Glossary of summaries

DISTRIBUTION OF COMPETENCES
The Treaty of Lisbon clarifies the division of competences between the EU and its member countries. Alongside the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, sits the principle of conferral (Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union - TEU). This principle means that the EU can only act within the limits of the competences that have been conferred upon it by the EU treaties. These competences are defined in Articles 2-6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU).

There are 4 types of competences:
- exclusive (Article 3 TFEU) only the EU can act in these areas e.g. customs union & trade policy;
- shared between the EU and EU countries (Article 4 TFEU). EU countries can act only if the EU has chosen not to, e.g. cohesion policy, energy & environment. EU countries may ask the Commission to repeal an adopted legislative act in one of the shared areas so as to better ensure compliance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality (Declaration No 18 annexed to the Treaty of Lisbon);
- EU sets up arrangements within which EU countries must coordinate policy (Article 5 TFEU) e.g. economic policy;
- EU can support, coordinate or supplement EU countries' actions (Article 6 TFEU) e.g. culture & tourism.

SEE ALSO
- EU powers and competences
- Proportionality
- Subsidiarity
- Subsidiary powers
- The European Union’s external responsibilities
- European Commission's FAQs on EU competences and the European Commission's powers