
FOREWORD

Stephen Sieberson has written a book about a sensitive and politically relevant subject matter: the delimitation of competences between Member States and the European Union. Indeed, the more the process of European integration develops, the more responsibilities and competences are handed over to – or at least shared with – the layer of government at the European level, the European Union.

The Treaty of Lisbon is a document as significant as the Single European Act (entry into force in 1987), the Treaty of Maastricht (1993), the Treaty of Amsterdam (1999) and the Treaty of Nice (2003). It is the successor to the so-called European Constitution, the treaty that was signed in October 2004, but which failed to enter into force because of the negative outcomes of referenda in France and the Netherlands in 2005. After new negotiations, the Heads of State and Government in June 2007 agreed on an alternative treaty text which later on – the signature was on 13 December 2007 – became the Lisbon Treaty. Careful analysis demonstrates that the new document incorporates the main contents of the European Constitution.

More particularly, the Treaty of Lisbon simplifies the institutional structures of the EU cooperation, while providing for more democracy and more efficiency at the European level. Obviously, when referring to more ‘democracy’ in Europe, the role of the European Parliament and the rights of individual European citizens are significant. On the other hand, when addressing ‘efficiency’, one should think first of (qualified) majority voting in the Council of Ministers. Indeed, in a framework of intensive cooperation like that of the European Union, with at present 27 Member States, progress can be achieved only if decision making through (majority) voting at least is made available as a possibility.

The study reflected in this book is a complete and detailed one. It covers all the relevant innovations and reforms brought by the Lisbon Treaty. The study is original as well, because the author has used his own specificities as the framework of his research: the EU’s values and objectives; the EU’s state-like attributes; democracy; a number of key principles of the EU cooperation, such as subsidiarity and primacy; and the Union as a ‘flexible’ entity. In so doing he has applied his research techniques horizontally to the characteristics of EU cooperation, the EU institutions and organs, as well as to all the policy domains of the Union.

In substantive matters addressed in the Lisbon Treaty, the author has paid particular attention to the policy reforms in the area of freedom, security and justice (the former justice and home affairs cooperation) and to the external action of the Union, including the common foreign and security policy, the common commercial policy, development cooperation and the like.

This book is well-researched and very readable. Also, for those who lack a thorough knowledge of the essentials of EU cooperation, the substance of the book is easily accessible.

During the period of his work, Steve and I had many discussions. It was always a pleasure to hear his comments, offered from the point of view of an American living in the United States and a relative outsider to the European integration debate. Nonetheless, I was always surprised to notice how deeply interested he was in European integration, well informed about latest developments, and motivated to write this study.

The book provides an interesting review of the most recent developments in European cooperation. Will the Lisbon Treaty be the last treaty, as certain politicians tell us or at least seem to believe? In my personal conviction, certainly not. European integration is a gradual process, and as new circumstances develop, further steps will be necessary. At the appropriate moment, when sufficient political will has been created, future actions will be taken to secure the fundamental values of peace, stability and prosperity on the European continent, in the interest of the Member States and the well being of their citizens.

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