



Lisbon Treaty into force

The Lisbon Treaty entered into force on 1 December. The treaty aims to rejuvenate the decision-making processes of the EU institutions. It increases the powers of the European Parliament, creates an EU president and a High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. It also introduces common policies on energy and climate change.

What more is there to know? Here the FSB set out the aspects of the Lisbon Treaty that may be of interest to members:

Citizens

- Now everyone has the opportunity to demand the drafting of legislation. If you gather one million signatures you can get the Commission to draft a proposal on a policy issue.
- Social objective: in all EU policies; promotion of employment should be taken into account.

National Parliaments

- National Parliaments can issue a yellow card for a proposal for legislation if they think the issue should not be dealt with on EU level.
- National Parliaments will review Commission proposals. If a third of the national parliaments reject the proposals, the Commission will have to change it.

European Parliament

- There will be 40 additional areas subject to co-decision. This will place the European Parliament – which is the only directly elected body – on a more equal footing with the Council (the ministers and heads of state and government of the 27 member states).

Here is a non-exhaustive list:

Energy; services of general economic interest; personal data protection; border checks; immigration: combating human trafficking and promoting integration; European intellectual property rights; public health; measures setting high quality standards sport; space policy; implementation of the European research area; tourism.

- The European Parliament will have to give consent to international agreements such as trade agreements.
- The European Parliament can propose treaty changes.
- The European Parliament can elect the selected president of Commission, and they have to give their consent for the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security.
- The number of MEPs rises from 736 to 751. The UK will have one extra MEP.

Council

- As of 2014: double majority voting (55 per cent of the member states representing 66 per cent of the EU population). Although member states can ask to revert back to weighted voting until 2017.

Does the UK have any opt-outs?

- Yes: the European Court of Justice can now rule on whether national legislation in the field of Justice and Home Affairs is compatible with EU laws, but not for the UK and Ireland
- The UK has also an opt-out with regard to closer police and justice cooperation
- The Charter of Fundamental Rights is now binding except in the UK and Poland



Federation of Small Businesses

The UK's Leading Business Organisation

The new possibilities for national parliaments to influence EU policy gives the Westminster Parliament the opportunity to stop legislation that is bad for small businesses. These are valuable rights and the FSB thinks that politicians should seize this opportunity to reform the way that MPs and Peers scrutinise EU legislation in order to effectively issue yellow cards and send proposals back to the Commission.

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