



CRT Briefing on the Reform Treaty and Climate Change

1. Introduction to the Coalition for Reform Treaty

The Coalition for the Reform Treaty (CRT) is a network of organisations and individuals advancing a positive view on the proposed EU Reform Treaty.

The principles of the CRT are as follows:

- The UK and its citizens derive significant benefit from membership of the EU.
- The EU's successful enlargements, which have increased membership from 15 in 2004 to 27 members today, necessitate reform of its institutions.
- The Reform Treaty is in Britain's interests as well as the European Union's because it will lead to more efficient, effective and democratic decision-making.
- Agreement and ratification of the Treaty by all 27 EU Member States will help the Union to focus on the issues that really matter: competitiveness, social and consumer policy, and the EU's role in tackling global challenges such as trade liberalisation and climate change.

The CRT has both individual supporters and member organisations. The member organisations of the CRT are as follows:

- All-party Group on Europe
- Business for New Europe
- Conservative Group for Europe
- Demos
- European League of Economic Cooperation
- European Movement
- Federal Union
- Foreign Policy Centre
- Global Policy Institute
- Jean Monnet Circle
- Jean Monnet Association
- Labour Movement for Europe
- Liberal Democrat European Group
- Policy Network
- Progress
- Weidenfeld Institute for Strategic Dialogue

2. Key messages

- There is now overwhelming scientific evidence regarding climate change, the role of human activity in creating it, and the damage it is creating. The consequences for our planet will be destructive and possibly catastrophic if governments, business and the public do not act over the next decades.
- The Treaty of Lisbon includes, for the first time, an explicit reference to European policy to address climate change.
- As the international actor with the most sophisticated mechanisms to deal with climate change, the EU is at the forefront of the struggle against global warming. Any credible and effective policy to address climate change must include at its core the institutions, policies and political weight of the European Union.
- EU decisions on climate change policy will be made by unanimous agreement in the Council ensuring the UK's leading position on climate change is reflected.

3. Background on climate change

The world's climate scientists have shown the rise of global warming, which has been driven by human activity, in particular burning hydrocarbon fossil fuels and releasing carbon accumulated over millions of years into the atmosphere.

The consequences of climate change on our planet will be even more destructive if we remain inactive over the next decades. In 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggested that average global temperatures may rise by between 1.1 and 6.4 degrees centigrade by 2100, a change that goes beyond anything known in the last ten thousand years. Unfortunately, even if measures are taken now, the consequences of climate change cannot be stopped immediately and damages will continue throughout the century.

However, we have the means to change that: the fight against climate change needs time but it is not too late to curb and reverse the dynamic. Scientists have even precisely identified the origin of the global warming problem and what our targets should be to achieve positive results. The scientific consensus is that the world's emissions of greenhouse gases must be cut by some 60% by mid-century and 80% by its end. In its conclusions, the well-known Stern Review (October 2006) says that "there is still time to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, if we act now and act internationally". It specifies that 1% of global GDP per year must be invested if we want to avoid the worst effects of climate change. If nothing is done, global GDP could fall by 20%.

The scientific facts are known. What is now missing is political will from countries who produce most greenhouse gas emissions, to start active, concrete and deep-seated worldwide action.

4. EU policies to fight climate change

With per capita emissions running at 8 tonnes of CO₂, the European Union didn't wait for other countries to take action and launched its own climate change policy in the early 1990s. By singling out sustainable development as a global objective, and the fight against climate change as a core pillar of its environmental policy, the Lisbon Treaty embodies the EU' willingness to act.

In March 2000, the European Commission launched the European Climate Change (ECCP) Programme which, by setting up working groups, led to a realistic climate change strategy and to the adoption of a wide range of policies. The ECCP led to the EU's world famous Emission Trading Scheme launched on 1 January 2005. The Scheme is the largest greenhouse gas emissions market both in terms of countries and sectors

involved. It provides a very cost-effective way of reducing green house gas (GHG) emissions and to meet Kyoto targets. Indeed, the Kyoto objective of reducing GHG emissions by 8% compared to 1990 levels by 2008-12 should be achieved at a cost of between EUR 2.9 billion and EUR 3.7 billion annually (less than 0.1% of the EU's GDP), instead of 6.8 billion a year for compliance costs. It is without any doubt a big financial gain for European firms.

