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Chairman

In continuing the committee's policy of inviting the various party leaders in the Oireachtas to appear before it to give their views on the Lisbon treaty and the reasons for and against it, as the case may be, today the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Deputy John Gormley, is here and the usual format applies. We have apologies from Deputies Pat Breen, Joe Costello, Joanna Tuffy, Michael Mulcahy, Beverly Flynn, Billy Timmins and Lucinda Creighton and Senator Terry Leyden. The usual citation applies in regard to the inadvertent or otherwise use of the names of persons outside the House who might be identified by Members of the Oireachtas who have privilege. The procedure is not to identify people who are outside the House in a way that might potentially defame them.

We will follow the usual format, that is, an opening statement from the party leader for approximately 15 minutes and then a response from members, followed by closing remarks from the party leader, the Minister, Deputy Gormley. He is very welcome and I ask him to make his presentation.

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley)

I am very pleased to be here this afternoon. I thank the committee for its invitation and congratulate it on the vital work it does on European Union issues, which were for too long neglected by all national parliaments. I note that if the Lisbon treaty is ratified, as I believe it will be, the Oireachtas will have even more responsibilities and powers to vet EU laws.

My colleagues and I in the Green Party have been asking people to vote "Yes" on Friday for a number of very positive reasons. I firmly believe a better organised Europe, which can tackle climate change and protect our rights and the environment, is worth supporting and I am convinced the Lisbon treaty promotes and advances those aims. I am also asking voters to say "Yes" on Friday because I believe our concerns have been dealt with in a declaration signed by 27 EU Heads of Government.
I have worked all of my adult life on things which protect the environment. The Lisbon treaty gives the EU new roles in the fields of climate change and energy which will have the potential to make a major impact on our lives. Many people of this generation do not really think these issues are too important right now. However, in 30 years' time, and perhaps far less, people will have realised that these are the defining issues of this generation.

I also believe the Lisbon treaty will consolidate workers' rights and build on the great advances which helped the EU deliver on women's rights in Ireland. It was the EU which delivered equal pay for women, a move initially opposed by the Dublin Government. The Lisbon treaty, specifically through Article 23 of the Charter for Fundamental Rights, builds on all the advances towards gender equality by preventing workplace discrimination.

More important, the treaty also allows the EU to take tougher action against criminals involved in the abominable business of people trafficking under Article 83 (1) of the Treaty on European Union. The Lisbon treaty will also improve democracy within the European Union. The Oireachtas, in common with other national parliaments, will have more say in shaping EU laws under Article 12 of the Treaty on European Union. Deputies and Senators can combine with members of other national parliaments to show a yellow card to draft EU laws which are opposed by more than a third of parliaments.

I am particularly pleased to see Article 11(4) of the Treaty on European Union catering for the provision of the citizens' initiative. It creates the possibility of 1 million citizens coming together and requesting the European Commission to take action on a particular issue. This was something I proposed while working on the Convention on the Future of Europe which cleared the way for the forerunner of the Lisbon treaty, the EU constitution.

The Lisbon treaty also gives more power to the European Parliament, which is leading the way in producing good progressive laws. Over the past few years it has taken the lead in working to phase out dangerous chemicals, to reduce emissions from cars. It has played an important role in stopping big companies from taking our patents on software, which would hamper innovation and could result in monopolies and price rises for software users. Thus, under Lisbon, our Deputies, Senators and MEPs have more powers and the people electing the Deputies and MEPs will have more powers as a result.

Since I came to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government over two years ago, much of my work has involved ensuring that Ireland joins with other countries in taking strong action to tackle the effects of climate change. It makes perfect sense that Ireland acts with the
European Union on this issue. In Copenhagen in December, the EU will represent Ireland at talks to agree targets and actions for tackling climate change. These talks are aimed at producing a follow-up agreement to the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012.

We know with a very good degree of certainty that rising sea levels and flooding will be one consequence of climate change. Here in Ireland, and in western Europe generally, we might be smug enough to think we can cope with what is coming but I believe that to be a dangerous assumption. As so many Irish aid organisations have eloquently and graphically argued, there are tens, perhaps hundreds of millions of people around the world, especially in Africa, India and along the equator, who simply do not have the money or the expertise to prepare for the enormous and catastrophic consequences of what climate change will do to them. Droughts, desertification, floods, monsoons, storms and tsunamis will be more and more common. Crops will fail and clean drinking water will become even more scarce than it is now. It will be a living nightmare. There are many things we can do at a personal level and as a country, to tackle climate change but to really make a difference we can work together in the European Union. By combining their strength the 27 countries of the EU, nearly 500 million people, can commit to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and ask the rest of the world to match that effort.

Article 191 of the Treaty for the Functioning of the European Union, provides for the promotion of measures to combat climate change as part of the Union's environmental competence. I am proud to say this reference was included at the request of the Irish Government. Article 191 of the Treaty for the Functioning of the European Union, will give the Union a specific basis for promoting international action against climate change. This is an important provision. It has been cynically derided by advocates of a "No" vote because it is a brief reference. History, however, teaches that some of the briefest references can prove to be most significant. It is important here because it gives the European Union the legal basis for joint action. It is just a beginning. In future disputes between environmentalists and big business, the European Court of Justice will be able to act. If the Lisbon treaty is passed the EU can justifiably push all the harder for an ambitious deal at the UN climate change conference in Copenhagen this December.

Ireland is at the tail-end of a supply line of expensive and dirty oil and gas much of which comes from politically unstable regions and supplies are running out. The Lisbon treaty gives the European Union new competences in the field of energy under Article 195 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. It is up to the Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas and the Government now and in the future to ensure this blossoms, as it can, into policies which continue to promote the creation of interlinked EU-wide energy grids based mainly on renewable energy sources. There is
no reason wind and wave power from Ireland, hydropower from Scandinavia and solar power from Spain cannot power our industries and homes in the future. This can best be advanced by the European Union and the Lisbon treaty points the way.

The Government's own research has shown that one of the people's key concerns around the Lisbon treaty has been about the erosion of Ireland's traditional neutrality. Since its foundation the Green Party has been to the forefront in articulating concerns about the importance of Irish neutrality. I am satisfied that if Irish voters endorse the EU Lisbon treaty on Friday, decisions on defence and foreign policy will continue to be made unanimously. We have secured a guarantee from the EU leaders' summit that Ireland's military neutrality will be respected. Irish neutrality will not in any respect be affected or prejudiced by the treaty. I insist that these guarantees are binding. All 27 EU governments have endorsed them. There is no precedent in the European Union's 52 year history where such guarantees were not respected. Such guarantees have always been respected and at all events we have received assurances that these guarantees will be given full legal status in a forthcoming EU treaty to remove any ambiguity.

The European Defence Agency has also been a matter of concern. Members of the committee know that this agency was established in 2004 to help EU member states to develop defence capabilities. There were concerns that Irish participation in the agency might undermine Irish neutrality. I am glad to say we worked very hard with our Government partners to address this very issue. Earlier this month the European Defence Agency Bill 2009 was cleared by the Cabinet and published. This legislation means that both Cabinet and Dáil approval will be required for participation in EDA projects or programmes. The Green Party insisted upon this to ensure the right amount of transparency and oversight. We insisted upon the removal of any shadow over the issue of neutrality. Separate legislation will also be worked on to restrict all State agencies from promoting an armaments industry in Ireland, while work will continue on a new White Paper on defence for the period 2011 to 2020, as agreed in the programme for Government.

There are many positive reasons for the people to say "Yes" to the Lisbon treaty on Friday. I thank the committee for its attention and would welcome questions.

Deputy Seán Power

I thank the Minister for his contribution. Looking back two years, at global and European level, climate change was being given priority, with major changes and co-operation forthcoming at the time. Due to the financial crisis that has affected most countries, climate change has since not been
given the priority we would like and which is necessary. How can the Minister assure voters that a vote to endorse the treaty will lead to climate change being given the priority it deserves? Does he accept that we have not explained clearly to the people the enormous difficulties and challenges thrown up by the issue?

**Deputy Mary O’Rourke**

I thank the Minister, Deputy Gormley, for attending. I was interested in the thrust of his contribution, which is about our future based on climate change, one he believes will be far better if we endorse the Lisbon treaty in that it will give us more clout in the Copenhagen summit where we are due to address the important climate change motion.

To follow on from what Deputy Power said, I seek the Minister's reassurance that shortage of finance does not mean there will be a shortage of commitment to climate change. It is hugely important that the emphasis upon it is kept up and strengthened because the dangers increase and if the dangers which abound with regard to our environment are not checked. Ireland, on the tail end of Europe, will not feel snug as everything will come down to us, so to speak.

I was also interested in comments the Minister made last week during a visit with some children. I am not sure if they came to the Minister or he visited them but the school children said the "No" posters had the greater impact on them. I was very taken by that because I had been going on for ages about the way lies can make an impact when it is very difficult to make an impact with a true statement, such as the Minister laid out earlier, as well as those from some of the other party leaders who came before the committee. I realise it is a little late to seek advice on how to combat lies but at the same time what the children said to the Minister is amazing. The child's mind is unclouded and is able to discern things swiftly. The children the Minister met were able to say clearly to him that the "No" posters had a greater impact on them, particularly the one on a minimum wage, which is a lie. I have no hesitation in using that word because it states that Europe will impose a minimum wage of €1.84, which is untrue. Also, we have not taken enough account of the fact that the starkness of the untruths is difficult to combat. People ask why we are so negative. We are negative because we have to say "No" first before we get an opportunity to say "Yes", which is extremely difficult.

I very much welcome the emphasis on the Minister's field of activity, namely, climate change, energy security and all of those issues. It is difficult sometimes to whip up enthusiasm about those
matters, which I believe did not feature enough in both sides of the debate on Lisbon. However, I thank the Minister for his contribution and his obvious enthusiasm for his brief.

Senator Paschal Donohoe

I thank the Minister, Deputy Gormley, for addressing the committee this afternoon. I will emphasise three points in response to his contribution and then put a question to him.

First, the Minister made an important point in his contribution when he emphasised that in respect of the guarantees Ireland has received, even before they are ratified by other European countries, it has never been the case that guarantees of that kind were not respected by other European countries in the history of the European Union in all its different incarnations. In the period before those guarantees are ratified, as I know they will be, that point cannot be emphasised enough in the final days of the debate.

Second, the Minister's contribution concluded with reference to the European Defence Agency Bill published earlier in the year. That is a new development from the previous debate because a Bill such as that was not under discussion. That has been a positive contribution in the debate on neutrality and the Lisbon treaty because it emphasises again to the Irish people that any participation we may have in activity like that can only happen with the consent of the people they elect here in Ireland. That legislation makes that clear.

My third point is a question to which I would like a response. I was surprised during the debate on the first and second Lisbon treaty referendum by the number of young people I met who instinctively understand the importance of the environment as a political and defining issue but who intend to vote "No" to the Lisbon treaty in larger numbers than I had anticipated. What would the Minister say to those people who share many of the passions he and his political party share but who intend to vote "No" on Friday?

The Minister touched on three points in his contribution, those of neutrality, energy security and climate change. What effect does he believe a "No" vote would have on our ability to deliver what is in our national interest in those three areas?

Deputy Timmy Dooley

I welcome the presentation by the Minister, Deputy Gormley. It is useful we are discussing the areas to which he alluded, in particular, the issues of greatest importance to him and his party, those of
climate change and energy security. Some within the "No" campaign have sought to undermine the treaty to some extent, and the Minister alluded to it in his presentation when dealing with this issue, because the treaty is light in terms of language around climate change. Will he accept that the fact there is a statement of intent to deal with this issue leaves it open to the member states to work together and develop more coherent policies and, for that reason, there is nothing to suggest that the limited amount of language is in any way a limitation on the extent to which member states recognise the importance of climate change and energy security, which are, to some extent, interlinked?

What is the Minister's view on the security of food supply, which is a central theme and perhaps has not been taken as seriously across Europe as it should be taken? Some countries have a policy of selling food cheaply and are not too minded from where it comes. There is a view emerging, especially within the agricultural sector here, that a coherent policy is required that ensures Europe is able to provide its own food supply into the future, recognising that within 40 years we will have to double our food production to feed the world, as it is currently constituted. Will the Minister accept that is an another area that we, as a green nation and one that does food production well, would need to continue to assert within the policies that will emerge from this overriding treaty?

Deputy Ciarán Lynch

I welcome the Minister to the committee and thank him for his contribution. I agree with Deputy O'Rourke's comments on the issue of the minimum wage. It is one that has created great concern, particularly among young people who are probably working at the lower wage scale and have serious concerns about the future. It is critical in the next few days that the lie concerning this issue is put to bed and seen for what it is, namely, something that distorts our having a proper debate on this issue.

I agree with the Minister's comments that Europe has been a platform for Ireland in introducing reforming and progressive legislation. The issue of gender equality and gender discrimination in the workplace is only one aspect of that. It was well recounted in the 1990s that the social welfare payment for women was less than it was for men and how that issue was dealt with by Europe. It is also well known that the driving force in creating a platform to deal with climate change has come very much from the European Union in the past decade and without question much of the legislation that has come before the House has had its genesis in the European Union. It takes a
considerable time to transpose into Irish law many of EU directives that come to the House. How many EU directives are awaiting transposition into Irish law in the Department?

Senator John Hanafin

I thank the Minister for his presentation. My question relates to the competence of Europe in the areas of energy and climate change. Membership appears to have been a very positive experience in Ireland. In fact, many farm families would have no income this year without the single farm payment from Europe. This is an area where Europe claims competence. Now it will claim competence in two other areas. Clearly, national parliaments would not have given up this competence unless they saw it as beneficial. Will the Minister mention one or two positive proposals from Europe on how to deal with energy security and, equally important, how to deal with the difficulty of climate change?

The "No" campaign has suggested that the protocols are not binding. After the defeat in the referendum 18 months ago, Ireland went back to Europe seeking guarantees. The "No" side is now suggesting that the 27 member states that gave us the guarantees to bring back to the Irish nation will now renege on their promise. Is that not bizarre and ridiculous?

Deputy John Gormley

Can the Senator repeat his question?

Senator John Hanafin

Eighteen months ago there was an analysis of the reasons people voted "No". Their concerns were brought to Europe. Ireland received, in good faith, undertakings from Europe regarding those main concerns, which were to be put into the treaty as a declaration and subsequently as a protocol. Having secured that declaration, and we will get the subsequent protocol, it has now been suggested that the very people who have given the undertakings will renege on them. Is that not ludicrous?
Senator Feargal Quinn

I welcome the Minister and his presentation. The Minister said the Lisbontreaty allows the EU to take tougher action against criminals. He was referring to human trafficking. However, I am concerned about cigarette smuggling. I understand that the amount of cigarettes smuggled into Ireland is huge. Figures quoted during the week suggest that smuggling is depriving the Revenue Commissioners of between €0.5 billion and €0.75 billion per year. There is also the issue of counterfeit cigarettes being smuggled into the country, which are very damaging to the health of smokers. Smoking is damaging anyway but these are even worse. I understand Ireland has opted out of certain actions in the battle against criminals because Britain has done so and we have moved with Britain. Is this the best procedure to take or should we reconsider it?

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

I join members of the committee in welcoming the Minister, Deputy Gormley, and the opportunity to put a number of questions to him. As one of only two "No" proponents here today, I would love to have had the opportunity to respond to some members, but that is not the format. I must ask the Minister the questions.

I remember working closely with the Minister in the previous Dáil in the Technical Group, which comprised Sinn Féin, the Green Party and the Independents. I recall working closely with Deputy Gormley and his colleagues in the Green Party on the constitutional treaty which was proposed in 2005. Sinn Féin, members of the Green Party and others worked closely together in strong opposition to what was proposed in the constitutional treaty. According to my notes from that time, the Green Party opposed that treaty because it contended the treaty would undermine Irish and European democracy, would lead to increasing militarisation of the European Union and because it recommitted Ireland to membership of the European Atomic Energy Community. Can the Minister outline what is so markedly different in the Lisbontreaty that has brought about this volte-face in his position as leader of the Green Party vis-à-vis Irish and European democracy, increased militarisation of the European Union and Ireland’s continued membership of the European Atomic Energy Community?

The Minister referred to climate change. I do not doubt the Minister's or his party's commitment in this area but where does the Lisbon treaty actually use the words "climate change"? There are a couple of other points I wish to raise to try to understand where the Green Party stands today. Does
it now support a European common defence compatible with NATO that seeks to increase the ability of the European Union to deploy troops in non-EU countries and in what the Lisbon treaty refers to as joint disarmament missions, such as that currently under way in Iraq, or missions to assist non-EU countries in combatting terrorism, as currently under way in Afghanistan?

There has been much focus on posters and so on during the past week. In particular, I note the Green Party posters say: "Yes for workers". I could go on to a whole range of areas in this regard but I have one question. Article 28 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights provides for the right to collective bargaining and Article 16 of the charter guarantees freedom to conduct a business. What will happen post-Lisbon, if it is ratified, with these two competing rights given the context of the European Court of Justice's decisions in regard to Laval, Rüffort, Viking and Luxembourg?

I thank you for taking the time to listen.

