

# a light on Lisbon

Every major treaty change has brought benefits for European citizens. The Treaty of Lisbon is no different. This leaflet, prepared by David Martin and Catherine Stihler, Labour Members of the European Parliament for Scotland, outlines four major ways in which the Lisbon Treaty will provide the European Union with the legal framework and tools necessary to meet future challenges and to respond to its citizens' needs and demands.



**David Martin MEP & Catherine Stihler MEP**

# The Lisbon Treaty will create:

**1. A more democratic and transparent Europe**, with a strengthened role for the European Parliament and national parliaments, more opportunities for citizens to have their voices heard and a clearer sense of who does what at European and national level.

- A strengthened role for the European Parliament: the European Parliament, directly elected by EU citizens, will see important new powers emerge in shaping EU legislation, the EU budget and international agreements. In particular, the increase of co-decision procedure in policy-making will ensure the European Parliament is placed on an equal footing with the Council, representing Member States, for the vast bulk of EU legislation.
- A greater involvement of national parliaments: national parliaments will have greater opportunities to be involved in the work of the EU, in particular thanks to a new mechanism to monitor that the Union only acts where results can be better attained at EU level (subsidiarity). Together with the strengthened role for the European Parliament, it will enhance democracy and increase legitimacy in the functioning of the Union.
- A stronger voice for citizens: thanks to the Citizens' Initiative, one million citizens from a number of Member States will have the possibility to call on the Commission to bring forward new policy proposals.
- Who does what: the relationship between the Member States and the European Union will become clearer with the categorisation of competences.
- Withdrawal from the Union: the Treaty of Lisbon explicitly recognises for the first time the possibility for a Member State to withdraw from the Union.

**2. A more efficient Europe**, with simplified working methods and voting rules, streamlined and modern institutions for a EU of 27 members and an improved ability to act in areas of major priority for today's Union.

- Effective and efficient decision-making: qualified majority voting in the Council will be extended to new policy areas to make decision-making faster and more efficient. From 2014, the calculation of qualified majority will be based on the double majority of Member States and people, thus representing the dual legitimacy of the Union. A double majority will be achieved when a decision is taken by 55% of the Member States representing at least 65% of the Union's population.
- A more stable and streamlined institutional framework: the Treaty of Lisbon which creates the function of President of the European Council elected for two and a half years, introduces a direct link between the election of the

Commission President and the results of the European elections, provides for new arrangements for the future composition of the European Parliament and for a smaller Commission, and includes clearer rules on enhanced cooperation and financial provisions.

- Improving the life of Europeans: the Treaty of Lisbon improves the EU's ability to act in several policy areas of major priority for today's Union and its citizens. This is the case in particular for the policy areas of freedom, security and justice, such as combating terrorism or tackling crime. It also concerns to some extent other areas including energy policy, public health, civil protection, climate change, services of general interest, research, space, territorial cohesion, commercial policy, humanitarian aid, sport, tourism and administrative cooperation.

**3. A Europe of rights and values, freedom, solidarity and security,** promoting the Union's values, introducing the Charter of Fundamental Rights into European primary law, providing for new solidarity mechanisms and ensuring better protection of European citizens.

- Democratic values: the Treaty of Lisbon details and reinforces the values and objectives on which the Union is built. These values aim to serve as a reference point for European citizens and to demonstrate what Europe has to offer its partners worldwide.
- Citizens' rights and Charter of Fundamental Rights: the Treaty of Lisbon preserves existing rights while introducing new ones. In particular, it guarantees the freedoms and principles set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and gives its provisions a binding legal force. It concerns civil, political, economic and social rights.
- Freedom of European citizens: the Treaty of Lisbon preserves and reinforces civil rights, the 'four freedoms' (goods, services, capital, people) and the political, economic and social freedom of European citizens.
- Solidarity between Member States: the Treaty of Lisbon provides that the Union and its Member States act jointly in a spirit of solidarity if a Member State is the subject of a terrorist attack or the victim of a natural or man-made disaster. Solidarity in the area of energy is also emphasised.
- Increased security for all: the Union will get an extended capacity to act on freedom, security and justice, which will bring direct benefits in terms of the Union's ability to fight crime and terrorism. New provisions on civil protection, humanitarian aid and public health also aim at boosting the Union's ability to respond to threats to the security of European citizens.

**4. Europe as an actor on the global stage** will be achieved by bringing together Europe's external policy tools, both when developing and deciding new policies. The Treaty of Lisbon will give Europe a clear voice in relations with its partners worldwide. It will harness Europe's economic, humanitarian, political and diplomatic strengths to promote European interests and values worldwide, while respecting the particular interests of the Member States in Foreign Affairs.

- A new High Representative for the Union in Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, also Vice-President of the Commission, will increase the impact, the coherence and the visibility of the EU's external action.
- A new European External Action Service will provide back up and support to the High Representative.
- A single legal personality for the Union will strengthen the Union's negotiating power, making it more effective on the world stage and a more visible partner for third countries and international organisations.
- Progress in European Security and Defence Policy will preserve special decision-making arrangements but also pave the way towards reinforced cooperation amongst a smaller group of Member States.

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