The concept of the European Union is a controversial one at times. The central idea is to achieve more financial and political stability through cooperation between European countries. This then means easier trading, migration and more but some feel at the risk of a loss of national identity for the individual countries. Here we will look in more detail at some of the European Union pros and cons by looking at the changes that they’ve made so far and how they impact the continent positively and negatively.

**The Euro**

One of the biggest changes that the European Union has made to the continent is to introduce the ‘Euro’ to many countries. This has many benefits meaning that people traveling through Europe only need carry one kind of currency through many of the countries (the countries combined are referred to as the ‘Eurozone’). At the same time it also facilitates trade between those countries and gives them a common goal rather than pitting them against each other.

At the same time though it is not without its negative points though. For instance the existence of the Euro is in some ways contributing to the economic crisis on the continent with countries like Greece that are struggling dragging down the overall value of the Euro for those countries that are not struggling (though conversely Greece would possibly be in a worse position were it not for the Euro).

**Migration**

Another important aspect of the European Union pros and cons is the impact that the EU had on migration, and since the EU was implemented it has resulted in the ability to move more freely between countries both when traveling and when setting up residence. This makes the whole process much easier and means that residents are now freer to choose where they live and more able to move to warmer climates or the countries that provide work.

However on the downside it also makes it very difficult for certain countries to refuse entry to large numbers of refugees and immigrants which can place a strain on the individual country’s resources. At the same time other countries may lose their skilled workers as they immigrate to countries where they can get better salaries for the same work.

**Trading**

Many European Union pros and cons revolve around trading and the EU has brought in many rules and regulations that aim to encourage trade between European countries. This means on the one hand of course that more money stays within Europe, but it also in some ways limits corporations within those countries. For instance a law affecting procurement from the EU states that companies have to re-evaluate all contracts rather than staying with known businesses. While this gives more European countries a fairer chance of getting work, it also costs the individual organizations more and means more ‘red tape’ for them to navigate.

**Politics/Democracy**

The European Union allows countries to do collectively what they could not do individually – that is to compete with countries like America and China on a global scale. This of course should in theory strengthen Europe’s position globally and politically, but it also threatens to take away some of the power of individual governments. Many describe the European Union as ‘bureaucratic’ and at times even un-democratic as many of the officials are appointed rather than elected. These same officials then make many laws that impact the individual members states without input from their local governments. This takes the power away from the people and is one of the most serious cons of the European pros and cons. However at the same time this does allow for many large-scale changes to be implemented quickly on a broad scale – recent laws on outdoor heating and on the engine sizes of cars for instance should have a very quick positive impact on the environment. The European Union of course also costs money which needs to be considered among the European Union pros and cons and of course this money comes out of taxes.

In theory the original idea that sat behind the EU was to make war impossible by bonding the countries politically and culturally (Robert Schuman declared that a supranational community would make war ‘not only unthinkable but materially impossible’). These ideas germinated following WW2, and since then a pan-European war has not occurred – and the EU can somewhat be credited with that.

**Culture**

By bringing the disparate cultures of Europe closer together there are many European Union pros and cons. On the one hand it means that cultures are shared and individual countries are made more aware of the activities and beliefs of their neighbors. By the same token though it also risks ‘merging’ these cultures to an extent where they are no longer as individual and diverse as they once were. The European Union pros and cons in this respect could almost be looked at as: more cultural diversity within member countries, but less across the continent.