Mr. Joe Higgins MEP

Gabh mo leithscéal as bheith déanach. Tá an-bhrú orainn ag an bpointe seo, mar is eol don choiste. I apologise for my late arrival. We are under intense pressure in the dying days of the campaign on the Lisbon treaty second time round. At the last meeting of this joint committee, Deputy Dooley was so concerned that I could not make it I thought, in fairness to him, that I absolutely had to attend today.

Chairman

We are very grateful that Mr. Higgins made it. We appreciate it.

Mr. Joe Higgins MEP

Thank you.

I wish to ask the Minister a couple of brief questions. Will he comment on the following statement from Volume 554 of the Dáil report of 4th September 2002 at column No. 33:
The aim of the EU is, over time, to create a military force to rival that of the United States and create an arms industry to compete with that of the United States. This goes to the heart of the problem. By seeking to compete with the United States the EU has ended up copying it. This is not the direction in which Europe should be heading.
Those were his words in a debate on the Nice treaty second time round when the opinions of the Irish people first time were also rejected by a Government which he opposed?

Lisbon provides for intensification of militarisation, for intensification of armaments development and for the first time puts the European Defence Agency in an EU treaty in a formal position. The Minister spoke vehemently against the European Defence Agency in the past. Considering that one of its remits is to create a competitive armaments market in Europe and to push for further research and development in the creation of armaments, that is, weapons of horrific destruction, how does he reconcile his views at that time with his now saying that he enthusiastically supports the Lisbon treaty? Is it that he has sold out on every single issue he said he believed in before he went into Government?

In regard to the European Defence Agency, the Minister said he was happy to say that we worked very hard with our Government partners to address this issue. Earlier this month the European Defence Agency Bill 2009 was cleared by Cabinet and published. The Cabinet discussed it, found that there was not a problem and the Minister could go against every principle for which he said he stood. He was against the development of armaments and against the creation of further militarisation but now he endorses it. Will he at least agree that he is guilty of the most massive hypocrisy or of the biggest sell out by a political party in the history of this State?

Chairman

I remind Mr. Higgins that the committee tends not to venture beyond the normal parliamentary procedures. It is not a public meeting as such; it is a meeting of the committee.

It has not been the practise of the committee to accuse political party leaders of hypocrisy or anything else. He can do that outside of the room if he wishes, but not here.

Mr. Joe Higgins, MEP

I have put it all in terms of questions. The Minister can respond.

Chairman

Bear in mind that the committee tries to maintain a certain decorum. The level of the debate outside need not necessarily prevail in here. We had to remind somebody else last week of the same point.
Mr. Joe Higgins, MEP

I have made my point and I will leave it at that.

Deputy Noel Treacy

I warmly welcome the Minister, Deputy Gormley, and thank him for his wide-ranging presentation. It is a broad contribution. I salute him, and all of his parliamentary party colleagues on the enlightened and positive leadership he has given his party over the past two years in ensuring that the Green Party in Ireland can be mainstreamed to mirror the thinking of the Green Party throughout the European Union. It speaks volumes for the importance of the Lisbon treaty that the Green Party across Europe has a strong positive attitude to that treaty, and I salute all of the members of the Green Party on that.

I also salute him on his contribution to neutrality in ensuring that it has been underpinned by another party. My party, and its founding father, the late Éamon de Valera, put Ireland on the international stage at the time of the last world war in maintaining and sustaining Ireland's position as a neutral nation. We have been strong on that since then and we are delighted to partner the Minister at this time in ensuring, as we embrace the expansion of the Union and the opportunity the Union confers on this country, that together we can give that governmental leadership that will be important in the future.

On climate change, my party salutes the Minister on the leadership he is giving in this field. Can he expand somewhat on the strong commitment and the key role the Union must play and the enabling device the Lisbon treaty will be to us as a small country to play our part in this considerable global challenge?

On common energy supply, as an island nation on the periphery of Europe, how important is it for Ireland that the assistance of the Lisbon treaty gives us that extra cover, support and sustainability of supply through the Union to ensure that we can grow our economy and embrace the opportunities for all of our people and future generations?

Looking at the treaty in more detail, taking into account its commitment to advancing the Union and its technological capacity in a competitive world, would the Minister accept that Ireland's membership of the Union, which confers on us the right to be members of the European Space Agency, gives us a particular niche as a small country to play an important part in a vast global
opportunity, which has major technological and economic benefits for our country and which we could not do outside of the Union, and that the Lisbon treaty assists us in doing this?

Moving from the global and the European position to the importance of democracy, the veracity of facts, of the dissemination of information and of not confusing our citizens as we face into this important decision for our nation, would the Minister give some indication of how, post Lisbon II, he, as Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, could deal with the serious situation that has emanated in this campaign where the lack of veracity in the information put up on posters, printed and produced in pamphlets and distributed across the nation is causing serious concern, not just to citizens but particularly to vulnerable citizens? Perhaps he might like to comment on the larceny of an image of one of our most revered international and national actors, namely, Mr. Frank Kelly, aka Fr. Jack in "Father Ted", which has been displayed on posters by the "No" campaign without the permission of him or the company that owns that image can Deputy Gormley, as Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, ensure that such a situation will not prevail in the future?

**Senator Phil Prendergast**

It is extremely disingenuous of Sinn Féin to put up posters which state that if people do not like the Government, they should vote "No". I do not understand what people's level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the Government has to do with the referendum on the Lisbon treaty.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin**

It is a matter of trust.

**Chairman**

I intend to comment on that matter at the end of the meeting.

(Interruptions).

**Chairman**
Members have raised a wide variety of issues and I call on the Minister to reply.

**Deputy John Gormley**

Quite a number of observations and questions were offered by members. I will spend more time responding to the criticisms levelled rather than remarking on the positive comments and questions offered. I hope members understand my reasons for doing so. I will deal with each of the criticisms in turn.

Deputy Seán Power commented on climate change and referred to the way in which attitudes have altered as a result of the economic context. That is undoubtedly the case. Human behaviour is understandable in that context because it is the so-called bread and butter issues that take precedence at a time of economic crisis. However, that is not to state climate change, as an issue, is less important. The scientific evidence for it is available. The most recent scientific reports indicate that the window of opportunity in which we might deal with the issue is shrinking all the time. Ban Ki-Moon previously referred to a window of ten years but this has shrunk to approximately eight years. It is within the latter period that we must get our act together.

The scale of the problem is monumental. The European Union which has led the way on the matter is committed to reducing its emissions by 30% below 1990 levels by 2020 if a global agreement is reached in Copenhagen. This can be done. There are, however, two problems. The first, to which some members referred, is that which relates to energy security, peak oil and climate change. These three factors are related. That is why the Government established a Cabinet committee on climate change and energy security. These factors are also fundamentally linked to the concept of the green economy. If we can invest in the green economy by means of insisting on better insulation standards for houses and making progress in respect of renewables, that will go a long way towards providing more sustainable jobs and tackling climate change. We should not perceive the issues of job security and job creation as being divorced from the question of climate change. They are fundamentally linked.

There is no doubt that the global economy and the way business is done will change dramatically in the coming years. The world views behind capitalism and socialism will have to change also. We will move towards what is termed "resourcism", namely, how we might deal with the resources of planet Earth.

Deputy Ó Caoláin asked me to quote directly from the treaty and I will do so because there are some extremely interesting references which I did not mention in my initial contribution relating to
how we might deal with the environment. I will quote from the treaty in this regard when I come to deal with the Deputy's question.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin**

I asked the Minister to indicate where climate change was dealt with in the treaty.

**Deputy John Gormley**

I will do so. I will comment on climate change and the protection of the environment — a matter of fundamental importance — in reply to the Deputy's question.

Deputy O'Rourke referred to the power of posters. There is no question that they are often dismissed by people who state they do not influence the way they think about elections, etc., but that is not true. Posters are an extremely powerful form of advertising.

**Deputy Mary O'Rourke**

Correct.

**Deputy John Gormley**

Some of the posters put up by the "No" campaign are extremely powerful and work well.

**Deputy Mary O'Rourke**

They work well for the "No" side.

**Deputy John Gormley**

Yes. Speaking objectively, one must admit they are powerful. Whether they tell the truth is another matter.

**Deputy Mary O'Rourke**
They do not.

**Deputy John Gormley**

In many cases, they are entirely misleading and the children in St. Louis secondary school, Rathmines, felt particularly that the minimum wage poster was extremely powerful because many children will leave school shortly. This also relates to Senator Donohoe's question about the reason people aged between 18 and 25 are negatively disposed towards the treaty. They believe the propaganda, which is a lie. Cóir says there is a question mark but that is disingenuous. It is a misleading but, nonetheless, powerful poster in the context of its propaganda value. The problem for the "Yes" side is we must spend our time rebutting much of this misinformation.

Senator Donohoe mentioned the EDA. The legislation we pushed hard for sets out clearly the types of missions in which Ireland can partake. Even in opposition, I supported every mission, including peace enforcement, involving the Army but it is important that our involvement in the EDA confines itself to missions we have always excelled at, namely, humanitarian and UN mandated missions. It is not just a case of having the imprimatur of the Dáil and the Government but the agency also has to ensure it sticks to what we are good at. We have been praised. I recently had a meeting with the new British ambassador, who said Ireland has always led the way on humanitarian missions.

The Senator also asked about the consequences of a "No" vote. It is difficult to predict what they would be but Ireland and Europe would be set back. That would present us with another crisis and the perception of Ireland would change radically and not for the better. It would have a negative impact. Anybody who has European experience would say the same. With regard to investment, one only has to listen to what people running large companies that employ many people have had to say and the consequences of a "No" vote are clear.

Deputy Ciarán Lynch referred to the necessity for EU directives and how they have played an important role. I have a list of transposition dates and I will give it to the Deputy following the conclusion of the meeting.

**Deputy Ciarán Lynch**
How many are awaiting transposition?

**Deputy John Gormley**

Approximately ten. I will give the list to the Deputy. I have tried to ensure that we not only transpose the directives, which is absolutely vital, but we also comply with them. That is not easy very often but it is absolutely necessary. The habitats directive, the birds directive, the special protection areas, SPAs, and special areas of conservation, SACs, around the country, the nitrates directive, the dangerous substances directive, the water framework directive — the list goes on of environmental directives from Europe — are there for one purpose only, namely, to protect our environment. Having worked in Europe with the Commission and having worked with Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and other organisations, I believe Europe is leading the way globally on these environmental questions. Ratification of the Lisbon treaty is one further step in that direction.

It is important to consider the objectives of the treaty and what it says about environmental protection. Some of it could have been written — and probably was — by people like Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth. The treaty states that the Union is about promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity among member states and that it will respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity. I am sure Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced by it. It continues by stating that in its relation with the wider world, the Union will uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens by contributing to peace, security and the sustainable development of the earth.

Those words, "the sustainable development of the earth" are powerful words. This is new language for a European treaty. The treaty continues and states it will promote solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular, the rights of the child as well as the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter. This is powerful language.

**Deputy Noel Treacy**

How could anybody oppose that?
Deputy John Gormley

Having worked with people in the area of environmental protection, I believe that wording was put in at the behest of those who are interested in protecting the environment.

I will come back to the reference by Deputy Ó Caoláin, but want to reply to Senator Feargal Quinn first on the question of why we acted with Britain. Sometimes we do that. I cannot give the Senator a definitive answer on the issue, but I imagine it has to do with the fact that we share a border. Despite everything, we are still very much tied to Britain and we work closely with the British within the European Union. That is our tradition. That said, the European Union has provided us with the opportunity to come out from under Britain's shadow and that has been worthwhile for us.

The difficulty with regard to cigarette smuggling is that it is inevitable that as we raise the price of cigarettes, smuggling becomes more intensive. This means we must spend more money trying to tackle smuggling. Therefore, sometimes raising prices can be a counter-productive exercise.

On the issue raised by Deputy Ó Caoláin and Mr. Joe Higgins, MEP, I am glad Mr. Higgins quoted me correctly as saying what I said at the time of the Nice treaty. The Green Party did not adopt an official position on the constitution or the Lisbon treaty at the time, although it was criticised on that account. However, we adopted a position on Lisbon subsequently. First we had a vote, but did not get a two-thirds majority, so we could not have an official position. Then we had a second vote and got a two-thirds majority. Those are the facts. I was critical, and still am, of the original constitution. I felt it should have been voted on by way of a Europe-wide referendum — by way of double majority, a majority of votes and a majority of states — to be held on the same day. It was argued at the time that certain member states, such as Germany, did not have the facility or were precluded from having a referendum but I was of the opinion there could have been a plebiscite at the very least and that was the best way of doing it. As we have seen the way we are doing it now is susceptible to all sorts of difficulties. That was my critique and it is still my point of view.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

Will the Minister acknowledge that there is a fine line between a party taking a formal position and what I said, which was that members of the Minister's Oireachtas team today, in tandem with me and others at the time, acknowledged that they were opposed to the constitutional treaty as presented and on the areas which I have already put on the record of the House?
Deputy John Gormley

No.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

That is what was said at the time.

Deputy John Gormley

That is not true. What is true is that we took a position with regard to the Nice treaty; we did not take a position with regard to either the constitutional treaty or the Lisbon treaty originally but we have now taken a position on the Lisbon treaty and that has to be by way of the party membership.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

There are members of the Minister's party acting independently.

Deputy John Gormley

No. I am telling the committee what is the official position of the party. Deputy Ó Caoláin asked about the question of climate change so I will provide the reference to climate change. This is important. When we hear about the posters and the propaganda, we must go back to the text of the treaty and read the original text as it has a very powerful resonance. There is no gainsaying it as it is in black and white.

I refer to the section of the treaty dealing with preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment, protecting human health, prudent and rational utilisation of natural resources, promoting measures at international level to deal with regional or worldwide environmental problems and in particular, combating climate change. Union policy on the environment shall aim at a high level of protection, taking into account the diversity of situations in the various regions of the
Union. It shall be based on the precautionary principle and on the principles that preventive action should be taken, that environmental damage should, as a priority, be rectified at source and that the polluter should pay. Any environmentalist will say that this is music to his or her ears, that is what environmentalists want to see included in legislation. For the first time, we have included, at the request of the Irish Government, a section dealing with combating climate change. In my view, that is a major victory for this Irish Government. We were the ones who asked for that and we are the ones who got it and not enough has been made of that achievement.

Deputy Noel Treacy

Hear, hear.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

The Minister has acknowledged——

Chairman

There should be no cross-talking at the meeting. One speaker at a time, please. The Minister is replying.

Deputy John Gormley

Deputy Ó Caoláin asked if I support a common defence policy and the answer is that I do not know. It is the Irish people who will decide if we support a common defence policy.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

But the Lisbon treaty——

Chairman
Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

The Minister is being very selective——

Chairman

Deputy Ó Caoláin is the leader of a party and he knows very well that this is not the way we do business here because if we did business in that fashion he would be still here and it is at least three weeks since he visited us. I call on the Minister to reply.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

The Chairman cannot have it both ways.

Chairman

If the Deputy wishes to address the committee we will reverse the procedure.

Deputy John Gormley

A colleague from the Austrian Greens was in attendance yesterday at a press conference with me to spell out in detail what the Lisbon treaty says; how the non-aligned countries are protected. In particular I refer to what I have seen written on a poster issued by the Deputy's party -"increased military spending". Ireland will not have to spend any increased amount on military matters and that is a fact. We will not have to spend an extra penny because of the Lisbon treaty and the statement is a complete and utter myth.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin
It is there as an obligation within the Lisbon treaty.

**Deputy John Gormley**

We have an absolute guarantee on that matter. It is up to this member state to decide how much money it will spend on military matters. I should add, to be very practical about this, that if the Minister, Deputy O'Dea, wanted to spend money tomorrow, it would not be endorsed by the Cabinet.

**Deputy Mary O’Rourke**

He would not get it.

**Deputy John Gormley**

It is just not there.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin**

Is this about——

**Deputy John Gormley**

It is a complete and utter myth.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin**

——the European Union——

**Chairman**

I am sorry, Deputy Ó Caoláin. You asked already.

**Deputy John Gormley**
It is myth. It is not there.

Chairman

You asked already.

Deputy John Gormley

Please stop putting that out. It is about this country.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

It is about the European Union——

Deputy John Gormley

It is about what this country spends on military equipment.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

——and Ireland's role in it.

Chairman

No.

Deputy John Gormley

That is a fact.

Chairman
I do not mind if we stay here all day.

Deputy Mary O’Rourke

We will not.

Chairman

I am sure the members of the committee are not too pleased to hear that. I assure everybody that the intention has always been to give everybody a fair hearing. I refer to those who address the meeting and those who wish to ask questions or make comments. There is also a general intention to avoid becoming personal or acrimonious and to have a reasonable debate, in a debate which outside the Oireachtas has not been all that reasonable.

Deputy Seán Power

In fairness, Sinn Féin has always opposed military spending.

Chairman

I ask the committee to allow the Minister to continue.

Deputy John Gormley

I recognise that Deputy Ó Caoláin was not being personal. He has tried to engage in debate at this forum. However, his party's posters relating to military spending are disingenuous.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

They are not.

Deputy John Gormley
There is no question about it.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin**

I totally reject the Minister's position.

**Chairman**

I ask the Deputy to allow the Minister to continue.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin**

You may sell that to your own party members, but only to some of them.

**Chairman**

The Minister is encouraging the Deputy and that is a parliamentary practice that is discouraged.

