

The EU Reform Treaty: 10 Myths

1. The UK is surrendering vital powers over fundamental issues of sovereignty to Brussels

No. The UK has maintained national control over our key national policy areas including justice and home affairs, social security, tax, foreign policy, and defence. The Reform Treaty will not transfer power away from the UK on issues of fundamental importance to our sovereignty.

2. The UK will lose or have to vacate its seat on the UN Security Council

No. The Reform Treaty package will include a clear Declaration stating that the new Treaty will not affect the responsibilities of the Member States for the conduct of their foreign and defence policy – including at the UN. And the UN Charter is clear that international organisations like the EU cannot be members of the UN.

3. An ‘EU Foreign Minister’ will control Britain’s foreign policy

Wrong. The proposed High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy replaces two existing roles and will report to the Member States on foreign policy. So Member States keep control.

4. British Embassies will be replaced by an EU “diplomatic service” and EU embassies

Not true. The European External Action Service (EEAS) will not replace the UK diplomatic service. It will simply provide better coordination and sensible support to the High Representative, including through existing European Commission offices overseas.

5. The UK will lose control of its borders

No. The UK will be able to choose whether to participate in EU action on issues such as immigration, asylum and combating international terrorism and organised crime.

6. There will be a new “President of Europe”

Incorrect. The full-time President of the European Council will take on the existing role of European Council President – but for two and a half years instead of changing every 6 months. He or she will be chosen by, and responsible to, elected national leaders. This will allow national leaders to set the political direction of the EU more consistently and coherently, compared to today’s constantly rotating Presidency

7. The Treaty will force us to free prisoners from prison

Simply not true. No criminals in the UK will be released because of the Reform Treaty.

8. The Treaty will reduce national parliaments to the level of regional assemblies

On the contrary, an express purpose of the Reform Treaty is to increase the role and powers of national parliaments. National parliaments will have a direct role - for the first time - in deciding whether EU legislation is necessary.

9. The Reform Treaty is the same as the Constitutional Treaty

No. The EU's 27 leaders have agreed that the constitutional approach has been abandoned. The Constitutional Treaty would have replaced all the existing Treaties and effectively re-founded the EU. The Reform Treaty takes the same approach as all previous amending Treaties. It amends the existing Treaties which Parliament has ratified and will not have constitutional characteristics.

The Government will not agree to anything that transfers power away from the UK on issues of fundamental importance to our sovereignty.

10. The Treaty will lead to UK workers being second class citizens

No. The rights and principles set out in the Charter are existing and not new. They apply now to EU institutions and to all Member States when they are implementing EU law. Once the Treaty is ratified they will continue to apply in the UK, and in other Member States, in exactly the way they do now.

We have secured a legally-binding Protocol that guarantees that the Charter does not extend the powers of any Court – European or domestic – to strike down UK laws.