

Sheet 4

THE LISBON TREATY AND CITIZENS' POWERS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

1) THE STRENGTHENING OF THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The **enhancement of representative democracy** comprises a central element of the **democratisation** of the Union planned for in the Lisbon Treaty.

WITH THE LISBON TREATY

The powers of the European Parliament are extended:

▪ **IN THE LEGISLATIVE DOMAIN:**

- **Extension of the legislative codecision procedure (Council of Ministers and Parliament) to nearly 50 new areas** (See Annex 4 – List of the articles coming under ordinary legislative procedure).



This procedure gives the European Parliament legislative powers comparable to those of the Council of Ministers.

- This procedure mainly applies to the present domains of competence of the European Union (**internal market and economic governance** in particular) and to some new competences that have been granted to it.



In the latter case we should note that the European Parliament's legislative powers now focus on the **control of individuals on the borders**, on measures **governing the reception and the processing of asylum seekers**, as well as on the **fight against illegal immigration**.

▪ **IN THE BUDGETARY AREA :**

- The European Parliament has been given the **equal right to decision as the Council of Ministers**, notably with regard to the **adoption of the entire annual budget** (whilst today the Council has the last word on the so-called "compulsory" expenditure which represent a major part of the European budget, notably agricultural expenditure).

▪ **IN TERMS OF POLITICAL CONTROL:**

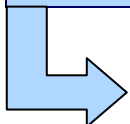
- **The Parliament elects the President of the Commission** on the proposal of the European Council. Parliament has to take the results of the European elections, along with the majority that won into account.



This will lead to a politicisation of the European elections and thereby give weight to the vote of European citizens who may now influence the course of European political affairs.



Voters will be able to influence directly the political bias of the President of the Commission **and his team. The same will apply to the political choices of the college.**



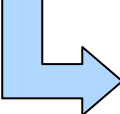
With the Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament, that is the only community institution to be elected by direct universal suffrage will see a radical increase in its powers and its political weight within the "institutional triangle" (the Commission, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament).

2) PARTICIPATIVE DEMOCRACY

In order to **bring citizens closer to the decision making process in Europe**, the Lisbon Treaty introduces, quite uniquely, details which will **foster citizen participation in the Union's democratic life**.

AVEC LE TRAITÉ DE LISBONNE

- **The treaty creates the right of citizens' initiative.**
 European citizens may ask the Commission to propose a "draft law" if they gather at least one million signatures from a significant number of Member States.
- **The treaty acknowledges the importance of dialogue between citizens, civil society associations and the Union's institutions** (particularly the Commission).
 Hence this enhances the possibility on the part of organisations and civil society associations **to take part in European decisions**.
- **The Council of Ministers sits in public** (which not the case at present) when it debates and votes on European legislation.
 The transparency and public nature of the Council's work facilitates **civil society's participation. Journalists can inform citizens** of the debates taking place in the Council.
- **With regard to social matters dialogue is confirmed by the acknowledgement of various consultation possibilities**, notably **the tripartite social summit between European social partners and the Union**.

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- These measures **provide European citizenship with "content"** "adding to national citizenship and not replacing it."
 - With the Lisbon Treaty a new phase in the definition of European citizenship is being defined – a central element in the creation of European democracy.

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