

European Parliament

Why do regions have their own representations?

The regions have their own representations so that they can put their concerns and needs forwards and know that they will be heard. Their representation will be focused on regional needs and therefore the voice of the regions can be heard in addition to the voice of EU member states.

How does lobbying function? And why?

Lobbying is attempting to influence decisions made by EU officials. Lobbyists are people who wish to change proposals in draughts before they become official and out of reach. They "lobby" or campaign to change regulations that do not suit them or try to create ones that do. They speak to politicians whenever they can and try to make allies. They do this because they feel something is wrong, could be improved or something new should be created.

Dr. Sommer

Dr. Sommer received a PhD in consumer food behaviour. She is fascinated with food production and consumer behaviour. She has been in the European Parliament for 15 years and is coming to the end of her third term. She is also expected to continue into a fourth term. She has been on many committees during her time in parliament. For 10 years she was on the transport committee then changed to another committee which looks at border immigration and control due to experience in this field. She hopes to change to a consumer committee in her next term as this is what she specialises in. She lives in Herne in Germany and stays in Brussels three weeks a month and in Strasbourg one. She returns home at the weekend.

Energy policies in different EU states

Many EU states understand the importance of renewable energy however they also know how costly it is. It requires large amounts of land and investment. Many countries receive energy from other countries if they cannot produce enough on their own.

Free Trade agreement with the US

The Free Trade agreement gives Germany and the US the opportunity to trade and become partners which can be highly beneficial. However it can also be negative on producers in Germany. They may have their products tossed aside as Germany uses the US to trade. A major problem with the Free Trade agreement is how standards will measure up. EU countries do not believe in genetic engineering particularly with food however for around 20 years the US has been cloning and playing with food genetics. Therefore the standard of food between the EU and thenUS could be very different. The Free Trade agreement is good but only if products which have not been modified.

Nuclear Power

The EU have regulations on safety of nuclear power and this is strictly controlled. However the regulations on emissions produced from this form of energy are not as clear or monitored and therefore it is not 100% safe yet.

A typical week in the life of an MEP

Dr. Renate Sommer packs a suitcase on a Sunday then leaves for work on a Monday morning. She stops at her own office to discuss plans for the week then drives to either Brussels or Strasbourg. She owns an apartment in Brussels and stays in a hotel in Strasbourg. Her first parliamentary meeting will be around 2pm in Brussels or 4pm in Strasbourg. She stays until either Thursday or Friday then travels to her own constituency. She has meetings there and across the community at the weekend.

EU enlargement

Russia is not part of the EU and does not wish to be as they feel unsure of it. However countries such as Belarus cannot currently join the EU as it would bring current EU countries closer and more connected to Russia. This is bad at the moment however in the future it could be beneficial and realistic.

How do we make young people more interested in European politics?

Teaching is key. If children are educated from a young age they will understand the importance of politics and be interested in it. Both parents and school teachers should involve young people in discussions on political matters. However many parents no longer understand or care about politics and cannot educate their children. Therefore it is important to start the learning at a young age.

Dr. Sommer's views on Comenius/Erasmus projects.

Dr. Sommer feels projects are very important and beneficial. They educate children on the topics which are being researched and gives them an insight into different fields of work and a view of the future. They also unite different countries and allow people to mix with other cultures. This is important as it teaches that everyone is different and everyone is similar. It also allows linguistic abilities to grow.

Dr. Sommer's daily use of renewable energy sources

Dr. Sommer would like to have solar panels on her house. However she lives in a listed building and this is not possible. She also cannot insulate outside walls or install thicker windows. She feels this is wrong as everyone should contribute to making the world a greener place and is campaigning to have listed buildings open to these changes. However she has a rain water pump in her garden which she uses to water plants instead of tap water. She has also installed insulation indoors to store heat and she drives an energy efficient car.