

# “Lisbon is not readable like the US Constitution...”

**FALSE**

## The Claim

This is an utterly inaccessible document.

The 272 pages offered for downloading as the “full text of the Lisbon Treaty” only contain the modifications, deletions and additions to the existing treaties, which altogether add up to circa 3,000 pages. The Lisbon Treaty is an incomprehensible document, which is NOT readable in a linear way.<sup>1</sup>

Irish businessman Ulick McEvaddy said that he had read the Lisbon Treaty four times and he did not understand it. He said we are simply being asked to vote for something here in Europe that nobody understands and that is being handed out as the Lisbon Treaty.<sup>2</sup>

“The Lisbon Treaty is barely understandable.”<sup>3</sup>

It's all a plot to make this unreadable.

Belgian Foreign Minister, Karel de Gucht, has said that, “The aim of the Constitutional treaty was to be more readable; the aim of this treaty is to be unreadable... The Constitution aimed to be clear, whereas this treaty had to be unclear. It is a success.”<sup>4</sup>

## The Short Answer

A Treaty dealing with 27 countries, 500 million people and different legal systems has to be detailed. It's the detail that makes it watertight.

## The Long Answer

Of course the US constitution is a simpler document than the Lisbon Treaty. Why? Because the US is a country and the EU is not; it's a system of 27 countries working together.

The EU is made up of countries that have different legal and political systems, who speak different languages, who share different histories and who are not all involved in the EU to the same extent as one another. As such, it is impossible to draw up a document that explains how this Union of assorted states should work without getting into a lot of detail. Unfortunately this does make the Lisbon Treaty less readable, **but a more simplified document would simply leave too much open to interpretation and cause a lot of confusion as to how the EU would actually work.**

The United States has a federal system where power is centralised, this allows them to have a more simplified Constitution which is subject to heavy interpretation by the central powers, namely their Supreme Court. The European Constitution was rejected partly because of a fear that it would bring about a federal Europe that was too centralised. If European citizens do not wish to see a federal Europe, the reality is that the EU will need treaties like the Lisbon Treaty that explain in explicit detail how the Union should function.



This European Movement Ireland fact sheet is part of a series of research conducted to clarify the issues in the Lisbon Treaty debate. European Movement Ireland is a pro-European non-profit organisation which does not advocate either side of the Lisbon Treaty Referendum, we advocate the facts.



## A legal clarification

It is not correct to compare the Treaties with the US Constitution. The Treaties also contain laws which would be part of the statute book or Civil Code if they related to an independent nation.

It might, of course, be possible in principle to draft a short treaty for Europe along the lines of the US Constitution. But this would really only be possible if Europe was (like the US) a single federal state. **It is the very fact that the EU is not a federal state which results in such complex treaties,** because it means that 27 (or more) sovereign states have to work out complicated agreements between themselves. If the EU were a federal state, matters would be much easier in this regard. For example, every State would have the Euro and there would be no need for special rules governing those countries who are part of the Euro-zone and those which are not. Nor would there be a necessity for complicated rules on matters such as free movement of citizens, goods and services, because these freedoms are taken for granted

within the borders of one single state. Nor would there be a necessity for a whole range of special rules which are particular to certain EU members: thus, for example, Ireland has a special protocol on abortion, Denmark has a special protocol on second houses, the UK and Ireland have an opt-out on passport controls and so forth.

Another key difference is that the original 13 states of the US all spoke the same language, had the same type of legal system, shared the same history and none of them had ever been sovereign independent states. This is in stark contrast to the EU, where there is a multiplicity of different languages and legal systems, as well as differing historical traditions, and all of them were independent sovereign states at some stage. For all of these reasons, any EU treaty must, out of sheer necessity, be more complicated and lengthy than a document which governs that of a federal state such as the US.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://howardh.wordpress.com/category/not-to-lisbon-treaty-campaign>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.lisbonvote.com/Cóir; McEvaddy joins the Lisbon 'NO' campaign RTE News, 21/4/2008/](http://www.lisbonvote.com/Cóir;McEvaddy%20joins%20the%20Lisbon%20%27NO%27%20campaign)

<sup>3</sup> "The EU and the Lisbon Treaty: Making a weak democracy weaker", <http://www.indymedia.ie/article/87934>.

<sup>4</sup> "The Lisbon Treaty and the European Constitution: A side-by-side comparison", Open Europe, January 2008.