**Deputy John Gormley**

I would like to respond to Mr. Joe Higgins, MEP. I have a problem with his approach to politics. He can throw out all the accusations he likes, but he has always engaged in the politics of negativity.

**Mr. Joe Higgins MEP**

That is rich coming from the Minister.

**Deputy John Gormley**

It is easy to be consistent when one is against everything.

**Deputy Timmy Dooley**
Yes.

**Deputy John Gormley**

I mean everything. Mr. Higgins is against war, which is fine, but he also against peace. He is against UN peacekeeping. He is against the United Nations. That is a fact. He is the only person sitting here who came out against the peace process, who came out against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. That is extraordinary. He is against the Israelis, but he is also against the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

**Mr. Joe Higgins MEP**

It is one of the most corrupt organisations on the face of the eastern——

**Deputy John Gormley**

He has come out against practically everything. I disagree with his approach to politics. I believe one has to try to make a difference. It is sometimes difficult to do that.

**Deputy Noel Treacy**

Hear, hear.

**Deputy John Gormley**

That is why I have produced a Bill that will ensure this country cannot over-spend on military equipment. Mr. Higgins should support that positive Bill.

**Mr. Joe Higgins MEP**

The Minister has sold out everything he said he believed in.

**Deputy John Gormley**
No. You do not have——

Mr. Joe Higgins MEP

Everything.

Deputy John Gormley

You have nothing to sell out, Joe.

Mr. Joe Higgins MEP

You have sold out.

Chairman

Order.

Deputy John Gormley

I know it is embarrassing.

Mr. Joe Higgins MEP

You have sold out every principle the Green Party has ever stood for.

Chairman

The Minister to continue.

Deputy John Gormley

I am speaking and he is interrupting.
Deputy Noel Treacy

Respect the Minister, please.

Deputy John Gormley

I know it is embarrassing for Mr. Higgins that I have revealed he came out against the peace process, which is something not many people know.

Mr. Joe Higgins MEP

For the record, Chairman——

Deputy John Gormley

He came out against the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Joe Higgins MEP

That is a total fabrication.

Deputy John Gormley

He asked people to vote against the Anglo-Irish Agreement. He does not even support the United Nations. That is extraordinary stuff. People out there do not actually know that. If they began to know where you really stand on all these issues, I think they would doubt your credibility on all the other issues as well.

Deputy Noel Treacy

He wants to increase taxation.
Mr. Joe Higgins MEP

I would not mention credibility if I were the Minister. I know whose credibility is in shreds here.

Chairman

I insist that the Minister be allowed to reply.

Deputy John Gormley

I would like to respond now to Deputy Treacy.

Mr. Joe Higgins MEP

The Minister did not answer my question about armaments, anyway.

Deputy John Gormley

I hope Mr. Higgins supports this country's legislation on the European Defence Agency. We have worked on the legislation, which is very good. I think it will receive the endorsement of most people in Dáil Éireann.

Deputy Noel Treacy

Hear, hear.

Deputy John Gormley

I refer to Opposition Deputies as well as those on the Government side.

Mr. Joe Higgins MEP
Is the Minister legislating for a bigger armaments market in Europe?

**Deputy John Gormley**

No.

**Mr. Joe Higgins MEP**

That is what it is about.

**Deputy John Gormley**

It ensures that this country only engages in those missions in which it has always engaged. I always supported those missions, even when I was in Opposition. We will continue to engage in UN peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions. I am proud to have made a contribution to that legislation, which spells out that we cannot go beyond that.

**Mr. Joe Higgins MEP**

Pontius Pilate. Wash your hands and let them at it.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin**

Hear, hear.

**Deputy John Gormley**

I will respond to Deputy Treacy who made the final contribution. Rather, Senator Prendergast made the final point but that was more of an observation than a question. There has been a distortion of facts in this campaign. It is difficult to avoid that. In the cut and thrust of any debate one will get accusation and counter-accusation. It is extremely difficult for people to make up their minds in that type of cauldron.
One can look to the wisdom of children. When they look at the posters they ask what the treaty is about. One tries to explain it to people by saying it is a way of re-organising the European Union, a union that has served us well. What is most difficult is to explain the issue to 18 to 25 year olds who have never experienced Ireland outside of the European Union and who take it for granted. Those of us who can remember, recall that this was a very different island. We have benefitted enormously from our participation in the European Union and we should never take it for granted. It has improved our quality of life, broadened our cultural horizons, protected our environment and provided peace on this Continent for a very long time. For those reasons I urge people to think about the way they cast their vote. I respect everybody's wish to cast his or her vote either way, but I urge people to think clearly about the future of this country and to vote "Yes" on 2 October.

Chairman

I thank the Minister. Deputy Thomas Byrne wishes to say a few words. I will speak after that.

Deputy Thomas Byrne

I apologise for being late as I was attending a function in my constituency. I thank the Minister. What he has done today has been notable and unusual in the debate in that he has referred to the treaty and highlighted a large section of text which he said could have been inserted by organisations such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace with which he has been associated, but that was inserted into the treaty at the behest of the Government, of which he is a member. I congratulate him on that. He has given good reasons for people of all ages to support the Lisbon treaty. He has referred to the text, left out the "what ifs" and "what abouts" in terms of what would happen if the European Court of Justice says this and then does that, he has said what is in the treaty, which is most important. He has given people a positive reason to support the treaty, namely, that it was negotiated by the Government. Too often we are told that Europe is imposing the treaty on us and we must accept it. The treaty is something we have sought and received and now we are being asked to ratify it in a referendum. I appeal to people to do what the Minister has done, namely, read the text of the treaty, see the advantages it contains and not to worry about the "what ifs", what if that word meant this or all of the other combinations mooted by the opposition. I thank the Minister for reading the clear words of the treaty.
Senator Donie Cassidy

With the Chairman's permission I second the proposal to thank the Minister for his clarification. It was most helpful at this crucial juncture three days before the referendum. In this calm room under the chairmanship of Deputy Durkan, the people of Ireland can hear the facts. I congratulate the Minister on all he has outlined and highlighted to the committee today. I urge the people to vote "Yes" on 2 October.

Chairman

I will comment before we close this session. This is the last of our meetings with the party leaders in the Oireachtas. I thank the Minister and his predecessors for speaking before the committee. It was the committee's choice to go through this useful process. We have tried to have a rational debate and that can only be beneficial to the wider community in making their decisions.

A few things need to be borne in mind. This campaign started approximately two years ago in the run up to the first referendum on the Lisbon treaty. The members of this committee took on a great workload and responsibility over that period. I compliment them and thank them for their work, not only during that campaign, which, from the majority of their points of view, was unsuccessful, but also in its aftermath. After the first referendum, the subcommittee chaired by Senator Paschal Donohoe had a very laborious series of hearings which I hope were beneficial to the wider community in that they aired the views for and against voting for the treaty. The debate during this committee's series of meetings, particularly during the past 12 months, was helpful to the public in allowing it to make up its mind. The debate was responsible for the circulation of further information in the public arena, which I hope will be of benefit.

There are a couple of matters which demand comment and which have been commented on already in respect of postering. I do not have any problem with the posters of Mr. Joe Higgins, he will be glad to know. I may not agree with them but they are consistent. I have no doubt that Mr. Higgins does not apply for funding from outside this jurisdiction. I am quite sure his posters are authentic and I compliment him thereon.
Mr. Joe Higgins, MEP

To correct the Chairman, all of the main parties have got funding from their groups in Europe.

Chairman

I am not talking about that but about funding from outside this jurisdiction that does not come from the European Union. There is quite an amount of it, as Mr. Higgins will know.

Negative campaigning, which has featured during this campaign, has achieved new heights or depths, as the case may be. Whether this is good or bad remains to be seen. One group responsible in this regard is the one with the picture of the plaintive child on a poster. I do not know what it intends to portray to the community, in Ireland or beyond, but the European Union, as a union, has done more than any other society or group of nations across the globe to protect children, look after their interests, and protect and safeguard civil and human rights. Irrespective of what the poster in question is intended to portray, it does no justice to its authors, to the message it intends to convey or to democracy.

We need to bear in mind that there should always be some semblance of truth in the message one must circulate in the political arena. I am not saying there should be absolute truth but there should be some affinity with reality and the facts. Consider the Catcher in the Rye syndrome that has developed in recent times. Since John Wilkes Boothe fired that famous shot numerous conspiracy theories have been built around that but none to compete with the number of conspiracy theories that have been built around the campaigns on the Lisbon treaty, particularly the second one. The problem with conspiracies is that if eventually you believe everyone is out to get you and you become paranoid, eventually they will get you because it becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy. The imagination runs riot and eventually the person loses control.

Deputy Mary O’Rourke

You would go mad.

Chairman
Eventually one begins to hear voices, which is a sad thing. Let me make two points.

**Mr. Joe Higgins MEP**

What does the Chairman make of multinational corporations threatening us this morning?

**Chairman**

I will talk about them also.

**Mr. Joe Higgins, MEP**

Along with the Minister, Deputy Gormley.

**Chairman**

With regard to multinational corporations, it has been suggested in recent days that a "No" vote would have a negative impact from an Irish perspective. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that Mr. Joe Higgins is a millionaire or major investor who proposes to invest in Hawaii, Alaska or the other US states. If in one of these locations there was a vote or a debate on leaving the union, would Mr. Higgins be happy to continue investing? Would he consider it safe, or would his backers be happy with that investment? Whether he accepts it or not, the reality is that investors are a peculiar breed. They are not forced to invest anywhere; they will invest of their own accord.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin**

With respect, no one is proposing to leave the European Union.

**Chairman**

With respect, I will come to Deputy Ó Caoláin in a minute.
Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

The Chairman is completely off. He should stick to the facts——

Chairman

I want to finish off.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

——and the truth as well.

Chairman

I want to come to a valid point raised by Deputy Ó Caoláin.

Mr. Joe Higgins MEP

The Chairman must accept a short intervention.

Chairman

No.

Mr. Joe Higgins MEP

The Chairman spoke about false statements and then he made a false statement.

Chairman

Unfortunately, I am winding up. If Mr. Joe Higgins wishes to take over the job of chair, I suggest he do so.

Mr. Joe Higgins MEP
I do not, but I beg the Chairman to hear for me for 60 seconds.

Chairman

No, I will not. You had your contribution and I am summing up.

I want to deal with an issue, which is a fair one, raised by Deputy Ó Caoláin. He mentioned what appears to be a contradiction of the right to strike and the right to form a business. This is an important question which has gone around several times and people on opposing sides have used the argument.

I happen to be one of the people involved in the drawing up the fundamental charter. One matter discussed at great length was that when formally recognises the right to strike, who can say that one does not have the right to strike? There must always be a right to strike in certain circumstances. That does not mean one is forced or must strike in all circumstances. It has to be balanced. In the same way one must have the right – and there is the right – to set up a business. One is not forced to set up a business. The Lisbon treaty does not force one to set up a business. The fundamental charter does not force one to set up a business. However, there are balancing rights there, each of which in their own time and place have a particular reason for being there.

The point raised by Deputy Ó Caoláin is a valid point but I presume he raised it with tongue in cheek because he already knows the answer.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

I raised it to give the Minister a chance to respond. However, like with many of the other questions I put, he did not respond to it.

Chairman

I want to finish off on one other matter. Militarisation, militarism and so on has been referred to many times. Several members of the committee have visited EUFOR missions abroad. We all should be proud of the Defence Forces and the role it has played internationally for the past 60 years. It has done the nation proud. Those who suggest it should not have access to training with its
colleagues in the EU and the UN are wrong. That is the most important factor in assisting the Defence Forces to look after its interests and do its job.

Incidentally, in every location Irish personnel have been posted with EUFOR, we have been told of the wonderful job they have done, how important it was and how their expertise was above beyond that of other defence forces throughout the world. We should not lose sight of the occasion to recognise them for the job they have done.

I thank members for being present. I thank the diplomatic corps, the press, our recording staff behind the glass case who are always silent, the committee secretariat and policy adviser, who advises us sometimes quietly and sometimes not so quietly. I thank our long suffering staff who have to change the formats of meetings at short notice. I thank members again for attending. It is not easy to attend when they are meant to be down in their constituencies working. I also thank those who campaign against the treaty for giving us of their time.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin**

The Chairman can thank us on Saturday.

**Chairman**

We will thank you on Friday. I thank the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Deputy John Gormley, for attending.

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**Chairman**

In accordance with a previous decision of the joint committee, party leaders have been invited to address us on the Lisbon treaty, the importance of it and to outline why people should be led by their views. This morning we are joined by the Leader of the Fine Gael Party, Deputy Enda Kenny, who is accompanied by Deputy Billy Timmins and Mr. Mark Kennelly. I invite Deputy Kenny to address the committee.
Deputy Enda Kenny

Ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghlacadh leis an Chathaoirleach as uct an cuireadh a thug sé dom an tseachtain seo mar cheannaire ar Fhíne Gael chun go leagfainn amach go díreach céard atá i gceist againn-ne mar pháirtí ó thaobh chonradh Lisbon.

On the day of the result of the first referendum last June, I said the reasons for the "No" vote should be examined carefully and that the concerns and anxieties expressed by so many people should be comprehensively addressed. In that context, I acknowledge the work done in the period subsequent to the decision by the people on the last occasion and by Senator Donohoe in chairing a special sub-committee of the Joint Committee on European Affairs and teasing out the treaty and the issues that gave rise to public concern during the referendum campaign on the first occasion.

That work was valuable in identifying the core issues that led to the referendum result and enabled the Government to seek solutions based on those concerns and the clear analysis that came from the work of that sub-committee. The resultant legal guarantees given by our European partners in June meet these concerns and allow our people to make informed choices before they cast their votes on 2 October. As members of the committee are aware, the Fine Gael Party has had a long and very consistent record of support for European issues and the European process over many decades. We have campaigned actively and energetically in favour of each and every European treaty, whether in Government or Opposition and we shall do the same on this occasion. I repeat what I have said on so many occasions that this is about ourselves, our people and our country.

We are currently involved in a comprehensive national campaign in favour of the ratification of the treaty because we believe that a "Yes" vote is fundamental and critical if this country is to recover from the current economic crisis. Anybody who says we can rescue the economy, fix the banking system, protect jobs and attract new investment in isolation, without the support and solidarity of Europe, is deluding himself. It would be very easy for me as leader of the main Opposition party to allow this referendum to be dominated by domestic political issues, of which there are many, and in respect of which we have fundamental disagreements with the Government. While I fully understand people's anger and the depth of frustration felt by so many, I do not want and have not allowed this crucial referendum to become a protest against the Government. As in all previous referendums, my party is campaigning vigorously for a "Yes" vote. This we have done in
Government and in Opposition, as we regard European Union membership to be a cornerstone for this country's success for the future.

The vote on 2 October gives the people a unique opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to remaining right at the centre and in the central axis of a process that has brought peace and stability to the continent of Europe. I am not sure whether Oireachtas Members generally appreciate the level of interest and concern within the European Union at the responsibility on our people in deciding on this question on 2 October. Other member states see this as something that is fundamentally important for the entire future of the Union and desperately want to continue to be in a position to continue to help Ireland as a member of that Union. While the debates in previous treaties have been about issues such as Structural Funds and allocations of finance for projects as well as other financial issues, or else about the creation of new powers for the European Union, the Lisbon treaty has provided us with an opportunity to have a real debate about ourselves and our views on and place in Europe. That is why this referendum is about our attitude to Europe: do we want to be at the heart of it or do we want to isolate ourselves and become irrelevant?

Many people campaigning against this treaty — and I have met a great many around the country — would have one believe that we can have it both ways. They say we can reject a reformed treaty that has the support of all other EU members while at the same time remaining central to the European process. This is not a credible position. This country's best interests lie in Ireland continuing to be an influential and respected member of an efficient, effective and democratic European Union. That is what the Lisbon treaty will create and that is why it will build on previous referendums and treaties.

Essentially the treaty's purpose is to reform the institutions and decision making processes of the Union to cater for a population of 500 million in 27 member states and prepare Europe for the many phenomenal challenges it faces. These include the growing economic power of countries such as China, Russia and India and the situation that will apply in a global sense in the next ten to 20 years, where the world will be very different to what it is now. It is to make those changes to allow the Union to cope with such challenges and Ireland as an integral part of the EU has an important contribution to make. Other global challenges such as climate change, hunger and disease epidemics require Europe to speak with a coherent voice if this continent is to be effective in contributing to solutions to such problems. The Lisbon treaty will equip Europe to meet these challenges.

EU membership has been pivotal to our success. Membership of the Union ended our economic dependence upon Britain and opened up new and fruitful markets for our products. I recall, as
Minister of State with responsibility for trade, many years ago, making deliberate attempts to shift the balance of exports from dependence on the British market to the newly opening European market. This is the largest market in the world, with the most potential for Ireland. I am glad that in the intervening years efforts by many successful Ministers as well as business have brought about a growth in understanding of that potential. That gave us an independence, through the European Union, moving away from our centuries of economic dependence upon Britain.

