

Intervention by Peter Hain, UK Government Representative and Minister for Europe

THE EU CARRYING OUT ITS MISSIONS: EFFICIENCY AND LEGITIMACY

I am not an expert in the minutiae of EU legislation. Nor am I a lawyer. Like many of the people I represent, I struggle with the complexities of directives, regulations and decisions, without knowing which have direct effect when, and whether they involve codecision or consultation.

So we must make Europe easier to understand. Otherwise how can it be legitimate? One way to do this would be to have fewer ways of legislating or co-operating. Or even linking the type of co-operation to the type of competence. But I do not believe that would solve our problem.

One of the good things about our present system is that we have the potential to identify individual solutions to individual problems. I do not want to make this system more rigid.

Legitimacy does not stem from understanding every tiny detail of a legislative system. It comes from understanding why something is being done, and who is making the decisions. So let's make sure there is a strategic agenda – a way of guiding a political decision as to whether legislation is needed. And that Council formations work in a harmonious way, not against each other. If we don't need to legislate in detail, or at all, let's work together in the way that best delivers the

objective our people want. And let's make any laws of the highest quality. Let's make these the principles of how we deliver the missions of the EU.

And let's commit at the highest level to making laws and rules that really improve things. We need some regulation, but not red tape that makes Europe a less attractive place to live in or to invest in. This should be a principle with the same status as subsidiarity and proportionality. The "better regulation" initiative moves us towards this. Let's always start by thinking about the effect we want to have – and only then choose a tool.

We must build on efforts to assess the impact new laws will have – the Commission is about to launch a system to do this. But the EP and the Council should also do this as they amend proposals.

The test of all this must be its practical outcomes. Have we completed the single market to the benefit of our consumers and business community? Have we adequately protected the environment? Do our workers have appropriate protection? Have we delivered jobs, security and prosperity?

These outcomes, built on a foundation of laws, regulation and cooperation that respect national practices, will make Europe's missions relevant to its people. And that will deliver the legitimacy Europe's institutions currently lack.