a good place to live!

History – The UK is a part of Europe and its history is all about Europe (even the colonial stuff). The economic and political alliances brought about by the EU and its predecessors have given Europe its longest period of peace and stability since the days of the Roman Empire. If the UK leaves, the EU may fragment further which could strengthen the power of far right, (also anti EU) groups in Austria, Hungary, France etc.

Geography – The UK sits on the same tectonic plate as the rest of Europe and the water that separates us, which is just 21 miles wide at its narrowest, was dry land before the last ice age, and one day may be so again. We cannot tow the British Isles out into the Atlantic, therefore we are a part of Europe, like it or not!

ODPs – Not many ODPs work in Europe these days, although Holland used to be a popular destination back in the day. Thanks to the EU rules on study and working, however, our profession is attracting a growing number of Europeans (I know of at least two Portuguese ODPs for example), who I am sure will be spreading the word about our profession to their friends and family at home. If we want to raise the profile of the ODP profession in Europe and beyond, we need to nurture these fragile contacts, and this will be made considerably more difficult if we are outside the EU.