We were not in a position to afford enormous sections of our infrastructure. It was our European partners and European taxpayers who contributed to that. If they had not done so, the economic progress of the past 15 years simply would not have been possible. There is no doubt that the significant inward investment into Ireland was stimulated by our place in Europe, Ireland being the only English speaking country in the eurozone. One can examine what has happened here as regards foreign direct investment, FDI, particularly from the United States, where there has always been a difficulty or complication in dealing with so many foreign languages. Given the traditional social, economic and political links this country had with the United States, 30 years ago when its investment in the manufacture of hardware began it saw Ireland as an English speaking country with a clear legal system and providing a unique opportunity as a marketing point for entry into Europe. From that has grown so much more inward investment in so many other spheres and we want that message to continue. Once our affairs are in order here, Lisbon opens up massive potential for Ireland's new generations and that message needs to be sent out clearly across the world.

More recently the support and stability of the eurozone has been crucial for the Irish banking system. It should be noted that the ECB has injected €120 billion into Irish lending institutions to prop up the economy. I recall a meeting in Brussels last year when a Norwegian observer said we must realise what is happening. He pointed to the situation that Iceland was in at the time, with the Russians at the door with their offers. He noted that the importance of Europe and its capacity to support countries in difficulty was self evident. At a time when Ireland has difficulties regarding unemployment, the collapse of tax revenues and a record budget deficit, it is more important than ever that we strengthen our place in the European Union.

As the only country holding a referendum on this treaty, we have a special responsibility to ensure that, for its remaining days, this campaign is honest, open, rational and based on the truth rather than on the many false and misleading arguments that have been promoted by anti-European groups in recent months. I have held quite a number of public meetings throughout the country. We invited members of the public to those meetings, which have been attended in many cases by people of the
"No" persuasion. While most of the arguments have been very rational and people are entitled to their viewpoint, some of them have been absolutely over the top. Committee members have all seen the posters stating the minimum wage will be reduced to €1.84 if we ratify the Lisbon treaty. This is absolutely irresponsible and false, and is designed to frighten and confuse people. It is an example of very negative campaigning but it did have an impact, especially with young people who might not read all the newspapers or tune into all the news broadcasts. That figure stuck in many people's minds but it is false and irresponsible.

The truth is, of course, that the European Union has no function or intention, no hand, act or part, in dealing with the minimum wage in this country or in any other country. In fact, the protection of workers is a core value of the European Union and much of legislation dealing with workers and workers' rights originated in European Union law in the first place. The Lisbon treaty will advance those rights through what is known as the horizontal social clause, where the social consequences must be taken into account if legislation is drafted, and through the new rights such as the collective bargaining established by the Charter of Fundamental Rights which will be given treaty status for the first time. My party has already committed to legislating for collective bargaining and, with Ireland being the only country not having yet done so, it is an issue that was considered carefully by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and by the majority of trade unions which have given their welcome and approval and advise their members to vote "Yes" for the Lisbon treaty. There are clearly a number of unions which disagree with that and they are entitled to their opinion.

Our colleagues in Europe have committed themselves to the protection of workers in the solemn declaration agreed in June. That sets out in clear and simple language the importance of social protection to the European Union project. The former Polish President and champion of workers' rights in Gdansk and throughout his country 30 years ago, Lech Walesa, was in Ireland last weekend. He came here to say that his entire life was built on tearing down the wall, breaking down Communism and building up workers' rights and their protection, allowing workers to have careers and futures and to raise their families in an environment of which we can all be proud. As a result, he wanted to say clearly that the new legal status given by the Lisbon treaty will protect and defend workers' rights. It is fundamental that this be explained to all workers here in Ireland, which is why I have made an issue of explaining to workers in various locations throughout the country that there is nothing to be afraid of in the Lisbon treaty in so far as workers and workers' rights are concerned. I am concerned at attempts to suggest that the Lisbon treaty would impact on Ireland's right to retain control over sensitive and important ethical issues, including the right to life. This is not correct. As a Catholic, I was offended by some of the material I read. Having spoken to a number of senior
clergy who actually removed some of the material from their churches on the basis that it was not official documentation of the church, I welcomed the statements by Bishop Treanor to this committee and by the committee of bishops in which they clearly stated it is absolutely proper for Catholics to vote either "Yes" or "No" in the knowledge that the Lisbon treaty does not contain anything that would impact upon their religious beliefs or these ethical issues. In fact, as the members of the committee are aware, the protocol dating back to the Maastricht Treaty almost 20 years ago guarantees our right to make our laws in this area. These guarantees were reaffirmed by our European colleagues in June, when they confirmed that nothing in the Lisbon treaty can in any way affect the protection of the right to life enshrined in Bunreacht na hÉireann at Articles 40.3.1°, 40.3.2° and 40.3.3°.

Others have argued that if we vote "Yes", we will lose voting influence. I take the opposite view. Since we opted to join the European Union 35 years ago, this country, through positive and constructive engagement by all Governments and the Ministers who went to Europe, has achieved a level of influence and respect with our partners far beyond our size. In adopting this approach, successive Governments have worked to build a climate in which the Irish view really does matter and where our voice is both respected and heard. We are and have been for many years a role model for smaller member states who want to attain the same level of respect and influence we have.

I speak not just as a Deputy or the leader of my party but also as an elected vice president of the European People's Party. This, as members will be aware, is the largest voting bloc in the European Parliament and contains 14 prime ministers and 13 who think they should be prime ministers. In any event, it provides the opportunity to meet these people regularly and to understand the range of challenges they face in their individual countries. Through all of that comes the collective understanding that what the Union is about is building on the principles on which it was first formed, namely, peace, democracy and a strong sense of fairness and social justice whereby people can live their lives in their respective countries safe in that knowledge.

On every occasion I attend the meetings held before the heads of government meetings, the same agendas are discussed. These people, who are of considerable influence both in European and world politics, want this country to remain central to the European project. They want us in there. This is our choice. It is about our people and our vote. They would all come here in the morning if they thought it was appropriate, but I have reminded them that this is a matter for the Irish people themselves. It is our decision and we must make up our minds on what it is we intend to do.

This referendum allows people an opportunity to reaffirm their support for Europe and to send out a very clear and positive signal, not just to Europe but around the world, that this small country of 4.2
million people is well able to accept the responsibility of making a decision for the future of 500 million people. In that sense, we have very good friends in Europe whom we should keep. I believe and hope the referendum will be passed and that this will be done with a resounding "Yes". This will strengthen our links with the new Europe as we proceed to meet the challenges of the next 20 years which will come from world leaders such as the United States, China, India, Russia, South Africa, Brazil and other emerging powers.

This is a crucial referendum for the State. I ask people to consider carefully the implications of their vote and the responsibility they are assuming. I ask people to set aside their dissatisfaction with the Government and their domestic political concerns. I ask people to vote for their country and not against the Government. This referendum is about us as a people and the future of our country. I hope the electorate will give a resounding "Yes" to the Lisbon treaty on this occasion. It is clear to me as I have travelled throughout the State that there is a much greater understanding of the treaty's contents this time around. Issues that were of concern last year have been clarified in people's minds. I have had people crossing the street to tell me that while they voted "No" last year, they are now satisfied that there will be no negative implications in terms of taxation, conscription or whatever. I hope that is translated into an approval of the referendum on 2 October.

**Deputy Lucinda Creighton**

I welcome Deputies Kenny and Timmins to the meeting.

**Deputy Mary O’Rourke**

We hardly knew Deputy Kenny.

**Deputy Billy Timmins**

I am here all the time.

**Deputy Lucinda Creighton**

I compliment Deputy Kenny on his comprehensive contribution. The theme that emerges most strikingly from his well considered words is essentially the reminder that united we stand and
divided we fall. It is important that we articulate the positive case for the treaty. We must have common solutions to the common problems facing the European Union, as outlined by Deputy Kenny, including cross-border health threats, cross-border crime, drug trafficking, environmental challenges, energy security, energy costs and so on. The greatest challenge, and the issue that is to the fore of everybody's mind, is to facilitate economic recovery and job creation. All of these are common challenges for the 27 member states of the European Union and we can only face them as part of a united Europe. As Deputy Kenny eloquently articulated, we cannot meet these challenges in isolation.

Deputy Kenny mentioned that he is a vice president of the European People's Party, EPP, the largest grouping in the European Parliament and the one with the largest contingent of prime ministers. I hope Deputy Kenny will be joining the ranks of prime ministerial members of the EPP in the near future. In his informal discussions with his counterparts at EPP meetings, both Opposition leaders and prime ministers, what has he found to be the general view since the defeat of the first referendum and what is the hope and expectation in regard to the outcome of the referendum that will take place on 2 October?

Deputy Kenny referred to some of the social and ethical issues that have cropped up in the course of the debate on the Lisbon treaty. The same issues have been raised in every single European Union referendum campaign since the first debate on joining the European Community in 1973. What is Deputy Kenny's view of some of the extremist groups that are active in this campaign? Córí is one such but there are many more. At the coffee dock in my local Spar last night I found a bundle of anti-Lisbon leaflets. The pamphlets, which referred to the "Lisbun" treaty, contained preposterous claims to the effect that our children would not be safe and would be taken from us in the streets in the event that the treaty is implemented. Such claims are beyond fantastical and it is truly frightening to realise these people are infiltrating not just the backs of churches but supermarkets and corner shops.

What is Deputy Kenny's view on how our distinctive constitutional values will be protected under the Lisbon treaty? How does he believe our distinctly Irish values in regard to the right to life, euthanasia and all these other issues in respect of which we have heard scare stories will be protected under the Lisbon treaty? How can we best provide reassurance to the public that such protection is there? Deputy Kenny referred to the bishops' conference. Dr. Treanor appeared before the committee more than a week ago and his contribution was obviously a positive from our point of view.
I remain concerned that many farmers and fishermen throughout the State intend to reject the treaty once again in the belief that such a protest vote will strengthen their positions. Both groups have legitimate complaints about the withdrawal of the REP scheme and other broken promises from the Government. However, it is vital that they distinguish between disappointments at a national level and the separate and important role of the European Union. Is Deputy Kenny of the view that farmers and fishermen can in any way have their hands strengthened by a "No" vote? Is it conceivable at any level that it would be in their interests to reject the treaty? What are the potential benefits in accepting the treaty for those particular groups?

Deputy Mary O’Rourke

I join other members in welcoming Deputy Kenny. It is difficult in an environment where we are all — apart from one member, who is fully entitled to his view — in tune to identify points of discussion. Nevertheless, there are several points I wish to raise.

We would all agree with Deputy Kenny's assertion that everybody is entitled to his or her view, whether in respect of a referendum campaign or in political life in general. However, I find it extremely difficult to cope with some of the outlandish arguments that have been made. If one is in a debate on local radio, one is inevitably struck by what Deputy Creighton described as the preposterous nature of some of the claims put forward by those urging a rejection of the treaty. How does one maintain an objective view and remain sanguine when one is told by the person sitting across the table that he or she does not care what the bishops say? The bishops are wrong, we are told, and a rejection of the treaty is the only way to ensure abortion and euthanasia remain illegal, that our children will be safe and that our young adult sons will not be conscripted to fight in wars not of our making. We know this is absolute nonsense but what I find most difficult in this campaign is to maintain a sense of perspective when seeking to counteract such nonsense. The debate on the referendum has been peppered with outlandish claims which are particularly evident in the posters we have seen throughout the State. It is easy to tell ourselves that posters do not make a difference to people's voting intentions. If we were genuinely convinced of that, why are we on the "Yes" side also investing in thousands of them?
There are gullible people who swallow the claims that the minimum wage will be reduced to €1.84 per hour, that parents will have their children taken from them, that abortion will be introduced and so on. Such claims may be even more persuasive when a person picks up the literature in question in the knave of a church. We discussed all of this with Dr. Treanor, Bishop of Down and Connor, and there is no point in going through it again. Dr. Treanor was enormously supportive and stated emphatically that any Catholic could in good conscience vote to accept the treaty. That was of enormous significance and I conveyed the information to everybody in my organisation in case there were any lingering doubts.

Nevertheless, the myth has not been punctured but is instead gathering force. I would not like Deputy Kenny or any of us to leave this warm and comfortable environment in the belief that everything is okay in the home corral. Everything is not okay. I suppose I am particularly exposed to it in that the lady whom I will refer to as "Mrs. Cóir" and who is also the spokeswoman for the Democratic Alliance for Women lives in Athlone. The title of the latter organisation is surely a misnomer. The real difficulty is that so much of the debate on the Lisbon treaty involves those on the "Yes" side having by necessity to refute the silly arguments of those opposed to it rather than pointing to the positives. It is difficult to achieve a balance. If one allows the myth to persist and fails to do it down, one has done a disservice to the cause. If one does otherwise, people might think one was highly negative towards that woman or whatever.

The second point, which really riles me and which I am sure Deputy Kenny has encountered, is the sense of isolation the "No" campaign seeks to inculcate in us all. They suggest we have no one else on whom to rely and that it is us for ourselves alone. This is not the case in the world in which we live today. It is us as part of Europe, just as important as Germany or France. Deputy Kenny's comment immediately struck a chord. I identify with the fact that we have more, rather than less influence in the voting structures that now have emerged. He should outline how to cope with the downright lies that are being peddled by the "No" campaign.

**Deputy Pat Breen**

I welcome Deputy Kenny before the joint committee. Fine Gael always has been highly pro-European and has taken an active role in all the referendum campaigns that have been held in recent years. Deputy Creighton asked about Deputy Kenny's role as vice president of the European People's Party grouping and his dealings with his counterparts in Europe. I seek information about his travels at home because I believe he is the most travelled leader within Ireland.
Deputy Timmy Dooley

Deputy Breen is not calling his leader a Traveller.

Deputy Pat Breen

I make the point that he is not afraid to face the people. I wish to make that quite clear. Deputy Kenny has been out and about meeting people in the past two to three years, especially during the two referendum campaigns on the Lisbon treaty. He should provide the committee with insights into the mood of the people on foot of his dealings with them and particularly on their opinions regarding the two referendum campaigns.

The same opponents have been with us in every referendum. They were present during the campaigns on the Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice treaties as well as during the previous Lisbon treaty referendum. They have been engaged in scaremongering and members are familiar with the usual antics on abortion, conscription, etc. The major issue at present is that of the minimum wage. Deputy Kenny should reiterate to members that this matter has nothing to do with the treaty. Even though the President of the Commission, Mr. Barroso, gave us an assurance in this regard last Saturday, this issue is current and needs to be killed off this morning. Another area on which Cóir is beginning to focus in another scaremongering tactic is that of euthanasia. Deputy Kenny should comment on this subject as well.

Deputy Timmy Dooley

I welcome Deputy Kenny, the leader of Fine Gael, and thank him for his concise and direct presentation. Deputy Kenny has identified effectively all the current issues and has dealt with them conclusively in his address. Notwithstanding this, the difficulty faced by all fellow travellers on this campaign as they try to get it over the line is that they find themselves up against some upfront groups that one can address and which will engage in public debate and against others which do not. I refer to groups that can only be referred to as being sinister in nature. Deputy O'Rourke alluded to the fact they are from different backgrounds, some of which cannot be identified because they do
not adhere to the law regarding putting the necessary information on their posters as to who or what they are and for what they stand.

One faces the difficulty of being ambushed by colourful material of high quality that seeks to misguide the entire population. I have been taken by the amount of literature coming through the door every day from groups of which I had never heard previously. They seek funding and support and put across a message for which there is no basis in the contents of this treaty or those of any of the treaties that heretofore have been passed and accepted. It comes down to the capacity of Deputy Kenny's organisation, the organisation of which I am a member and all those who seek to support this treaty over the next nine days. They must try to get out and convince their own people of its importance and to canvass as diligently and as hard as they possibly can. The public will react to people they know and it will be necessary to do this to get past the scaremongering that is coming through via colourful literature of a high quality.

I also agree with Deputy Creighton's remarks regarding the agricultural and fishing communities. While we have gone as far as possible with the fishing community, there still is a body within the rural farming community that has a difficult decision to make. I also was taken by the recent survey conducted by Red C and published in the Irish Farmers’ Journal which seems to indicate there is a very strong balance towards the “Yes” side from the farming community but there is work to do in this regard. Deputy Kenny should comment on the agricultural sector, within which his party has good support. He should comment on his perception of the importance of a “Yes” vote towards assisting in the development of the farming community. I refer to trying to reassure them that, despite the difficult times through which they are going at present, there is an opportunity for them in the future and that they will be embraced within the growth, development and evolution of the European project.

**Senator Feargal Quinn**

Deputy Kenny is welcome and I was pleased to hear both his words and the strength with which he expressed them. Deputy Creighton mentioned a visit to her local supermarket in which she found some literature urging her to vote "No" and which provided information she believed to be untrue. She suggested that perhaps members might have a view as to what each of them should do were they to find such literature in their local supermarket. While my initial instinct would be to take it
and throw it in the bin, my second instinct is to suggest that the local supermarket should be the marketplace in which one should allow all sides to debate. Therefore, it could be dangerous for members to take the action one might initially contemplate.

I seek Deputy Kenny's views regarding the distribution of literature in which views are expressed that he considers to be untrue and on what might be done in this regard. I am especially concerned about the leaflet I have to hand. It came through my post box and, to the best of my knowledge, through every post box on my road and perhaps in the country. I believe this may be the leaflet that has been sponsored by the United Kingdom Independence Party. That party declared its intention to put an item of its literature into every home in Ireland to encourage the "No" vote.

