

New treaty reshapes European Union

by UPI

LISBON, Portugal -- Most EU leaders converged Thursday on Lisbon, Portugal, to sign a new treaty designed to streamline decision making. The new 250-page treaty will create an EU president with a 5-year term, formalizes the position of foreign policy chief, and removes veto powers in some 50 policy areas such as police and judicial cooperation, the BBC reported. The Lisbon treaty is a result of a failure in 2005 to create a new constitution when voters in France and the Netherlands rejected the draft. EU leaders have repeatedly asserted the new treaty is not the same as the one rejected earlier. Of the union's 27 members, only Ireland is planning a referendum on the document. The BBC said polls show voters there are "either undecided or indifferent." British Prime Minister Gordon Brown was unable to attend the official signing ceremony because of reported scheduling conflicts but was to arrive later in the day to sign it, the report said. The changes are to go into force in 2009.

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