

MAYDAY! MAYDAY!
SUPPORT IRISH FISHING COMMUNITIES
VOTE NO TO LISBON TREATY



The Lisbon Treaty is bad for the EU. It is bad for Ireland. It is particularly bad for the Irish fishing industry.

We're not getting the full story about the Lisbon Treaty

The Referendum Commission urges us to 'get the complete picture' about Lisbon, yet does not inform us that a post-Lisbon European Union would be fundamentally different from the present EU.

If people vote 'yes' they will be turning the European Union into a federal state.

This would turn Ireland into a regional state within the new Union with the EU's constitution and laws being superior to the Irish constitution and laws in any case of conflict between the two.

Lisbon would turn us into real citizens of the new EU owing obedience to its laws and loyalty to its authority over and above our obedience and loyalty to Ireland, the Irish constitution and laws.

An EU supreme court, the European Court of Justice, would have the power to decide our rights as EU citizens and Ireland's Supreme Court would no longer have the final say.

Already as far back as 1989, the Court struck down quite mild measures introduced by the Irish government to prevent 'quota hopping' by requiring nationals of other Member States to set up an Irish company before obtaining a licence to fish at sea.

The Court found that this was not permissible as it conflicted with the fundamental EU principles of 'freedom of establishment'. Lisbon will now copper-

fasten this type of approach and extend the rules of the EU internal market to fisheries.

This will have increasingly serious consequences as an already ideological but now more powerful European Court applies EU internal market rules to legal questions arising from the operation of the industry.

Lisbon represents the final nail in the coffin for coastal communities and the populations that depend on our indigenous fishing industry. Control of national fisheries was handed over to Brussels on our accession to the EEC in 1973 in exchange for what was believed to be a good deal for farming within the CAP. The division of quotas has led to a situation where Ireland's fishing waters account for around 12% of the EU fishery but Irish fishermen are currently allowed only around 4% of the EU quota.

The Common Fisheries Policy is one of the worst examples of a centralised EU policy. It is backward-looking, inflexible and completely detrimental to the survival, let alone, the development of fishing communities of Ireland.

Lisbon carries this centralising process to new extremes. Each shift of power to Brussels increases the power of the non-elected Commission, which has the monopoly of proposing European laws to the Council of Ministers by giving it many new policy areas to propose laws for. Each shift of power from national level to the EU also entails a further shift of power from the Dáil and the people to Irish government ministers at EU level where they can use the EU system to make laws in a less accountable and more secret way.

This process hollows out our national democracy even further. It ensures that the future of fishing communities will be determined in an EU system in which it is a condition of making proposals that you're not elected.

Under the Lisbon Treaty:

The un-elected Commission has the sole right to propose legislation relating to all aspects of fisheries.

But there wouldn't be an Irish commissioner for five out of every fifteen years and Ireland would lose the right to decide who Ireland's commissioner would be when it comes to our turn to be on the Commission;

The Irish government would lose what remains of its 'competence' (power to take decisions) in the fisheries area. This is because Lisbon includes fisheries as an area of 'shared competence' between the Union and Member States. So EU legislation would not only come to replace the content of Irish fisheries law but also the right of Ireland to legislate in the area;

Fisheries issues would be dealt with in a secret and unaccountable system where 85% of all EU laws are adopted by civil servants drawn from the Member States and the Commission operating in 300 secret working groups under the Council of Ministers in Brussels. The laws themselves are drawn up by 3000 other secret working groups attached to the Commission, with only 15% of EU laws actually adopted at meetings of the Council of Ministers where the ministers themselves may be present.

Lisbon shifts influence over law making and decision making on fisheries and other matters towards the big EU states and away from smaller countries like Ireland. It does this by replacing the voting system for making EU laws since the 1957 Treaty of Rome by a primarily population-based system which gives most influence to Member States with big populations and reduces the influence of smaller ones.

The conservation of marine biological resources under the Common Fisheries Policy would be an exclusive competence of the EU. This will have consequences in areas such as the fixing of quotas, their allocation between different member states, the making of policies affecting the marine environment, fishing policies and perhaps the 12-mile limit itself.

Measures on the allocation and fixing of fishing opportunities would also be exempted from the application of the so-called 'co-decision' procedure involving the European Parliament and would be decided by the Council using the Qualified Majority Voting system in which Ireland's voting weight in relation to the other Member States would have fallen to one-third its present level - from 2% to 0.8%

Lisbon provides that if one-third of national parliaments object to the Commission's proposal for a EU law, the Commission must reconsider it, but not necessarily abandon it: it might reword the law or just ignore the objection.

The European Parliament cannot propose a single EU law, but it gets more influence under the Lisbon structures. Co-decision involving the EU Parliament would in future apply to framework legislation e.g. long-term cod recovery plan which sets the boundaries within which decisions on the allocation and fishing opportunities are taken. But Ireland only has 12 members out of 750 in the European Parliament. When Ireland was part of the UK in the 19th Century it had 100 members out of 600 at Westminster where all UK laws were both proposed and made.

We need to send the Lisbon Treaty back to the EU prime ministers and presidents and tell them we want a better deal - for Ireland's sake and the EU's sake. The fishing community is overwhelmingly opposed to the Lisbon Treaty, it can see through the misrepresentations of what it is about and will not be intimidated by bullying and threats. It wants a better deal for the country and it certainly wants a better deal for Irish fishing.