The funding for this leaflet is coming from abroad because at its bottom, it states "Europe of Freedom and Democracy group in the European Parliament (DK/FR/UK/FI Delegations)". The initials refer to delegations from Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Finland. If this leaflet has been funded from outside the State, is that acceptable or is it even legal? I believe that in the United States, it is not legal to fund political campaigns or action from outside the state. I am unsure whether the leaflet has been distributed by An Post. However, if this is the case, a State body has been used for a purpose that may not be and should not be legal to influence political decisions. While I do know whether this is the case, I seek Deputy Kenny's view on whether action should be taken in this regard as well.

**Senator Pearse Doherty**

Cuirim fáilte roimh an Teachta Kenny chuig an choiste seo. I listened with interest to what Deputy Kenny had to say. One point that jumped out at me is that he spoke about how this debate on the Lisbon treaty is not merely about the transfer of funds or of competences but that fundamentally it is about our attitude to Europe and whether we wish to be part of it or whether we wish to be isolated and irrelevant. I suggest this constitutes absolute scaremongering. As a legislator, Deputy Kenny, is aware that one considers the text and implications of the wording of any legislation that comes before one. He understands how, if enacted, the treaty will affect Irish or other citizens. This is what the Lisbon treaty is about and we should have a real and honest debate about its content.

I hope that there will be a "No" vote on 2 October. A likely, if not automatic, consequence will be the Government's collapse. Were Deputy Kenny to become Taoiseach, would he give a commitment that he would not put the treaty, if rejected by the people twice, before them again without a single change having been made to its text, as is currently the case?
Deputy Kenny claims that the treaty will not diminish our influence but will have the opposite effect. Without discussing how our vote on the Council of Ministers will halve or how we will confer 30 new competences on the EU, how is it in Ireland's interest to give up our veto in 68 areas? Speaking as leader of Fine Gael, how would this serve the people? Article 48, which would see us giving up the right to a referendum, allows us the infrastructure to move from veto to qualified majority voting on taxation issues. Deputy Kenny mentioned workers' rights, but he and his party have as much credibility on that issue as Ryanair. Fine Gael has opposed social partnership and attacked the unions regularly.

Chairman

We have tried to be as courteous as possible to all of the leaders. I remind the Senator that we want to continue in that vein.

Senator Pearse Doherty

I want to conduct an honest debate. Fine Gael is on the record more than once as having attacked public rights.

Deputy Lucinda Creighton

That is blatantly dishonest.

Chairman

Let me explain for a moment. We try not to introduce personal animosities and we try to ensure allegations are not made against persons or parties. The Senator should remember that his party leader in the Oireachtas was given a courteous reception.

Senator Pearse Doherty

I appreciate the direction from the Cathaoirleach. What I was pointing out is that it is well known and on the record that Deputy Kenny's party has opposed social partnership and attacked unions
several times. My question is on his commitment to enshrine in legislation the rights to representation by a trade union and to engage in collective bargaining. Does he intend to enshrine those rights in the Constitution? That would be the best way to provide them.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights provides a right to collective bargaining. Under Article 16, however, it provides a guarantee to conduct a business. If the treaty is ratified, what will occur when these competing rights clash, as they have done in the Laval, Viking Line, Rüffert and Luxembourg cases?

We have mentioned other campaigners' posters with which Sinn Féin have nothing to do. All of our posters cite the articles to which they refer in their images. Fine Gael's campaign posters state, "Yes to jobs", yet its April pre-budget submission proposed the sacking of 14,000 public sector workers. Is it not contradictory to call for the creation of jobs at one time and the sacking of 14,000 public sector workers at another? Is Fine Gael's poster campaign misleading? These documents are on the record and can be inspected.

Fine Gael has a policy document entitled, "Beyond Neutrality", which was introduced by Gay Mitchell, MEP, a number of years ago. Like many, I am confused by Fine Gael's policy on the State's neutrality. Will Deputy Kenny clarify this matter? Does Fine Gael support a European common defence compatible with NATO that seeks to increase the EU's ability to deploy troops in non-EU countries in what the Lisbon treaty calls "joint disarmament missions", such as that under way in Iraq, or in missions to assist non-EU countries in combating terrorism, as in Afghanistan? This is what is contained in the Lisbon treaty. Having read "Beyond Neutrality", I believe that Fine Gael supports this, but will Deputy Kenny clarify the matter for the committee?

**Chairman**

The Senator does not attend committee meetings too often, but we welcome him when he does.

**Senator Déirdre de Búrca**

I welcome Deputy Kenny as leader of the Fine Gael Party to the committee and thank him for his interesting overview of his party's position on the Lisbon treaty. He is campaigning hard in favour of it.

He mentioned the false and misleading claims made on the well known Cóir poster about the minimum wage being likely to decrease to €1.84 were the treaty to be ratified. In his experience,
have many people raised this issue with him? As a campaigner on the treaty, many young people have expressed concern to me. They have taken the poster's message at face value. The issue of the minimum wage is pertinent to younger people in particular who might find themselves working at that rate during holiday periods and so on. The 18-25 year old age group did not vote in favour of the treaty the last time. Is Deputy Kenny concerned that young people might be misled by the poster's message and be equally inclined to vote against the treaty again? What can be done in the time remaining to try to correct this false impression which is being disseminated by certain quarters?

Concerning the upcoming negotiations on a new international climate change agreement in Copenhagen in December, the EU was a global leader where the Kyoto Protocol was concerned and has indicated that it is equally prepared to sign up to impressive emissions reduction targets, depending on the positions taken by other major international powers. Is Deputy Kenny concerned that were the Lisbon treaty rejected again, the EU would go into those negotiations in a weakened position? It would not serve the citizens of the EU or the international community because the latter will look to Europe to provide strong leadership in this area.

**Deputy Beverley Flynn**

I also welcome Deputy Kenny, Leader of the Opposition and my constituency colleague, to the meeting and thank him for his considered paper. I do not want to repeat what many others have stated but he has highlighted a number of areas of concern.

What are the treaty's three main selling features to try to convince people to vote "Yes"? We recognise that it is a technical treaty. I was a member of a sub-committee chaired by Senator Donohoe on analysing why people voted "No" at the last referendum. Senator de Búrca referred to young people, but women were particularly negative. In the course of my campaigning this time, I have encountered some of that negativity but I am happy to say nowhere near as much as last time. What is in the Lisbon treaty that would encourage women to vote "Yes"? Some of the fears raised at the last referendum related to conscription into a European army, cross-Border crime and the trafficking of women. Is there anything in the treaty that would be positive for women specifically? The treaty affects all citizens equally. Women for Europe, a group that has been active throughout the debate, is holding a meeting in our constituency. This is an issue on the ground and I would be
interested in learning Deputy Kenny's opinions, especially given that his party's European spokesperson is a woman.

Many people have referred to the minimum wage and young people have been taken in by the poster. The document to which Senator Quinn referred was distributed throughout the country. A door-to-door canvas was carried out in our constituency and people were told that a local industry would be at risk specifically because foreign workers with a lower minimum wage would be drafted into Ireland. What is Deputy Kenny's opinion on the Laval judgment and how it impacts on the minimum wage? Ireland sets its minimum wage but I refer to other EU workers coming into Ireland and working on a lower minimum wage that might apply in their country.

I note that Mr. Peter Sutherland is reported in the newspaper this morning as saying that politicians can be parochial. In the Mayo constituency, with five Deputies campaigning for a "Yes" vote on the last occasion, the county voted "No". I hope the situation will be reversed on this occasion. Does Deputy Kenny feel it will be and is there anything that rural counties can do to bring about a changed result?

Deputy Noel Treacy

I warmly welcome Deputy Kenny and thank him for his focussed and concise contribution on the treaty and the Union. I endorse everything he said and I assure him this committee has always operated on the basis of fact and opportunity for our people. We do not allow scaremongering and I am disappointed reference was made to this today. I am shocked at the level of negativity and the depths to which the "No" campaign has gone. This was illustrated this week in what I call double negative pamphlets created by the "No" campaign placed in churches around the country. They use the name of an organisation in this city, telling people to vote "Yes" for the treaty and say this will guarantee a massive invasion of foreign workers, not just from all parts of the Union but from outside it into the Union and Ireland, thus forcing down the minimum wage in Ireland. These documents have been placed in churches particularly in the west of Ireland and in Dublin. When that organisation, whose name was on the pamphlet, was contacted it had not been consulted about the document. It was obvious that the type of document and the type of printing done would not come from any professional, competent body, voluntary or otherwise. This is the level they have reached to create confusion and misguide people to lead them to think that if they vote "Yes" they will destroy the country, with the idea being to encourage them to vote "No". This is very sad.
Does Deputy Kenny accept that the strength of the Union has been solidarity and security? I refer to solidarity in respect of the crises and challenges the Union has faced over the years, whether in financial matters, economic matters or natural disasters. I refer to security of citizens at all levels, irrespective of the member state the citizen is in. Does Deputy Kenny accept that there is no threat at any time to the rule of the sovereign Government of the Republic of Ireland in managing education, health and taxation in the interest our country, in contrast to the "No" campaign which suggests that we are we are handing over these responsibilities in the Lisbontreaty?

Deputy Kenny finished up on an optimistic note that the treaty would be passed and I hope it will be but I agree with Deputies Creighton and Flynn that a residue of negativity exists in the rural vote. This worries me and we need a major effort in the final nine days to ensure we can transfer that to positive action. Deputy Flynn alluded to Mayo, Deputy Kenny's home county, which had the highest "No" in Ireland on the last occasion. Is Deputy Kenny optimistic that Mayo and the west can give the lead and give the right result this time?

**Senator Terry Leyden**

I welcome Deputy Kenny and Deputy Timmins, who has changed seat. I got a bit of a shock when I came in and thought he was a Minister. I was inadvertently late for the meeting because the Order Paper of the Seanad refers to a meeting of the Joint Committee on European Affairs being held in committee room 3 at 11.30 a.m. I apologise to Deputy Kenny. I went to the end of Deputy Kenny's meeting on Monday to welcome him to Roscommon town. The meeting was well attended on Monday, when it is usually difficult to get people to attend. Deputy Kenny made a good impression and a great contribution. Deputies Kenny and Gilmore put the national interest ahead of their party political interests in the sense that this is about Ireland rather than any individual party. The Lisbon reform treaty is bigger than any political party. It concerns the future of this country and we need a positive result on it on 2 October in the interests of the country.

I refer to issues that arise such as conservation of bogs. I asked the people involved in this what influence we will have after 2 October if we vote "No". What influence will we have on the Common Agricultural Policy if we vote "No" on 2 October? How could we go to the Council of Ministers or the Commission having rejected this treaty? We will have a Commissioner for a
guaranteed ten out of 15 years, missing five years, and it could be unfortunate if we do not have a Commissioner during a particularly crucial period.

Some 26 countries have ratified the treaty. New applicant countries joined under our approval, after approving the Nice treaty, and we are in a strong economic position in respect of trade with those countries. As a former Minister of State with responsibility for trade, like me, Deputy Kenny knows the importance of trade, which is crucial at the moment.

The people who voted "No" on the last occasion did us some service in respect of the concessions we received. One such concession was the Commissioner, another was the clarification and confirmation on issues about which we were certain and about which there is now no doubt due to the protocols. This is due to negotiations of the Government and the support of the Opposition. Those issues have been put to bed. Deputy Kenny referred to those who voted "No" on the last occasion but are now satisfied and will vote "Yes". That is positive and we must be broad-minded about this.

It is not the first referendum held on two occasions. I remember campaigning against divorce when Fine Gael proposed the first referendum and within a certain period there was a second referendum. Divorce came in, for better or for worse, and that is life and politics. It is not barred in the Constitution but I do not think there would be a third effort at this subject. If there is a "No" vote on 2 October that is the end of the Lisbon reform treaty. It will also be the end of any reform of the European Union because if the British Conservative party, with the support of the UKIP, is in power it will veto any reform of the European Union. An effort would be made to leave the European Union. The influence of such parties should be totally rejected by the Irish parties. Senator Quinn referred to the document circulated. The advertising is racist, having the Turkish flag implanted with the European Union flag and giving it a prominence that suggests the party is anti-immigration. The party is so anti-immigration that it comes over to Ireland to try to influence voters to vote "No" on 2 October. Sinn Féin is particularly embarrassed by this intrusion and it does not help the "No" campaign in this regard.

I have tremendous respect for Mr. Peter Sutherland but he stated that Irish politicians are too parochial to understand the EU or the Lisbon treaty benefits. He is a former EU Commissioner and former head of the World Trade Organisation and said this to Mark Hennessy, London editor of The Irish Times on Thursday, 24 September 2009. Mr. Peter Sutherland is a fine fellow but some of us have been at the Council of Ministers. He under estimates the ability of the Irish people to decide on 2 October in this regard. His heart is in the right place and he made a major impact when he was a terrific Commissioner. Perhaps he has been misquoted but this appears in The Irish Times today.
We must keep up the momentum and Deputy Kenny has influence as leader of the second largest party in the country. It is important in this regard. The next seven days are crucial to ensuring a "Yes" vote on 2 October.

**Senator Maurice Cummins**

I am convinced there will be a blitz by the "No" campaign to muddy the waters. This morning we have already seen an example of this. What are Fine Gael's plans for maintaining the momentum for a "Yes" vote in the final week of the campaign?

**Deputy Tom Hayes**

I thank the Chairman for allowing me to raise a major concern, namely, the 400,000 unemployed people. This number includes highly qualified graduates and engineers. They are trying to decide how to vote. I ask Deputy Kenny to expand on how we can appeal to these people.

I recently heard a story about IDA officials who brought American investors on a tour of Ireland. They visited three sites, including one in my constituency, and were extremely happy with the workforce available to them. However, on the issue of where Ireland stands in Europe they felt it was a negative development that we were going against the EU despite the benefits we had received. They were deciding whether to invest here or in another European country. That is a serious matter and it needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

**Chairman**

Members have expressed views which are similar to those they expressed on previous occasions. They are particularly concerned about the origin of certain material which is on prominent display throughout the country. Yesterday I noticed a newsletter called The Sovereign Independent, which states that it is published in southern Ireland but does not identify its publisher or origins. It is
similar to the scare mongering described by other members. This propaganda confuses people and creates doubts in their minds.

**Deputy Enda Kenny**

I thank members for their contributions, comments and questions. There is no doubt that the campaign on the last Lisbon referendum was held in complete confusion. There were so many posters and untruths that people were confused by the arguments being made. What is striking about this campaign is that people have a clearer understanding of the issues pertaining to the Lisbon treaty. Our position has been clarified by the legal guarantees given to the Government by the other 26 member states. People are happier in their minds about that. However, I agree that a significant number of people hold entrenched views or concerns about elements of the arguments for and against the treaty.

Deputy Creighton made several important observations. Other leaders of EPP group in Brussels expect the Irish people to adopt the Lisbon treaty. They want us to be part of the European Union family irrespective of the differences of political opinion that may arise. They appreciate what Ireland has done, the way our cases have been made over the years and our attendance and contribution to the European Union. As an island nation, we come from a different background to the continent's experience of the wars between France and Germany which caused 60 million deaths and led to the establishment of the European project.

The social and ethical issues have been dealt with on numerous occasions. Irresponsible claims have frightened people, although not to the same extent as in the last campaign. I find from speaking with various groups that they are much clearer than heretofore. I welcome the bishops' comments in that regard. The Most Reverend Dr. Noel Treaner made a very clear contribution to this committee and the Catholic hierarchy issued an assurance that Catholics could vote "Yes" or "No" in the knowledge that the treaty does not impact on these issues. The Maastricht protocol is also clear from an Irish point of view. The Lisbon treaty will have no impact on the issue of abortion or euthanasia. Since Maastricht, we have been protected by a specific protocol on these issues and the Irish people would have to be consulted by referendum before any change is made. The Referendum Commission has confirmed this issue does not impact on the Lisbon referendum and it is false and mischievous to claim otherwise.

I am glad that the IFO, the IFA, the ICSA and the ICMSA offered their considered views of the Lisbon treaty and advised their members to vote "Yes". All the leaders of the EPP were invited
to Dublin in advance of the last referendum to meet farming organisations. It is fair to say that farmers were upset at the way the former Commissioner for Trade, Peter Mandelson, handled agriculture and at his attitude towards the pending WTO negotiations. They felt our cards had been revealed before the negotiations had even started. While the WTO had no material connection to the referendum, people connected the two in their minds. On this occasion, it is true to say the agricultural economy faces serious problems. The cereal crop has been a disaster and production costs for liquid milk are far higher than the price being paid. However, as the most practical of people, farmers understand these matters go in cycles like nature. They are aware of the prospective reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and that it is preferable to be central to the decision making process if we are to secure funds in future negotiations in the face of arguments to shift funding to newer member states. All the farming organisations appreciate we can maintain our influence by endorsing Europe in the sense that a reform of CAP can still bring great benefits to Ireland. This has been recognised in a jobs context, where over 200,000 people are directly employed in the food industry. I chaired the section within our own grouping which wrote the agriculture piece for the recent European elections and there is very strong support for Ireland and Irish agriculture within our connections in Europe. That will be continued in the new Commission and European Council.

