

If only the EU

Published: January 15, 2026, 6:09 am

Every time I am in Brussels I suffer from the same torn emotion based on the idea of 'if only': if only the aim had been closer union, but not ever closer union and if only the idea had been freer movements of people and capital, and not free movement of either.

What then, I always want to ask? Wouldn't we be so much better off now? Wouldn't embracing the reality of compromise which is what really typifies Europe have been so much better if wrapping it up in the language of absolutes had not happened?

I suspect we'll never know. The language of the ideologues on which the EU was founded suits some all too well now.