

## Here is a letter written by an MEP to a UK broadsheet in response to negative press coverage regarding the European Union.

Dear Editor

As an **MEP** with many years' experience of EU affairs, I am writing to express my utter dismay at the coverage the EU has received from the British press over the past year. Articles about institutions such as the Commission, the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice are often trivial, misleading or just plain wrong. Both tabloids and broadsheets repeatedly present the EU as an authoritarian superstate run by faceless **civil servants** intent on interfering with British affairs and stifling British enterprise with **red tape**.

This practice would be entirely acceptable if the stories run by newspapers were accurate. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case. Reports, for example, announcing EU bans on double-decker buses or tooth-whitening procedures are simply untrue. No such proposals exist. Equally unfounded are articles suggesting that the EU is trying to undermine the British way of life. There are no directives outlawing British foods that fail to **conform** to EU **regulations**, nor is there any **legislation** designed to foist a Mother Christmas onto traditional British Christmas celebrations.

This kind of reporting does a disservice both to the British people, and our European neighbours. There is little coverage of important events such as EU **summits** or EU **treaties** with other countries. Serious issues such as **monetary union** and the European **constitution** are being sidestepped in favour of trivial nonsense about the **harmonisation** of bananas. No wonder UK opinion polls consistency reveal a strong **anti-European sentiment**. No wonder, too, that our government is loath to organize **referendums** on issues concerning Europe – people simply don't have the information needed to make informed decisions.

In the end it is the British public who will be the losers from this Europhobic style of reporting. How can we influence events in Brussels when we know so little about what is going on? How can we make our voice heard when our response to choosing our own **representatives** during European **parliamentary elections** is so apathetic and our **lobbying** skills so undeveloped? Balanced, accurate, informative reporting about the EU would be a first step to resolving this sorry state of affairs.

Yours faithfully

Brenda Rowland MEP