I have met with fishermen on a number of occasions up and down the country. There was a very serious issue regarding the transposition of the directive into law and the way it made an impact on fishermen. We produced a Private Members' Bill on that issue and I was glad to see the Tánaiste indicate on Tuesday that the committee dealing with European scrutiny should be able to examine a number of directives to consider the flexibility and common sense we have applied in transposing those directives into law without losing the impact of the directive through red tape and administrative bureaucracy. That was a cause for concern with different sectors, whether they were involved in agriculture, fishing, etc.

The fishermen's association, the IFA, the ICMSA and other farming groups have all considered this very carefully and on balance, they advise their members to vote "Yes" and that it would hold massive potential for us if we can weather these cyclical storms and get our own affairs in order.

I agree with Deputy O'Rourke in that it is very difficult to deal with lies when some people believe wild and inaccurate statements to be correct. Even by sticking to the facts with a treaty such as this, people can sometimes form the wrong view. That has been an issue for everybody who has been involved with this.
Deputy Pat Breen described his own campaign in Clare. The Eurobarometer findings make it clear that people in this country are well able to distinguish between European issues and those in the national domestic political domain. That is being done in this case and I have tried to reinforce the matter by saying that although there may be many differences between me and the Taoiseach and the Government regarding how the country is being run, we will not have a row with the Government on this issue. This is about ourselves and our country.

The minimum wage was mentioned and it has been cleared beyond yea or nay that the Lisbon treaty cannot have an impact on taxation matters. These are entirely within our own competence and will remain so. For people to put out the view that if they vote "Yes" for Lisbon, Ireland's minimum wage will be reduced to €1.84 per hour is a complete fallacy and a downright lie. It just does not apply.

It is a case of us repeating the truth here on so many occasions. As other members of the committee have mentioned, young people in particular, who may not take the time to read all the material, may have seen that poster and an element of it may have stuck with them. I believe that effect is wearing down and I hope it is. The statement is not true.

The mood of the public has reflected how the economic crisis has hit our country to a worse degree than most other countries. People appreciate the extent of the support from the European Central Bank and understand that interest rates are being kept down by the bank. They also appreciate the fact that the European Union is the biggest market in the world and if we get our own affairs in order as a small, nimble and flexible country with massive potential, we can ride many of those waves and we will be there for future changes. We can then avail of the new structure making a Union for 500 million people and 27 countries while working effectively. As a small, nimble and flexible country we can avail of brilliant opportunities in that context.

Deputy Dooley mentioned the mood of the public; he and I have met many farmers. By and large, many people at the National Ploughing Championships indicated to me that however things are in this country, we should stick with Europe, and I hope that is reflected in the vote. Deputy Flynn knows many people in our county felt Europe was to blame for everything but problems arose from the way we transposed directives into law. I hope that has been cleared up for different sectors. Although I cannot predict the outcome, I will ask all the people in our county — which voted "No" the last time — to vote "Yes" on this occasion.

Senator Quinn mentioned support from outside the country for different groups. I do not have any objection to outside groups stating their views, as the Lisbon treaty has implications for all EU member states. Their views should be honest, although this is not the case with what UKIP is
putting out. That group's extreme views, which are untrue, are not accepted by the Irish people and we should continue to say this in the next nine days. Leaflets are being posted in the door which are grossly incorrect but we must deal with that in our own way.

As Deputy Flynn noted, conscription was an issue with mothers but from my tours around the country, I do not believe it to be an issue now. People understand that by voting for the Lisbon treaty, they will not have their sons or daughters conscripted to a European army, which is not even mentioned in this treaty. That has been cleared up for a great number of people.

Deputy Treacy mentioned the importance of solidarity and security, which is essential and understood. He mentioned three issues which stand out for people. These issues are as follows: that every country gets a commissioner; the importance of co-decision making between the European Parliament and the European Council, where elected members from Ireland share the responsibility of voting on issues; and in the area of agriculture, which is important for everybody, the Council will meet in open and public session so people will know what members say, what they do and how they vote. If that happened with the Government, there would be a Cabinet meeting in Castlebar or Athenry and it would be broadcast on Galway Bay radio. Europe is so much more open and less secretive than what goes on here. Those are three big selling points.

Senator Leyden mentioned that we would have no influence if we voted "No". To put it a different way, we are in a central axis of decision making and if we vote "Yes" we will stay there; if we vote "No" they will not kick us out of the Union, although we could leave if we want, but by our own hand we would be consigned to the back room. In that case we would be removed from the central axis and would not be able to see, hear or have the same influence on what is going on.

Deputy Tom Hayes mentioned the 400,000 people unemployed here. Our posters say "Yes to jobs" but the European Union is not going to arrive in here on 5 October and say now that we have voted "Yes", we can have 500,000 jobs. It has, however, put together a multi-billion euro stimulus package for major projects and Ireland can share in that. Over and above that, this is the biggest market in the world and we know we can avail of that. Considering the 1,000 firms based here which are exporting to Europe, I know as a former Minister dealing with trade, we tried to shift the balance from Britain into Europe.

Young entrepreneurs around the country can see real opportunities. We must act domestically as well but by passing the Lisbon treaty, the opportunities will be increased for exporting quality goods and services under competitive regulations. We have always been good at this and the opportunity still exists. Jobs at home will come both from foreign direct investment and even more so from our own entrepreneurs and people of initiative who see ideas and opportunities. The best way to deal
with the social welfare problem is to create jobs. We can do some of this through our own taxation systems such as PRSI and VAT and the way we structure our initiatives both for the protection of employment and the creation of jobs. When we get that right, the opportunity will exist for serious job creation in the times ahead as the world changes.

Senator Cummins mentioned the remainder of the campaign. The Dáil does not sit next week. All our members — MEPs, Senators, TDs and councillors — are mandated to make direct connection with people — that is, to canvass — for all of next week. We have a national canvass day on Saturday and I am sure in Waterford people will be doing the same thing. Every Member of the Oireachtas, from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m and 3 p.m. until 6 p.m., has a plan laid out for this work.

I reject what Senator Doherty said. This referendum is about our place in Europe. I do not envisage a "No" vote. He asked me what I would do if the Government were to change and I were to be in a different position. I do not contemplate a defeat; I expect that the weight of public opinion will be on the "Yes" side and people will vote with their heads for their future.

The Senator referred to vetos. There will clearly be a number of areas in which we move to qualified majority voting. That is the same for states whether they be large or small. As the Senator is well aware, an absolute veto is not necessary and is never used in practice. The new system will facilitate decision making, which will benefit all countries, and we retain the veto with regard to serious matters and big decisions such as treaty changes or major trade agreements. That is clear.

With regard to workers' rights, the Laval case, which occurred in Sweden where there is no minimum wage, has no impact on the Lisbon treaty, nor do the other cases mentioned. We retain competence to do our business in our own way in respect of taxation matters and the minimum wage. I have already said that my party would be opposed to any reduction in the minimum wage, for very good reasons, but the Government will make its views known in due course. As I said, we will legislate for collective bargaining, which is part of the issue of workers' rights, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights will have legal status when the treaty is approved, it is to be hoped, on 2 October.

Job creation, as I said to Deputy Hayes, is central to what we must do. We cannot go on as we are. The future of this country depends on our capacity to get things right at home and avail of our own capacity to export, as we have done for many years. That potential is of enormous significance and we can benefit from it.

Senator Pearse Doherty
What text or article in the Lisbon would hamper our ability to export if we reject it?

Deputy Enda Kenny

When Fine Gael says "Yes for jobs", I am making it perfectly clear I do not think the EU will arrive here with a plateful of jobs. This is about creating a structure. If we use our initiative and ability, we can avail of massive opportunities for job creation here at home. The European Union, and this treaty, are not about the number of jobs created but the potential we have as one country of 27 in the biggest market in the world.

Senator Doherty also mentioned neutrality. At least Sinn Féin is consistent in that it has opposed every treaty I can recall for the past 30 years. That is one point on which I can agree with Senator Doherty. It has been consistent in that regard. However, it wishes to increase corporation tax, which would destroy much employment in this country. I was a member of the Government that introduced that. If one asked any foreign direct investor in here, he or she would say that Ireland's rate of corporation tax was a significant element of the company's decision to come here, in addition to our English language capabilities, our strong legal base and our proven capacity to deal with Europe.

The Senator's comments on neutrality are nonsense. The Fine Gael Party produced a document, "Beyond Neutrality," drafted by Gay Mitchell, MEP, who has a serious interest in the progress of Europe for very good reasons, and has made his case on the committees on which he has served with great distinction. The Senator should bear in mind that the document was approved by the Fine Gael Party. I do not agree at all with the posters Sinn Féin has throughout the country depicting tanks running around our country. What has that to do with the Lisbon treaty?

Senator Pearse Doherty

The question is whether Fine Gael supports a European common defence. Deputy Kenny has clarified the fact that his party has——

Chairman

Hold on, Senator——
Deputy Enda Kenny

There is no——

Senator Pearse Doherty

The question was about the European common defence policy, which involves tanks, as we know. The European armaments agency——

Chairman

The Senator got his chance and was allowed to speak without interruption, so he must allow the response.

Deputy Enda Kenny

The Fine Gael document was clear. If Europe were to move to a common defence, we should be able to articulate our views on its architecture and structure. However, there is no intention in the Lisbon treaty that any such thing will be done. It is clear that if that were the situation, the people of this country would have to vote on it by referendum, and I support that. Sinn Féin also has misleading posters about our voting strength. If the Senator had read the documentation, the treaty and the supporting arguments, he would understand the system is carefully balanced in a way that benefits a country such as ours. If he wants the detail of that I can give it to him.

Senator Pearse Doherty

I fundamentally reject what the Deputy is saying, which is misleading and untrue.

Deputy Enda Kenny

It is based on population.
Senator Pearse Doherty

Ireland's voting strength at the Council of Ministers——

Chairman

Senator, do you believe in democracy?

Senator Pearse Doherty

I do.

Chairman

Well, then——

Senator Pearse Doherty

But I believe in truth and honesty as well.

Chairman

The Senator said what he had to say. I ask him not to interrupt.

Senator Pearse Doherty

The Deputy needs to read the document. It is important.

Chairman
The Senator has already had his say. If he does not believe in parliamentary democracy, he should leave.

**Senator Pearse Doherty**

Of course I believe in democracy.

**Chairman**

I am sorry——

**Senator Pearse Doherty**

I am the one trying to uphold the rights——

**Chairman**

The Senator is out of order. He will await his chance to respond just as everyone else does.

**Senator Pearse Doherty**

People voted against the Lisbon treaty in the first referendum and now they are being asked to vote a second time. Democracy is being thrown out the window.

**Chairman**

You will wait to respond; that is democracy.

**Deputy Enda Kenny**

The Senator can explain this to me afterwards if he wishes. I do not understand the relevance of the Union flag on the Sinn Féin posters. He might explain that to me afterwards because I do not see it.
I will deal with his point about Ireland's voting strength. There will be an entirely new voting system, as the Senator is aware. A total of 55% of the member states and 65% of the population must back a proposal. Each country's strength depends on which side of the equation — either the number of member states or the population — they are on. The influence of the large countries will come from the population side of the equation, while for smaller countries their strength lies in the requirement to have 55% of countries approve something. On the country side, that is, from the point of view of the smaller countries, each country has one vote in 27, which equates to 3.7%. For Ireland, this means its key vote will be 3.7%. That is the relevant number for people in this country. It marks an increase in our vote from what it was under the old system, which was seven out of 345, or 2.02%. Thus, it is a fallacy that our voting strength is being reduced. It is wrong, and Sinn Féin should correct it. Senator Doherty should have the courage and openness to admit that what I am telling him is correct. If he reads the documentation he will see that is the case.

Senator Pearse Doherty

The Deputy will have to read it again himself.

Deputy Enda Kenny

I am glad to know the Senator is up to speed with the documentation we have here. My party set out on this campaign without any intention of campaigning negatively. I see nothing but benefits if the Irish people vote "Yes." I see major opportunities for our young people of the future to avail of the co-operation and friendship of Europe to build career opportunities. I was in Sligo Institute of Technology the other day and, as I do in every university I go to, talked to young people who say, "I have done my three or four years for my degree. What opportunities are available for me?" The European Union will open many doors, both in the creation of jobs at home and in movement to and from our continental friends.

I thank the Chairman for giving me the opportunity to speak to the committee and thank members for their attendance and contributions. For our part, I reiterate that in the remaining nine days of the campaign the Fine Gael Party will not fight with the Government on the Lisbon treaty issue but will campaign vigorously and energetically right up to the close of polling stations on 2 October. I hope that on 3 October the 1,000 journalists from other countries who have already booked accommodation in Dublin waiting for the result will understand the Irish are very capable of
accepting this responsibility and understanding just how important this vote is for the future of the European Union. I hope, with whatever assistance all my colleagues and I can give, the outcome will be a resounding "Yes". It is about ourselves as a people and a country. I hope we endorse this solidly as we face the future with the same sense of courage.

Chairman

Deputy Costello did not have an opportunity to speak and wishes to make some concluding remarks
Deputy Joe Costello

I apologise for having had to leave the meeting to attend a press conference.
I thank Deputy Kenny for a very fine contribution which I had the opportunity to read and also for his statement. He has emphasised on a number of occasions that his party will not avail of cheap opportunism to use the economic crisis in this matter. I also thank him and his party for their commitment to introduce collective bargaining. The contribution I heard in his response to queries was excellent. We will all work together to ensure a "Yes" vote on 2 October.

Chairman

I thank Deputies Kenny and Timmins and Mr. Kennelly for attending. I have no doubt today's debate will contribute greatly to the clarification of issues raised in the public domain and that it will be beneficial to the general public in making an objective decision when the time comes.
Our next debate on the matter will take place next Tuesday when the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and leader of the Green Party, Deputy Gormley, will speak to the committee. I ask members to attend this important debate. As Deputy Kenny said, the peoples of Europe are looking towards Ireland which has a major role to play, as a republic and an independent country. The people can make up their own minds and the country can decide for itself. It is very capable of doing so and it is what I have no doubt the people will do.
Chairman

In accordance with a previous decision of the joint committee, party leaders have been invited to address us on the Lisbon treaty, the importance of it and to outline why people should be led by their views. We have already heard submissions from the Taoiseach and Deputy Caoimhghin Ó Caoláin. Today, we will hear a submission from Deputy Eamon Gilmore, leader of the Labour Party, who is accompanied by Mr. Tony Brown, Labour Party international affairs committee and Ms Jean O'Mahony, Labour Party policy analyst.

The proceedings of this meeting are webcast and for this reason I ask all persons to ensure their mobile phones are switched off and not left on silent mode. I draw witnesses' attention to the fact that while members of the committee have absolute privilege that same privilege does not apply to witnesses appearing before it. Members are also reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against any person outside the Houses or an official by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

The joint committee will first hear an opening statement from the leader of the Labour Party, Deputy Gilmore, following which there will be a questions and answers session. I now invite Deputy Gilmore to make his opening statement.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore

I thank the Chairman for his invitation to speak to the Joint Committee on European Affairs on an issue critical to the future of Ireland and Europe. The Labour Party is asking the Irish people to vote "Yes" to the Lisbon treaty on 2 October 2009 for three principal reasons, namely, to help restore international confidence in Ireland so that jobs and businesses here can be secured, to enable Europe to function more efficiently and democratically to
help get Europe and Ireland out of the economic crisis, and to improve the rights of the individual as a citizen, worker and consumer in Europe.

The Labour Party believes the Lisbon treaty is a positive step for Ireland and the European Union. In this referendum campaign, as in the previous one, so much time has been taken up by manufactured controversy, conspiracy and misinformation that the real and concrete benefits of the Lisbon treaty have often been obscured. The Lisbon treaty reflects the challenges facing the European Union, its member states and its citizens and provides a roadmap for a stronger more social and democratic European Union into the future.

The Lisbon treaty is a reform treaty which helps make the European Union fit for purpose in a globalised world economy, not as an end in itself but for the better flourishing and protection of its citizens who work and live in an age defined by insecurity. More than any other, the Lisbon treaty is the European treaty which does most to progress the social agenda in Europe. The Labour Party has consistently argued that these two objectives, to prosper in a globalised world economy and to create a stronger more secure society, must go hand in hand. We believe the Lisbon treaty is an important step towards that goal. It is in this context that we should examine the question of whether the Lisbon treaty is good for workers' rights.

I can understand why people are concerned about employment rights, in particular at the moment. There will always be those at home and across Europe who will try to use a downturn in the economy to row back on workers' rights. However, the response to this threat to workers' rights and employment conditions is not to destroy the Lisbon treaty but to support it. The Lisbon treaty is good for workers. There is not a single provision in it which weakens or lessens the rights of workers. On the contrary, it copperfastens a range of workplace rights such as the right to collective bargaining and collective action, the right to information and consultation, the right to protection from unfair dismissal, the right of non-EU citizens working legally in the European Union to the same working conditions as the host population and a range of rights relating to women's and parents' rights in the workplace. Furthermore, the inclusion of the Charter of Fundamental Rights gives workplace rights the same weight as market rules when the European Court of Justice is making a decision on EU law. This could have been significant in recent controversial judgments such as Laval, Viking, Rüffert and Luxembourg which are now being used by the "No" campaigners to muddy the waters when it comes to discussion of the Lisbon treaty.

