

# British Media Best On Europe: Says German

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The British media is just what European institutions need right now to keep them honest. That was one conclusion from our debate on Media and Europe at the LSE. Surprisingly, this view was not just espoused by [Mats Persson](#), the euro-sceptic campaigner from Open Europe. It was the considered opinion, based on research, of [Jurgen Kronig](#) the long-time UK correspondent for the respected German weekly [Die Zeit](#). His defence of the 'aggressive' UK media comes at a time when the [European Parliament](#) stands accused not only of a [£100 million expenses fraud](#), but a refusal to make the information public.

Jurgen is a classic liberal-left product of post-war Germany. But he feels that the European project has reached its limits through enlargement and the problems of sustaining a real democracy across so many states and so many complex issues. He also thinks that most of the continental media is failing to report European institutions critically. Indeed, he says that French and German journalists are part of a sort of conspiracy not to raise awkward questions. Despite making mistakes in procedural details over stories like [bendy bananas](#), Jurgen thinks that even tabloids like [The Sun](#) give more information on key European issues such as the current [Lisbon Treaty](#), than many serious papers in Germany. He's right: have a look at The Sun's discussion forums [here](#). But aren't they driven to a blind euro-scepticism by their anti-Brussels proprietors? Yes, says Jurgen, but that has been balanced by pro-European papers and the BBC. And it is from TV, after all, that most people get their real news information.

[John Palmer](#), veteran pro-integration analyst and former Guardian Brussels correspondent does feel that the UK media is crudely anti-EU. He also pointed out that economic pressures on the media mean that there is less resource for spending on international coverage, so fewer papers and TV channels have correspondents covering the EU in situ. But he raised a much bigger issue about democracy in Europe. He insists that increased integration is inevitable. More trans-national decision-making is unavoidable. Not because of a federalist conspiracy. But because issues like food supply, energy policy and climate change demand regional not national action.

Mats Persson insists that you can deal with those problems in a liberal way with states combining. But even if that is the case, we will still need our European-wide institutions to work better than they do now. The first step is for those Euro-bodies to open themselves up and admit it when they screw up. It would be a good thing if the UK parliament led the way on openness and threw its own procedures open to greater scrutiny. I would happily trade a pay rise for MPs and MEPS in return for total honesty. If they can't stand the attention of the media then they shouldn't claim public money or power.

Thanks to [William Horsley](#) for chairing the debate, [Cafe Babel](#) for partnering with us, and to [UNESCO](#) and [Hanover Public Affairs](#) for their sponsorship.

Next Wednesday evening we have a group of Euro bloggers in to discuss how new media is changing European identity.

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