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Treaty changes the template

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A look at how the **Lisbon** treaty is – or is not – affecting **EU** studies courses.

The EU's reforming Treaty of Lisbon has forced changes to the scripts of EU studies courses. The re-writing began soon after December 2007, when national leaders signed the treaty, but the adjustments have been made by individual lecturers and universities, with inevitable differences.

At the end of this year, though, lecturers will be able to draw on what amounts to a template of course material.



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That material will be the work of one of the first academic projects researching the treaty's impact on how the EU does business and its effect on European politics.

The project, dubbed EUPOLIS and financed by the European Commission, has been in the pipeline since before the treaty was signed by national leaders, let alone ratified.

"We were lucky," says Andreas Hofmann, a [University of Cologne](#) lecturer who is leading the project. "We applied for funding two-and-a-half years ago and we were only sure the new treaty was implemented late last year."



The 'we' in question are [Jean Monnet](#) EU studies research teams drawn from three universities – Cologne, the [University of Liverpool](#) and [Charles University in Prague](#) – who have also called in experts from Sweden's Karlstad University, the Middle East Technical University in Turkey, and the Institut d'Etudes politiques de Paris (Sciences Po). This is an academic project, with research into the theoretical and practical implications of the changes, but it will feed directly into EU studies courses.

"What we are trying to do is analyse the Lisbon treaty to see what teaching material the reforms can produce," Hofmann says. "We are all focusing on teaching the new aspects."

The six universities will use the teaching material for their own courses, but Hofmann says they could be used by other universities, if they wanted.

Hofmann says the study, which began last December, could revamp courses on everything from EU law and EU institutions through to European integration theory and EU policies.

Pooling sovereignty

At this stage, few preliminary findings are being given, but some trends are already apparent.

A key part of the study looks at the transfer of some sovereignty from the national level to the EU, says Hofmann. The study will highlight factors that are driving member states to co-operate and pool sovereignty and assess how, in the EU's new legal context, this can be done through more democratic decision-making procedures.

But there are also broader trends. Hofmann believes that the process that failed to lead to an EU constitution and eventually resulted in the Lisbon treaty has left a sense of 'institutional fatigue' in the EU. The Lisbon treaty itself, he argues, will also bring greater stability to interactions between the EU institutions and member states. The cumulative effect will be to force EU studies specialists to adjust their focus, from institutional navel-gazing to assessing how effectively the EU works and where it wants to go from here.

One result, he says, will be greater attention to the regional dimension of EU collaboration.

That regional dimension is one to which Karlstadt University, some of whose lecturers are contributing to EUPOLIS, is already paying special attention.

"A few years ago we restructured our bachelor's degree programme and are concentrating on two strands, international politics and the sub-national level. However, the EU permeates all our teaching," says Malin Stegmann McCallion, a senior lecturer at the university (a point also evident in the training courses that it runs to prepare teachers to instruct students aged 13 to 16 on EU affairs).

The same trend towards regionalisation is reflected at the master's level – it has degrees on region-building and another "with a heavy concentration on the EU with a regional perspective" – and at the doctoral level.

Karlstadt completed a research project on regionalisation in northern Europe in the context of European integration last autumn and started a new "research school on region-building" which currently has nine doctoral students.

Karlstadt's special emphasis on regional matters is partly a matter of market positioning and a reflection of the view, expressed by Stegmann McCallion, that "today we live in a complex multi-level governance system with multiple levels and actors involved in governing and playing a part in our lives".

But it is also a reflection of the labour market. “We do not train the ‘traditional civil servant’, if there ever was one,” she says. “We train people who will go into an internationalised public administration and these people have to be able to fully grasp the complexity of how we govern ourselves.”

Such market pressures and strategic decisions are having a more fundamental impact on EU studies courses than a change in the EU’s modus operandi represented by the Lisbon treaty.

Greater demand

Paul Demaret speaks for many when he says that the [College of Europe](#), of which he is rector, has already adjusted its programmes to reflect the Lisbon treaty and that “all these new developments will be treated, as a matter of course, in courses and seminars that already exist”.

The broad market trend is identified by Susan Banducci, the head of the [University of Exeter](#)’s department of politics. She says that there is “greater demand” for more practical courses – an influence evident in new courses at the bachelor’s and master’s level (see Pages III and VIII).

Banducci, who is also a member of the UK committee of the [University Association](#) for Contemporary European Studies (UACES), says demand for practical courses is particularly evident at a postgraduate level.

“We moved in our department and in our school from offering a programme that was interdisciplinary and that covered culture as well as politics and history to offering programmes that are more focused on politics and administration at the European level,” Banducci says of Exeter’s response.

This also reflects a change in British students’ dwindling interest in Europe, due in part because of a rise in the level of interest in international relations courses since the terrorist attacks on the US in September 2001.

In the case of the College of Europe, the changes more closely reflect changes in the post-Lisbon dynamics of the EU. External affairs now figure more prominently than in the past – though Demaret stresses that its master’s programme in EU international relations and diplomacy was introduced in 2006, before the Lisbon treaty was adopted, in part “to position [the College] for the day a European Diplomatic Academy would be created”.

Universities are having to adapt to the Lisbon treaty and, with EUPOLIS, may find it easier to do so, but the student and labour markets are affecting the shape of courses more. And the result at the moment seems to be a movement toward greater diversity.

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