The truth is these European Court of Justice cases have nothing to do with the Lisbon treaty. They relate to EU law prior to the ratification of Lisbon and those who use them as the spectre of a race to the bottom in wages and working conditions spearheaded by the European Court of Justice are
highly selective in their choice of ECJ judgments. Conveniently for them, they ignore other positive ECJ rulings, concerning gender equality, fixed-term workers' rights, equal pay and carers' rights. Contrary to what some have claimed, the rights in the Charter of Fundamental Rights cannot be undermined if they are perceived to be contrary to the "common organisation of the market".

Most significantly for those who want to advance workers' rights in Ireland, there are domestic solutions to legitimate concerns about wage agreements and the right to collective bargaining — both of which can be legislated for by the Dáil, if the political will exists. In that context, I want to reiterate the commitment that, if elected to the next Government, the Labour Party will legislate to give domestic effect to the principles enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, including collective bargaining. It is incontrovertible that it is in Ireland's interests, and the interest of working people, to be part of a Union of 27 member countries, and 490 million people, with the power to uphold employment standards and withstand pressure from low-wage economies in other parts of the world. It is disingenuous in the extreme to imply that Irish workers would do better outside the European Union and those who suggest this are leading working people up a blind alley.

A second area where the Lisbon treaty seeks to strike a better balance between the social and economic needs of European citizens and the demands of a globalised market economy is in public services. Some opponents of the Lisbon treaty claim that, if ratified, it will enable the privatisation of essential public services. If that were truly the case, the Labour Party, our sister parties in the socialist group in the European Parliament and indeed the European Trade Union Confederation would not be supporting it. The European Union has developed as a social market economy — an economy which seeks to harness the prosperity brought about through trade for social ends. That is an ongoing process that is helped or hindered by the complexion of the governments of its member states. On many social issues, and issues of workers' rights, the EU has often been more socially progressive than Irish Governments.

The Lisbon treaty consolidates the gains made to date in the social market economy — gains relating to workers' rights, citizens' rights, consumer protection and environmental protection. Through the Charter of Fundamental Rights it rebalances the objectives of the European Union in favour of the social, civic and economic rights of its citizens. The Lisbon treaty enables a distinction to be made in EU law between services which are suitable for commercial competition from private operators, such as telecommunications or energy generation, and essential, non-economic public services such as health care, education, policing or social welfare. This is the foundation stone on which legislation that clarifies and protects the role of public services can be built. The principles that will inform future EU legislation on public services are set out in a protocol to the treaty,
recognising the following: the role of member states in delivering public services; that they should be located as close as possible to the user; that public services are diverse and vary from one member state to the next; and that they would demonstrate a "high level of quality, safety and affordability, equal treatment and the promotion of universal access and of user rights".

During the previous Lisbon treaty referendum campaign, the Party of European Socialists, of which the Labour Party is a member, published its draft regulations governing public services. The task ahead is to have strong regulations protecting the unique place of public services in EU member states, adopted as EU law. However, it is already clear that the objectives of the European Union, as set out by the Lisbon treaty — such as combating social exclusion and discrimination, promoting social justice and protection, equality between men and women, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of children — could not be achieved without a commitment to strong, universal public services. This is consolidated by the passing of the Charter of Fundamental Rights into primary EU law, which includes the right to social security and assistance, the right to social housing, the right to education, preventive health care, medical treatment and other public services. If the Lisbon treaty is ratified, future EU law — and existing EU law — must be compatible with these rights.

The Lisbon treaty is a practical response to the major global challenges that face every member state of the European Union, and indeed those outside it. Priorities for the European Union set out in the Lisbon treaty include the following: energy security and climate change; the need to eradicate poverty in the developing world; global migration; and international peacekeeping and humanitarian aid. These are reflected in new decision-making procedures and structures which will make the EU more efficient and more effective in responding to international problems.

The common thread running through all of the biggest problems facing us today — the global credit crunch, climate change, the complex relationship between global poverty and global peace — is the need for significant international co-operation and collaboration. For Ireland, the European Union is a bulwark against global insecurity and a vehicle for tackling it. Playing an active part in a reformed, more responsive and more responsible European Union is not only in our own interest, but also our duty as members of the international community.

The Lisbon treaty is a progressive response to the realities of a globalised world. It sums up the collective political will of the leadership of 27 European democracies, which share an understanding of the demands of 21st century political, economic, social and cultural life, rather than the will of the so-called "faceless bureaucrats" of Brussels. There is much to be gained for Ireland and the Irish people from the ratification of this treaty. More than any other
European treaty we have voted on to date, it addresses in a practical way things that matter to people who live and work in the European Union. I refer to issues like opportunity, prosperity, basic rights, social cohesion, stability, international security, addressing the great environmental and energy challenges, combating serious international crime and working to end global poverty. It is on the basis of the concrete advances for Irish people and citizens across Europe that are contained in the Lisbon treaty that the Labour Party is strongly campaigning for a "Yes" vote on 2 October.

Deputy Lucinda Creighton

I will be brief because Deputy Gilmore has covered many of the issues I wanted to raise. In his statement, he clearly and lucidly dealt with the allegation that services will be privatised. Ireland is currently facing the challenge of rising unemployment. It affects supporters of the Labour Party and almost everyone else in Irish society. Can Deputy Gilmore outline the steps he believes the EU can, should and will take to try to tackle unemployment in Ireland and elsewhere in the EU? We have all indicated that this issue is relevant to the debate on the Lisbon treaty. Perhaps the Deputy can expand on that by explaining the crucial role he thinks the EU can play in this regard. He might also give us some detail on the Labour Party's campaign for a "Yes" vote. What is the organisation doing throughout the country? What is Deputy Gilmore's perspective on the current status of the "Yes" campaign? Is he confident and optimistic? Does he think the referendum can be carried on Friday week?

Deputy Timmy Dooley

I join Deputy Creighton in complimenting Deputy Gilmore on his concise and important input into this debate. The Deputy's career background — he has represented workers at every level within the trade union movement — puts him in a strong position to state categorically that the Lisbon treaty will not have a negative impact on the rights, pay and conditions of workers. What is his view on certain groups and entities — some of them are non-entities — that have sought to usurp the authority of representative groups such as trade unions, political parties, farmers' associations and business associations? The claims made by such organisations, which have given the impression that the groups have some mandate or reason to represent the sectors I have mentioned when that is clearly not the case, have had an inordinately damaging effect on such sectors. I have been canvassing extensively over the last two or three weeks. When I canvassed
again at the weekend, I was bowled over by the number of people who continue to believe the minimum wage will be reduced if the Lisbon treaty comes into effect. The Government, in common with all political parties and various interest groups, has issued a frank and forthright press statement to contradict that belief. Unfortunately, that message is not getting through to a certain section of vulnerable people who are clearly concerned for their futures. Deputy Gilmore also spoke about the issues of health and education. When I was canvassing in Ennis on Saturday, I met two women from County Kildare who are convinced, on the basis of posters in their local area, that education will be privatised. While we all agree with freedom of speech, it is particularly disappointing that some people in our society treat other people's futures in a cavalier manner by issuing statements and generating posters that seek to undermine confidence in the treaty. This matter has to be addressed and this is the forum in which to address it. I would welcome comments from Deputy Gilmore in that regard.

Deputy Mary O’Rourke

I thank Deputy Gilmore and his team for appearing before the joint committee. Canvassing in Athlone last night, I found that most workers and former workers in the ESB and Bord na Móna, two prominent companies in the area, will vote "No" in the Lisbon treaty referendum. Some of those to whom I spoke pointed out that their trade union, the Technical Engineering and Electrical Union, opposes the Lisbon treaty.

I heard Deputy Gilmore discuss the Lisbon treaty on a recent radio broadcast — perhaps it was "Morning Ireland" — with a trade union representative. I believe the individual in question was from the North but represented workers throughout the country. I fail to understand how trade union opponents of the Lisbon treaty arrive at their point of view. Does Deputy Gilmore, who deals with this issue at a more focused level, understands the reasons they oppose the treaty? Their opposition cannot arise from the Laval judgment or other rulings of the European Court of Justice as we have all addressed this issue.

I cannot figure out how trade union members could oppose the Lisbon treaty or the reason the esteemed Member of the European Parliament, Mr. Joe Higgins, is able to argue that voting "Yes" for Europe and the Lisbon treaty would be bad for workers. In his forays around the country and his various meetings with trade union members, many of whom have expressed support for
the Lisbon treaty, has Deputy Gilmore been able to establish what documents or reasons these individuals are using to support their position and the rubbish they have been talking?

Deputy Joe Costello

I, too, thank Deputy Gilmore and compliment him on a fine speech. I will continue with the line taken by Deputies Dooley and O'Rourke. Deputy Gilmore placed considerable emphasis on the support the Lisbon treaty provides for workers' rights, the Charter of Fundamental rights and public services. Mr. Joe Higgins, MEP, has taken the opposite view, strongly criticising the treaty and arguing it does nothing for workers' rights. We have even had Cóir tell us the treaty does nothing for workers' rights. I ask Deputy Gilmore to outline how extensive is support for the treaty within the broader trade union movement.

I refer to the priorities set out by Deputy Gilmore, which include the need to restore international confidence in Ireland in terms of jobs and business and the role of Europe in helping to get Ireland out of the economic crisis. I ask him to elaborate on his perception of the importance of the Lisbon treaty in this respect. What will be the role of the treaty in restoring confidence, creating employment in the business sector and moving out of the current economic crisis?

Senator Terry Leyden

I welcome Deputy Gilmore and his team and compliment him on the strong stance he has taken on the Lisbon treaty. He is wholeheartedly involved in the campaign, as are the Labour Party members present, Deputy Costello, Senator Prendergast and Nessa Childers, MEP, who are attending in support of the referendum on 2 October. From Deputy Gilmore's work it is apparent that he is not in any sense making this a political issue. I saw Deputy Kenny was canvassing in Roscommon yesterday. Deputy Gilmore is supporting Ireland Incorporated from the point of view of the country as a whole, which is very worthwhile.

I also compliment Deputy Costello and Deputy Dooley on the detailed and comprehensive document they produced on workers' rights, which explains the situation very well. It has not been circulated to the extent that it deserves. Much work went into producing that document which is probably available on our website.
If anything would convince people to vote "Yes" it is the work of the UK Independence Party. Nigel Farage of the UK Independence Party was canvassing in this country. That party's sole objective is to destroy the European Union. It is fine if one wants to collaborate with that party. People who vote "No" are working with the UK Independence Party. If the Conservative Party in the UK gets into power, which will possibly happen in the next year, reform of the European Union will not take place. There is no doubt about that. It will put the Conservative Party into a serious dilemma. Twenty-six countries have already ratified the treaty and if this country ratifies the treaty, the United Kingdom will be tied into that ratification and there will not be any question of it trying to disengage from the European Union or trying to renegotiate the Lisbon reform treaty.

The Government deserves great credit for the negotiations that have taken place to clarify issues and get agreement on protocols among the other member states of the European Union. The situation has been clearly outlined by the Government. In general, the propaganda that was spread during the campaign on the previous referendum on the Lisbon treaty has been countered. The advertisements for the UK Independence Party that suggest euthanasia would be introduced following ratification of the treaty are an abuse.

It is all to play for. We cannot be complacent about the referendum on 2 October. It is a serious issue. Declan Ganley's propaganda is coming to the fore. He is getting a lot of air time and in most cases he is not being challenged. In some cases he will not allow any challenge to himself. Everyone who is in favour of the treaty should work together for the next few weeks until 2 October to get people to support it on the basis that a "Yes" vote is good for this country and a "No" would be against the national interest.

**Senator Paschal Donohoe**

I apologise to Deputy Gilmore for missing his contribution. I have had an opportunity to read it while my colleagues have been speaking. The one point on which I would like him to comment is the role of immigration in the debate so far. It has been my experience during this campaign and the previous one that insecurity has been created due to the perceived effect of immigration on people who were hanging on to jobs in this country and who recently lost them. Some of the literature to which Senator Leyden in particular referred is beginning to focus strongly on immigration. It argues that ratification of the Lisbon treaty would encourage more immigration and make it more difficult
for member states to have control of their borders and to have policies in this area. I seek a comment from Deputy Gilmore on what effect the Lisbon treaty will have on immigration and the ability of national governments to control it. What would he say to those people who are considering voting "No" to the Lisbon treaty because of the perceived effect immigration has had on the labour market?

**Deputy Noël Treacy**

I warmly welcome the leader of the Labour Party, Deputy Gilmore, and Mr. Tony Browne and Ms Jean O'Mahony. I thank Deputy Gilmore for his detailed and focused contribution pertaining to the importance of this treaty and the European Union. Mr. Browne has played a leading role in the National Forum on Europe over many years. I thank him for his significant contribution at a European and domestic level.

Is Deputy Gilmore satisfied that irrespective of nationality, all workers in all member states will, under the Charter of Fundamental Rights, be afforded absolute protection, absolute rights, absolute safety and security and a guarantee of adequate payment? Is he absolutely certain the Union will have a greater capacity and collective ability to continue to transfer resources and to support its member states' requirements once the Lisbon treaty is enacted? That is of more importance than ever to this State in the current global economic crisis.

**Deputy Joanna Tuffy**

I thank Deputy Gilmore for his presentation to the committee in which he concentrated on the issue of workers' rights. Related to this is the need to create jobs and to ensure we have an educated workforce. The Labour Party published a document some years ago on access to third level education which outlined how the free third level education initiative had helped improve access to that sector. One of the findings was that European Union social funding to the institutes of technology in particular had greatly improved access to third level for those who were unlikely in the past to progress beyond second level. I recently tabled a parliamentary question to the Minister for Education and Science to ascertain the extent of support from the European Social Fund to Irish education in recent years. Between 1994 and 1999, I was informed, the Department received €963 million from the fund, and €352 million in the period 2000 to 2006. It is anticipated that we will
receive €130 million between 2007 and 2012. This is in addition to the €52 million being provided under Structural Funds towards research and development. Will Deputy Gilmore comment on how we can work with the European Union in this area to get our economy moving again?

Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh

Gabhaim leithscéal as gan a bheith anseo níos luaithe nuair a bhí an Teachta Gilmore ag labhairt, ach bhí mé ag freastal ar ócáid eile. In the aftermath of the first referendum in June 2008, Deputy Gilmore proclaimed that the Lisbon treaty was "dead" and that the result of the referendum must be fully respected. He went on to argue that it would be entirely wrong, inappropriate and counterproductive for the European Union to proceed on the basis of any settlement that does not fully respect the voice of the Irish people.

In December 2008, in the course of a debate on the future of the Lisbon treaty, Deputy Gilmore told the Dáil of the genuine concern among working people that the way had been opened for an undermining of levels of pay and working conditions and that these issues must be addressed satisfactorily before another referendum could be held. Now, however, he seems to advocate support for the second referendum on the grounds that the solemn declaration of workers' rights somehow addresses those concerns.

Does Deputy Gilmore agree that the solemn declaration will not have the status of the protocols on taxation and neutrality, will not in any way impact the text or implications of the treaty and will give the European Union no new powers to redress the current trend of Commission policy and European Court of Justice decisions undermining workers' wages, terms and rights throughout the European Union? I note Deputy Gilmore referred in his contribution to some of those court judgments, some of which took cognisance of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The solemn declaration will do nothing to address the genuine concerns of which the Deputy spoke in the Dáil last December. Despite this, he is calling for workers to support the treaty. Does this not represent a massive U-turn from June of last year?

Senator Phil Prendergast
I thank Deputy Gilmore for his contribution. We launched our campaign in south Tipperary on 1 September. The response is overwhelmingly different this time in that there is far greater awareness among the public of the contents of the treaty. I was concerned by the fact that elderly women were distributing anti-Lisbon propaganda outside churches in south Tipperary. A number of people in health care centres and elsewhere have told me that they were intimidated and frightened by this sort of negative campaigning. Yesterday I visited all the churches in my locality but did not find anything other than routine church pamphlets. There was no propaganda on Lisbon, and rightly so.

Tactics such as showing an old person a poster of a foetus or intimating that a "Yes" to Lisbon will bring all sorts of unhealthy consequences can cause distress among the public. Groups such as Cóir and this type of negative campaigning should be addressed head-on in the media and at the highest levels.

**Senator John Hanafin**

I welcome Deputy Gilmore and thank him for his contribution. In light of the saying, "If you are explaining, you are losing", should we not outline in more detail the positive contribution Europe has made to all aspects of our social policy? I have brought some examples of anti-Lisbon propaganda, much of which is bizarre and simply untrue. However, rather than responding with explanations, we should show what the EU has done in respect of workers' rights, maternity leave and equal pay. We need to continue making the point that the treaty is a force for good. As Senator Prendergast noted, we need to point out that the misinformation being spread is sometimes quite dangerous.