After many debates on the need to reform European environmental action, the Commission introduced a new package of legislative proposals a month ago, which should be operational by 2013 when the Kyoto Protocol has expired. The new targets include a reduction of at least 20% in the emission of GHG by 2020 compared to 1990 levels (30% in case of a comprehensive international climate change agreement) and 20% renewable energy in the EU's energy mix by 2020, including a 10% biofuels target. The package also includes a reform of the Emission Trading Scheme, a proposal to reduce GHG for sectors not previously included in the Scheme and a directive promoting renewable energy.

5. What is in the treaty?

For the very first time, the fight against climate change is included explicitly in the European treaties.

Article 2(5): "In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens. It shall contribute to peace, security, **the sustainable development of the Earth...**"

Article 174(1): "promoting measures at international level to deal with regional or worldwide environmental problems, **and in particular combating climate change.**"

Article 175 specifies that decisions on climate change policy will be made by unanimity in the Council, unless the Council agrees by unanimity to use the ordinary legislative procedure, i.e. qualified majority voting in the Council and co-decision with the European Parliament.

6. What difference will it make?

Mentioning climate change in the Lisbon treaty (which was not included in the former constitutional treaty) will strengthen the EU's ability to act and is an indication of its willingness to do so.

Everybody knows that climate change can only be dealt with through concerted international action. The Lisbon Treaty is an important building block in the international efforts to deal with this global challenge.

It means that international action becomes more likely and that when it comes, it will be consistent with our democratic traditions – the big decisions will be taken unanimously by the member states, while the detailed decisions will involve the democratically elected European Parliament.

7. Useful quotes

Sir Nicholas Stern: “there is still time to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, if we act now and act internationally”. (in the Stern Review, October 2006)

Al Gore, former US Vice-President and 2007 Nobel Peace Prize winner for his work on climate change: “The European Union is absolutely key to helping the world make the changes it must.” (BBC Online, 8th March 2007).

Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor of California, also said: “California hopes to link its planned emissions trading system to the European Union's market, boosting efforts to build a global mechanism to fight climate change” (Reuters, 29th March 2007).

David Miliband MP, Foreign Secretary: “An environmental contract has to stretch beyond each nation – we have to embed a shared willingness to tackle climate change across Europe and beyond. This is a challenge that the European Union was designed for: addressing global problems that require cooperation across borders. Europe has a strong environmental record on which to build. From air pollution and water quality to recycling. But in future, we should go further. It's raison d'être in the 21st century must be to prevent the exploitation of the planet. The European Union must become the Environmental Union.” (“Building an Environmental Union” speech, Berlin October 2006)

Jim Murphy MP, Europe Minister, in a speech at the London School of Economics on 9 January 2008, said: “It [The European Union] should also resolve to challenge poverty and environmental degradation and climate change, not only within its own borders but far beyond, because we all know that the environment, climate change doesn't respect national boundaries. So it's an empty intellectual argument to say that we can simply build some patriotic front behind ever increasing national borders as a way of protecting us from climate change [...] And working with the EU on climate change offers the best chance of safeguarding all of our futures.”

David Baldock, Director of the Institute for European Environmental Policy said: “Few Governments, in Britain or elsewhere, have been ready to acknowledge how far progress on the environment in their own countries has depended on agreements at a European level. Standards have been raised across the board – in air and water pollution, recycling, the regulation of chemicals and nature conservation. Without the force of law behind these standards they would not have been respected. The world now looks to Europe for leadership on the environment, including climate change in a way they once followed the US.”

British citizens show a positive view of the European action against climate change in recent polls. According to a Guardian/ICM poll published on the 26th of January 2008, 58% think the EU helps create a cleaner environment, against 39% in 2001. In the last Standard Eurobarometer published in February 2008, 62% of British citizens believe that the decisions about the protection of the environment should be made jointly within the EU and not only nationally, against 51% in December 2002.