

# 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:

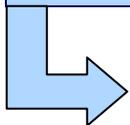
- **The Parliament elects the President of the Commission (position occupied by José Manuel Barroso)** on the proposal of the European Council. Parliament has to take the results of the European elections, along with the majority that won into account.



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.**



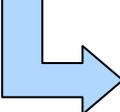
With the Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament, that is the only community institution to be elected by direct universal suffrage will see a radical increase in its powers and its political weight within the "institutional triangle" (the Commission, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament).

## 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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*The sheets were written by Thierry CHOPIN. The appendixes were made by Thierry CHOPIN, Mathilde DURAND, Marek KUBIŠTA. Lorraine de BRABOIS, Pauline DESMAREST and Xavier-Alexandre RELIANT also contributed to the publication. Translated by Helen LEVY.*