



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

The period of 'reflection' recommended by the European Commission following the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by France and the Netherlands ended with the conclusion of negotiations on a new treaty during the Portuguese presidency. The signing of the Lisbon Treaty, sometimes referred to as the Reform Treaty, on behalf of all the member states of the Union took place on 13th December 2007. If it is to come into effect (possibly by 1st January 2009) it has to be ratified by all 27 states. It now appears to be the case that Ireland alone among the 27 is putting the treaty before the electorate for approval by referendum. This places an exceptional responsibility on the Republic which has, in effect, a veto on the entire process.

In order to familiarise the public with the issues arising from the Treaty, the National Forum on Europe (on which the Church of Ireland is represented) organised several regional meetings at which speakers who supported the treaty, and those who opposed it, put forward their arguments. The forum also published *A Summary Guide to the Treaty of Lisbon*. The Institute of International and European Affairs, of which our working group is a member, has published a *Consolidated Version of the Treaties as amended by the Treaty of Lisbon*, intended to provide a readable version of the several foundation treaties of the Union as amended by the new treaty.

It has been our endeavour to enable members of the Church of Ireland to identify the major issues raised by the Lisbon Treaty and to encourage informed discussion on the treaty within the Church and to approach these tasks in an ecumenical manner. We are grateful for the attention that the *Church of Ireland Gazette* and diocesan magazines have drawn to this important treaty which has equal significance for society north and south of the border.

The EU office in Dublin arranged a fact-finding visit to Brussels in April by members of the several religious traditions in the country and four of our working-group participated in the event.

Since we last reported, we have had a meeting with Mr Jim Nicholson, MEP, in accordance with our policy of seeking discussion with MEPs representing all constituencies on the island. We had already met with Mr Jim Allister and most MEPs from the Republic.

We are happy to report that in the course of the year, having in mind the objectives of our covenant with the Methodist Church, our working-group was joined by Mr Robert Cochran. We would also like to convey our good wishes on his appointment as Bishop

of Down and Connor to Mgr Noel Treanor who, as Secretary General of the Conference of Bishops' Conferences of the European Union, was ever ready to help us in our work.

FUTURE OBJECTIVES

- To identify the major issues emerging from the *Lisbon Treaty* and to encourage an informed discussion within the Church;
- To identify the significance of other general developments emerging from the European Union and to make information on such developments available to the Church;
- To communicate, where appropriate, the particular views of the Church to the governments of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and to the institutions of the European Union.