



Syed Kamall is a Conservative Member of the European Parliament for London. He is the Vice Chairman of the Constitutional Affairs Committee and also sits on the Economic & Monetary Affairs and International Trade Committees of the European Parliament.

He wrote this Pocket Guide after commissioning a national survey which reported that nine out of ten British citizens wanted more information about how Europe is run.

Syed's work is guided by his belief that the EU should interfere less in our lives and that power should be exercised at the lowest level possible.

For more information about Syed's work please visit www.syedkamall.com

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MEMBER STATES

Founders in 1957

Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, West Germany.

Joined in 1973

Eire, Denmark (and Greenland), United Kingdom.

Joined in 1981

Greece.

Left in 1985

Greenland.

Joined in 1986

Portugal, Spain.

Joined in 1990

German Democratic Republic (as part of united Germany).

Joined in 1995

Austria, Finland, Sweden.

Joined in 2004

Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia.

Joined in 2007

Bulgaria, Romania.

Countries that have applied to join

Albania, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

Did you know?

-  The Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights are often mistaken as EU institutions. They are not, but Britain is a member of both.
-  Sixteen countries in the EU share a single currency - the other eleven, including the United Kingdom, are not members of the 'Eurozone'.
-  The EU's accounts have not been signed off by the Court of Auditors for 14 years.
-  The EU is estimated to cost each person £120 a year.
-  The European Parliament sits in Strasbourg once a month and in Brussels the remainder of the time.

SYED KAMALL'S POCKET GUIDE TO THE EUROPEAN UNION



The European Project

Over the past 50 years, the European Union (EU) has grown from 6 to 27 countries – representing 480 million people. The Coal and Steel Community became the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957. To recognise the reality of political union, in 1992, the Maastricht Treaty renamed it the European Union. The EU has the power to create laws in areas such as agriculture, the environment, economics, foreign affairs and defence. Many European politicians support “the European project” which is the attempt to create a European superstate. Others, including London MEP Syed Kamall, do not support this goal, preferring instead an open Europe of independent nation states.



The European Commission

The Commission is made up of one Commissioner from each of the 27 member states. The United Kingdom’s Commissioner is Cathy Ashton, previously a Labour Government Minister in the House of Lords. Supported by a civil service organised by Directorates-General, the Commission is the only body which can propose EU legislation. It is often seen as the driving force behind European integration.



The Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers is the institution that represents the national governments of the EU. It brings together Ministers, Ambassadors and officials to agree deals on new laws. Countries have a weighted number of votes on most issues. In recent years, Britain has given up its veto in many areas of policy under new Treaties agreed at Maastricht, Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon.



Left to right : Exterior of the European Parliament in Brussels, Syed Kamall supporting builders against more unnecessary legislation, the Parliamentary Chamber in Brussels.



The European Parliament

The Parliament is the only directly elected body in the European Union. There are currently 736 MEPs of which 72 are British. The most recent elections were in 2009 and the next ones will take place in 2014. The Parliament meets in both Brussels and Strasbourg and, in some areas, it has the power to block or amend laws.



The European Court of Justice

The Court rules on disputes over the treaties or EU law. The Court can hear cases brought by the Commission, EU countries or even individual citizens who feel aggrieved. It can impose heavy fines and its decisions are binding on national governments.



UK cedes power to European Institutions by signing the Treaties on European Union



POWERS UNDER THE TREATIES

The UK has one commissioner appointed by the Prime Minister subject to approval of Commission by European Parliament.

European Commission

PROPOSES LEGISLATION

Government Ministers attend these meetings

Council of Ministers

European Parliament

TOGETHER AMEND AND AGREE LAWS

Elections to the European Parliament take place every five years

The UK Parliament has no power to amend laws made in Europe once passed

UK PARLIAMENT

APPLIES THE LAW

The UK appoints one judge to the bench of the European Court

UK & EUROPEAN COURTS

ENFORCE THE LAW