



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

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Following the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by the electorates of France and the Netherlands, the EU embarked on a period of reflection. In Ireland, this process has been conducted by the National Forum on Europe. It is anticipated that considerable progress will be made under the current German presidency towards solving the difficulties that stand in the way of making such changes in the *modus operandi* of the EU that are rendered necessary by its greatly enlarged size. The Forum invited its members (including the Church of Ireland) to make submissions on how we envisage the future of the continent, not simply of the European Union itself.

An important development during 2006 was the holding of meetings, in several dioceses with representatives of the Forum and its secretariat. These presentations, at diocesan synods and clergy conferences, were highly effective in achieving the European Union's objective of bringing its work closer to the citizens of the Member States.

Two regional women's meetings with Forum involvement were held during the year, and the panel thanks the Mothers' Union for providing representation on these occasions.

The Most Rev Diarmuid Martin, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, who is vice-president of COMECE (the Commission of Bishops' Conferences of the European Commission), which works closely to the Conference of European Churches, addressed the Forum on 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2007 on 'the values underpinning European integration', and Dr Kenneth Milne responded. Archbishop Martin has indicated his willingness to meet with the panel to discuss matters of common concern.

Resulting from meetings between the Church in Society Committee and the Methodist Council on Social Responsibility, it was agreed to invite the Methodist Church to nominate a representative to our working group.

Our membership of the Institute continues to provide opportunities to hear speakers from many parts of the European Union and to receive its publications.

The panel is continuing with its policy of seeking meetings with MEPs, north and south and arrangements are ongoing.