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## Lisbon Treaty: Constitutional Affairs Committee welcomes increased powers for national parliaments

A comprehensive review of the European Union's new institutional structure, should the Lisbon Treaty enter into force in 2009 as foreseen by the December 2008 European Council, was approved by the Constitutional Affairs Committee on Monday.

A report by Jo Leinen (PES, DE) on the "New tasks and responsibilities of the EP for the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty" and another by Elmar Brok (EPP-ED, DE) on the "Development of the relations between the EP and national parliaments in the frame of the Lisbon Treaty" were approved by large majority.

### A greater role for national parliaments

Approving the report by Mr Brok, the committee welcomed the new rights of the national parliaments, as agreed in the Treaty of Lisbon, which would enhance their role in the EU decision-making system.

National parliaments would also gain a new right to be informed on, inter alia, the evaluation of policies conducted in the area of freedom, security and justice, proposals to amend the treaties and new candidate countries' applications to join the Union.

### Orange card: the right to object

National parliaments would gain the right to object to a proposal, by using so-called "orange cards", if they felt the subsidiarity principle had been breached (e.g. that a given result could be better attained by action at national rather than EU level).

In addition, a national parliament could seek to remedy an infringement of the subsidiarity principle by bringing an action before the Court of Justice, if allowed by national law.

### More powers for the European Parliament in justice and home affairs

The report by Mr Leinen welcomes the fact that, with a few exceptions, the new Treaty would place the European Parliament on an equal footing with the Council as a lawmaker in areas where this has not been case so far, notably in setting the EU budget (the EP would enjoy full parity), agriculture policy and justice and home affairs.

Specifically, the committee welcomes new EU policies and the binding character that the Treaty gives to the Charter of Fundamental Rights, thus requiring EU institutions to respect citizens' civil, political, economic or social rights.

### Call for agreement among the EU institutions on foreign policy and "work programme"

# Press release

Among the new legal bases Lisbon would bring into force, committee members stress that the new provisions affecting foreign policy need a new inter-institutional balance, to ensure Parliament's right of scrutiny.

Finally, the committee calls on the other EU institutions to reach an inter-institutional agreement on the key objectives to be achieved by the European Union after 2009, forming a kind of "work programme" for the EU, and on the implementing measures needed to make "the new Treaty a success for the institutions and for European citizens".

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