

FOREWORD

When asked about my job as Vice-President of the European Commission, and the European Union's Justice Commissioner I like to say that it is the most beautiful job in the European Union.

Indeed, the implementation of the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty in the field of justice and fundamental rights is about the creation and the strengthening of a European area of Freedom, Security and Justice, today one of the main objectives of the European Union. And this area is where you can best see how the procedural innovations and institutional changes made by the new Treaty have marked the ground in building a Europe for the people.

For decades, the European Communities have had little competence in the field of Justice and Home Affairs. It was barely twenty years ago that with the Maastricht Treaty, these important areas became part of EU policy making. But the EU was not fully equipped to act in the interests of citizens. In particular, decisions had to be taken unanimously by EU governments, in most cases behind closed doors, and the European Parliament and the European Court had very little say in what was known then as the so-called 'Third Pillar'.

This situation has now evolved radically. The Lisbon Treaty got rid of pillars and introduced major changes in the field of Justice and Home affairs. The Lisbon Treaty provides the tools necessary for the development of a European area of Freedom, Security and Justice, opening up new opportunities to re-orient EU policies in these fields, in the interests of EU citizens. The co-decision procedure, with the European Parliament and qualified majority in Council of Ministers, is now the rule for new legislation. Judicial review is fully available both at the Court of Justice and in the national courts. Our EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is finally, after ten years of existence, legally binding, and on equal footing with the Treaties. The EU is now able to seek accession to the European Convention on Human Rights and we are already working on it. Finally, the European Council set, in the Stockholm Programme, an ambitious agenda of priorities and strategic objectives.

In my daily work at the European Commission, I am absolutely committed to make full use of the tools provided by the new legal and policy framework. This is why in its first year in office, the Barroso II Commission has issued a number of proposals addressing various aspects of individual rights – procedural rights of suspects and the accused, children's rights, victims' rights – with the aim of rein-

forcing citizens' confidence in other Member States' judicial systems and mutual trust between judicial systems themselves, which are both preconditions for a fully operational Area of Freedom, Security and Justice.

The current situation and the future perspectives of the European Area of Freedom, Security and Justice are exactly what this very welcomed book is about. It provides a comprehensive overview of all the different policies included in the area, from migration, asylum and borders control, to police and judicial cooperation, from substantive and procedural criminal law, counterterrorism measures and access to justice, to foreign policy and data protection.

Benefiting from the expertise of contributors with different backgrounds, both academics and practitioners, the book assesses what are the current achievements and the future challenges in this field, showing which of the steps already taken by the EU have produced positive effects on citizens, migrants and practitioners, and what, on the contrary, still needs to be done.

We should be really thankful to the Authors for providing EU officials, judges, lawyers, police officers, academics, and students with such a useful tool to assist them in playing their role to the full in what is a fascinating and multifaceted EU policy area so central to the wishes and expectations of citizens.

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