



**POLITEIA**

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**Give Parliament More Control Over EU Law-Making, says Politeia's new pamphlet. Parliament Must Hold Ministers to Account, says Theresa May, Shadow Leader of the House of Commons.**

Each year around 1,000 EU measures become law in the UK. Most of these are never debated in the House of Commons. Many are not even considered by the Committees of the House. Theresa May, Shadow Leader of the House of Commons, explains in Politeia's next pamphlet\* that there is a failure of scrutiny. Parliament, under the present system, is unable to hold the Government to account over many EU laws.

The problem, says May, owes much to the structures of the EU which leave national parliaments with little say in proposing, preparing or passing EU legislation: they merely implement directives. All the UK parliament can do is to hold ministers to account and in this way influence the European Council. However the UK's scrutiny system, which aims to give parliament such power, is failing.

Why is this? The pamphlet explains that the European Scrutiny Committee lacks the power and the resources; it often receives documents too late to make a difference; it is backed up by limited specialist support. To make matters worse the Government has a majority on the Scrutiny Committee. As a result many measures which should be discussed are 'cleared'. In particular:

- EU measures often reach the European Scrutiny Committee too late for changes.
- The European Scrutiny Committee lacks statutory power: ministers can ignore rulings.
- The Government controls what is debated or 'cleared'.
- Even when debates are recommended, they may not take place. The House of Commons may not know of the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations.
- There are only three European Standing committees to consider documents referred for debate – despite the huge volume of EU legislation.
- Too few documents are debated and there is too little time for debate.
- No formal arrangements are in place to scrutinise new treaties.

What can be done? 'We... need a system' says May 'that gives Parliament real powers over ministers, enough time to scrutinise new EU laws, and the transparency to restore public trust in the process'. In particular she proposes:

- Statutory scrutiny reserve and more powers for the European Scrutiny Committee
- The right to force a debate in the Commons and more time for European matters
- Stronger Standing Committees and open deliberation in the Scrutiny Committee
- Formal arrangements for responding to new European Treaties

**\*The Rt Hon Theresa May MP is Shadow Leader of the House of Commons.**

*Restoring Parliamentary Authority: EU Laws and British Scrutiny*, by Theresa May and Nicholas Timothy, is also available online from [http://www.politeia.co.uk/Portals/0/may\\_final.pdf](http://www.politeia.co.uk/Portals/0/may_final.pdf).

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