



CHURCH of IRELAND GENERAL SYNOD
CHURCH in SOCIETY COMMITTEE
European Affairs Working Group

JOINT CHURCH STATEMENT ON LISBON TREATY

A Statement on the Lisbon Treaty Referendum issued by the Church of Ireland European Affairs Working Group, the Church and Society Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Council on Social Responsibility of the Methodist Church in Ireland.

The European Union, as a multinational body of 27 member states founded on principles of democracy and subsidiarity, has been a remarkable experiment in peaceful cooperation in the aftermath of the untold suffering of the Second World War, throughout the divisive period of the Cold War and through to the present day. This has been accompanied by significant economic growth, not least here in Ireland. We would however stress that prosperity has a purpose, and therefore regard it as important that the Union, as it develops, should be seen to promote social development as well as economic progress. We rejoice in the fact that the Union is expanding and bringing new opportunities to countries formerly cut off from the European mainstream by the political realities of the Cold War.

We recognise that the enlargement of the Union has brought new challenges to its structures, originally designed for just six member states, and that some reform is necessary to enable the Union to act effectively in responding to major challenges facing the world, including issues such as climate change, the increasing cost of food internationally and the security of energy supplies: external challenges that can best be faced on a multinational basis. We acknowledge that the Treaty of Lisbon is a considered effort to respond to these challenges.

It falls to the Irish people to evaluate this effort and to form their own judgement as to whether or not the Treaty effectively addresses the issues facing Europe, its citizens and the world. In making this judgement we would urge all Christians to take the time and to make the effort to study and reflect prayerfully on the contents of the Treaty. We would particularly commend the Referendum Commission's explanatory leaflet on the Treaty and the National Forum on Europe's *Summary Guide to the Treaty of Lisbon* in this regard. This Treaty relates to the future of the Union and Ireland's role in it, and we would urge members of our churches to judge it on its merits and not for reasons unconnected with it.

Finally, we would urge the members of our churches to vote, which is their right and privilege. An aspect of this Treaty we would particularly commend to your attention is Article 2, section 30, which recognises the role that churches and religious associations can play under the new structures, and we welcome the fact that the Irish government has already provided for structured dialogue between government officials and the churches on issues of shared importance.