**Chairman**

The views expressed by members are consistent with what they have said previously and are based on what they have learned in their respective constituencies. In regard to scare-mongering propaganda, it appears that a significant proportion of posters have no basis in fact. This is an alarming trend and one which could be divisive for the country. We have not previously seen this type of poster. One poster suggested that the minimum wage could drop to €1.84. Since 1988, Irish incomes have increased dramatically when compared with the per capita incomes of other EU countries, the US and Japan. That is an extraordinarily positive development from an Irish perspective but it is completely ignored by some posters. These posters irritate and upset members
because they could set a trend for the future whereby allegations would not require any basis in fact. Attempts have been made in some parts of Europe to stampede people in particular directions. The use of, for example, immigration issues comes close to racism. These issues are being raised by certain groups from outside this country in an attempt to foment division. That is a matter about which I am worried. I congratulate Deputy Gilmore for the very strong and positive leadership he has given to the people who support him.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore**

I will take the questions thematically, rather than in the order in which they were asked. The first issue concerns jobs and the economy and is the biggest issue facing the country at the moment. Some 400,000 people are out of work and the figure is heading for 500,000. A huge number of people are out of work throughout Europe and several things need to happen. We must accept that getting out of our economic difficulty will involve collaboration with our neighbours in Europe. We will disagree on certain issues and we will have various arguments about what is happening with regard to our economy but to get out of the economic hole which Ireland, Europe and the world are in, will require that we work with our neighbours.

It is important that the European Union and its institutions can concentrate on addressing the economic crisis rather than be plunged into years of institutional navel-gazing, which will happen if the Lisbon treaty cannot be ratified. It took seven years to get to this point and the European Union needs to be enabled to focus collectively on jobs, services and the things that matter to people rather than the institutional preoccupations to which I referred. The European Union needs to be able to operate more efficiently than it has operated heretofore and the institutional and decision-making reforms in the Lisbontreaty will free up the European institutions to make decisions more quickly and respond more rapidly to the changing global economic circumstances so that the European economy can compete more effectively on the global stage. The Lisbontreaty addresses the employment issue by its commitment to building a union that achieves full employment. Deputy Tuffy mentioned the roles of education and training, which are also important.

There is no provision in the treaty which opens the way to the privatisation of public services. On the contrary, a protocol to the treaty aims at the protection of public services, which the Labour Party and its sister parties in Europe welcome. If the Lisbon treaty is passed it will provide the basis
for European institutions to legislate to underpin the delivery of public services and we and our sister parties have published the equivalent of a Private Members' Bill on the matter.

There is nothing — not a syllable — in the treaty which weakens workers' rights. The minimum wage will not be affected by the Lisbon treaty as the European Union has no function — good, bad or indifferent — in deciding anything in that regard. Posters claiming that the minimum wage will be cut to €1.84 are nonsense and are designed to frighten people. They are having a measure of success because I meet people, particularly young people, who are concerned about the issue but there is no basis for it.

A small number of trade union leaders have expressed opposition to the Lisbon treaty but the majority of trade unions in Ireland support the treaty. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions supports the treaty, as it did on the last occasion. I held a joint press conference this morning with the general secretary urging working people to vote in favour of the treaty. The European Trade Union Confederation is clear in its statement that it supports the treaty. John Monks of the ETUC has said: "There is no conditionality in the ETUC's support for Lisbon." SIPTU, the country's largest trade union, stated: "The balance of advantage for working people and their families rests with ratification of the Treaty."

Much play has been made of the Laval and other judgments in the European Court of Justice. The Swedish Trade Union Confederation, which was involved in the taking of that case, said the Swedish trade unions are 100% behind the Lisbon treaty and ask us to tell this to the Irish people. That is the message it has sent to us. When one thinks about it, why would it not support the treaty? Let us look at the things that are being written into it. There is the right of everyone to form and join trade unions; why would anybody ask working people to vote against that? The right to education and training will be written into the treaty; why would one ask working people to vote against that? There is the right to work; provisions on non-discrimination and equality between men and women; the right to consultation; the right to negotiate; the right to conduct collective bargaining; the right to strike; entitlement to social security; and the right to parental leave. I could go on. All of these rights are being given the same legal status as every other provision of the European treaties. It baffles me that anybody who purports to have the real interests of working people at heart would turn around and say that these things should not be in the European treaty or that we should not have them.

Senator Donohoe mentioned the issue of immigration. It is not something that is raised overtly, but one does sometimes suspect it is there under the surface. Again, however, let us look at the provisions of the treaty. Although Deputy Treacy remarked on it, not enough attention has been
drawn to a provision in the Charter of Fundamental Rights which states: "Nationals of third countries who are authorized to work in the territories of the Member States are entitled to working conditions equivalent to those of citizens of the Union." There is a fear that people from third countries will be coming in, taking jobs and causing cuts in wages, but one of the things that has been written into the treaty is a provision that they are entitled to the same conditions as citizens.

Deputy Ó Snodaigh challenged me on a number of things. I did say after the referendum in June 2008 that the Lisbon treaty could not be ratified or adopted as a result of the Irish vote. That remains the case. The Lisbon treaty cannot be ratified or come into effect because Ireland voted "No" in June 2008, and that will remain the case if we vote "No" again on 2 October. The question is whether this is a good or a bad thing. In my view, it is a bad thing because it means the European Union will proceed on the basis of the existing Nice treaty and we will not have within the European treaties the rights for working people, for example, that I have just set out.

Yes, I did say that the result of the June 2008 referendum was respected, and I believe it was respected. The principle issues that arose as a result of that referendum were addressed. We will have a commissioner, which was a major issue. There were concerns with regard to abortion, tax harmonisation and neutrality, which have been addressed in legally-binding guarantees. There are concerns about workers' rights, which concerns, as I believed in June 2008, are addressed by writing these rights into the treaty, which is being done through the Charter of Fundamental Rights. It does not help anybody's case to engage in word games such as wondering if the solemn declaration is as important as the legally binding guarantees and about where it stands regarding the Charter of Fundamental Rights. What matters is the bottom line, that is, the result. If one takes an issue such as the minimum wage, there are concerns about the pressures being exerted on it, but if one looks at where these pressures are being exerted from, one will see that the pressure on the minimum wage here is not being exerted by the Lisbon treaty or from Brussels but from north of the Border where Deputy Ó Snodaigh's party is in government. In this jurisdiction the minimum wage is €8.65, while in Northern Ireland it is €6.32. Everywhere I go persons such as those involved in the retail trade who are trying to employ people, particularly in Border areas, ask me about this. The concern is not that somebody from Brussels will come and tell them they have to apply a particular wage level, rather it is the wages being paid north of the Border. If Sinn Féin wants to do something constructive about the minimum wage in this jurisdiction — I wish it would — I ask it to please do something about the minimum wage north of the Border where it is in government because it is causing huge difficulties for people who are trying to trade within a 50 to 100 mile distance of the Border.
We have to make a distinction in addressing these issues between what is contained in the Lisbon treaty and what we have the potential to deal with. A lot of the things about which working people have concerns are matters we can and should be dealing with in our laws and practices. Is the Lisbon treaty a help or hindrance? It is a help because it sets down principles that will apply across the European Union in order that we can build legislation in the European institutions and domestically. That is why, for example, on the issue of collective bargaining I welcome the fact that the principle of and the right to collective bargaining will become part of European treaty arrangements. We should legislate for it here, which is why I have given my political commitment and that of the Labour Party that if we get the opportunity in government after the next general election, we will legislate for it.

Chairman

I thank members for their participation. I also thank Deputy Gilmore and his colleagues, Mr. Browne and Ms O'Mahony, for coming before us. I compliment Deputy Gilmore on his robust contribution. It may be of some interest to members that in drawing up the Charter of Fundamental Rights all trade unions throughout Europe were consulted at great length over a long period, as the responses given by Deputy Gilmore confirm. The strength and length of the discussions with the trade union movement prior to drawing up the charter, now embodied in the Lisbon treaty, are dramatically at odds with and draw questions as to the credibility of some of the advertisements people have seen in recent times. I am not referring to any political party when I say this, rather I am merely drawing attention to a fact, that in the case of some posters some seem to feel it is timely to make suggestions that are totally at variance with the facts and which can prove very damaging in terms of political dialogue in this country. I again thank Deputy Gilmore and his colleagues for being with us and hope the discussions of the committee which are being broadcast on the web will be of benefit to those who have made up their minds to vote in a particular direction but most particularly to those who have not yet made up theirs on they way they should vote.
Chairman

Before the meeting starts, I remind members that this meeting is webcast so their every move will be recorded and broadcast on the world wide web. This has happened for the past three meetings. In accordance with the previous decision of the committee to invite the leaders of various political parties in the Oireachtas to address the committee in respect of the Lisbon treaty and the European agenda, we welcome Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, the leader in the House of Sinn Féin. He is accompanied by Mr. Eoin Ó Broin, Sinn Féin European affairs adviser.

Members should switch off their mobile phones because they interrupt proceedings or at least the technology used. I draw attention to the fact that while members of the committee have absolute privilege this privilege does not apply to witnesses appearing before the committee. Members are also reminded of long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the House or an official by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable. That is important to ensure we do not have major difficulties. I invite Deputy Ó Caoláin to address the committee for ten or 15 minutes, which will be followed by a question and answer session.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

Ar dtús báire, ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil leis an gcoiste as ucht an chuireadh bheith leo anseo ar maidin. A Chathaoirligh, a Leas-Chathaoirligh, a Theachtaí Dála agus a Sheanadoirí, I thank you for the opportunity to outline Sinn Féin's considered and reasoned opposition to the Lisbon treaty, to hear members' views and answer their questions as best I can. I hope to convince some members of the merits of our position.
On 12 June 2008 almost 900,000 people in this State rejected the Lisbon treaty. They did so because they believed that it was a bad treaty and because they wanted a better deal for Ireland and for Europe. The result presented the Government with a strong mandate to negotiate a new and better treaty. At the time Sinn Féin presented the Taoiseach, Deputy Brian Cowen, with detailed proposals of how we felt the concerns of the electorate could be met. We outlined ways in which we believe the EU can be made more democratic, more protective of public services and workers' rights, more respectful of this State's neutrality and more responsive to the needs of rural communities and the developing world. What did the Government do? Just like its mismanagement of the economy, it prevaricated, sat on its hands and failed to act appropriately. As a result, the Government has not secured a single change to the text of the Lisbon treaty. On 2 October we will vote on exactly the same treaty as we did last year.

If it was not good enough for the electorate then, why on earth should it be good enough for us now? At the European Council meeting in June of this year, the Government agreed so-called legally binding guarantees on neutrality, taxation and ethical issues. The Government also agreed a so-called solemn declaration on workers' rights and reiterated the promise for every member state to retain a Commissioner. On this basis the "Yes" side argue that the 53% of the electorate who rejected the Lisbon treaty should reconsider their position. Unfortunately, nothing in the so-called guarantees or in the solemn declaration changes either the text of the treaty or the impact it will have on Ireland or the EU. We fear we will still lose our Commissioner in 2014. I challenge anyone present to state unequivocally and on the record that while the Lisbon treaty proposal to reduce the size of the Commission remains, the possibility of member states losing their rights of a permanent Commissioner is not only a possibility but indeed a probability come 2014.

Our neutrality will still be undermined. Although the so-called legally binding guarantee reiterates the position that only an Irish Government can send Irish troops abroad, it does not address the many concerns Sinn Féin raised during the previous Lisbon treaty referendum with regard to the advances on the common security and common defence agendas.

Workers' rights and public services will still come under attack. The solemn declaration is nothing more than a glorified press release, giving the EU institutions no new powers or instruments to address the growing deficit with regard to workers' rights.

Tax harmonisation will still be made easier, as Sinn Féin argued in 2008. Our concern was never that the Lisbon treaty would introduce tax harmonisation, rather the simplified revision procedure contained in Article 48 of the treaty would allow the Council acting by unanimity to move taxation
to qualified majority vote and we, the people, would not have the right to a referendum in this vital matter of State sovereignty.

The Government's claims, and those of their supporters in Fine Gael and Labour, of having addressed the concerns of the electorate are absolutely false. The proposition before the people on 2 October is exactly the same as it was in June 2008. If it is the same treaty, then the people should give the same answer and say "No" to this bad deal.

Fianna Fáil and its supporters in Labour and Fine Gael are also using the economic crisis to scare people into supporting the treaty. We are told that if we vote "No" we will lose investment, jobs and support from our EU counterparts. The truth is very different. The cause of this recession is the failed economic policies of this Government and its counterparts across Europe. Many of these failed right-wing politicians were responsible for negotiating the treaty and many of their failed right-wing policies are contained in the treaty. In much the same way as this recession is the creation of Deputies Bertie Ahern and Brian Cowen, so too is the Lisbon treaty. If they got it so wrong on the economy, why should anyone trust them on the Lisbon treaty?

Fianna Fáil and its supporters in Fine Gael and Labour are arguing that supporting the Lisbon treaty referendum is the only route to economic recovery, the only route to job creation and the only way for Ireland to remain fully involved in the EU. Sinn Féin believes these claims to be false. The Lisbon treaty is a right-wing treaty that promotes greater deregulation and undermines the ability of member states to intervene in their economies to stimulate growth and equality. Rather than assisting any economic recovery, ratification and implementation of the Lisbon treaty would make the recession worse.

We are also being told that a second "No" vote would jeopardise inward investment. Did we not hear that before? We heard exactly the same kind of scaremongering during the first referendum campaign. Unfortunately for Fianna Fáil the facts tell a different story. In July of this year IDA chief executive officer, Barry O'Leary, said: "It should be noted that 2008 saw a 14 per cent increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) on the previous year bringing the total number of FDI investments in 2008 to 130. »

Speaking to the Oireachtas sub-committee on Ireland's future in the European Union on 21 October 2008, Paul Rellis, managing director of Microsoft Ireland said: "I have not seen any material impact on jobs, market access or sales in recent months attributable to the rejection of the Lisbon treaty." Of course the biggest threat to job creation, investment and the economy is not a second rejection of the Lisbon treaty but the continuation of this Fianna Fáil-Green Party Government and for that
matter its replacement by an equally right-wing Fine Gael-led Government if and when a general
election is called. We argue from a left perspective that the root to economic recovery rests not in
the Lisbon treaty but in a change of direction at home and in the European Union.
In 2008, Sinn Féin outlined the key reasons for people to oppose the Lisbon treaty and they remain
the same. The Lisbon treaty reduces Ireland's power in the European Union; we will lose our
permanent Commissioner and our voting strength on the Council will be cut by half while the
bigger states double their strength. The Lisbon treaty erodes our neutrality, drawing us further into a
NATO-compatible common defence and obliging us to increase military spending. For the first time
we will be voting on an EU treaty that states, in Article 28, that there "will" be a common defence.
The Lisbon treaty will further undermine the viability of rural Ireland and family farming, through
the strengthened powers for the EU Trade Commissioner contained in Articles 2, 10 and 188C,
effectively ending the Irish Government's veto on mixed international trade deals. Crucially, Article
48 removes our automatic right to a referendum on future changes to existing treaties.
Last week, the Taoiseach addressed this committee and during his remarks he argued that the
outcome of the referendum would be "interpreted as a signal for our future intentions regarding this
country's place in the European Union" and that it would "make a statement about whether we want
to continue to be an influential player at the heart of Europe or whether we want to move to the
periphery on the basis of our suspicion and mistrust of the EU's direction and intent". He continued
to state that a second rejection of the Lisbon treaty would mean that our commitment to Europe
would be called into question.
These arguments, used in various forms by Fianna Fáil and its supporters in Fine Gael and the
Labour Party, are a cynical attempt to play on the legitimate fears that many people have because of
the economic insecurity created by the Government. A rejection of the Lisbon treaty would not
indicate a spiritual withdrawal from the EU, as Deputy Brian Lenihan suggested, nor would it
declare an intention to move to the periphery. Rather, it would be a demonstration of our
commitment to a better European Union and a fairer Ireland.
I place emphasis on the fact that the overwhelming majority of those voters who rejected
the Lisbon treaty in 2008, including this voter, want Ireland to play a full and central role in shaping
the future of the European Union; make no mistake about it. Our primary purpose in campaigning
against this treaty is that we believe the EU can and must do better. A strong "No" vote on 2
October would send a signal to the peoples of Europe that we in Ireland have a better vision for our
future and our children's future than that of the failed and discredited political elites who drafted
the treaty over the past eight or nine years.
The consequences of voting "No" are that Ireland will remain a full and equal member of the European Union. We cannot be expelled or marginalised. The European Union will carry on as before and inward investment will not be affected. As I indicated, in 2008 we saw a 14% increase in foreign direct investment on the previous year despite the scaremongering claims of the "Yes" side. Crucially what will happen is that a space will open for a real debate on the future of the European Union in the context of today's reality. The Lisbon treaty started life in the declaration of Laeken in 2001 and the first draft of the treaty was concluded by the European Council in 2004. The world has changed dramatically since then. The Lisbon treaty is out of date and out of time. We need a new treaty written by new political forces containing new policies to meet the new and very serious challenges of our time.

Deputy Timmy Dooley

I welcome Deputy Ó Caoláin and Mr. Eoin Ó Broin. I thank Deputy Ó Caoláín for his presentation which, as always, was well thought out, well researched and well presented. I am delighted he has had an opportunity to make his points today. I would like to pose a number of questions to tease out the debate. Deputy Ó Caoláin spoke about a change in the direction of Europe and that is interesting. Will he highlight to us what is his view of Europe? He stated that he is a committed European. I do not want to go back over the old chestnut of when did Sinn Féin support a European treaty, but it is a point that he might address.

Deputy Ó Caoláin quoted Paul Rellis from the record. I do not have his statement with me but, as I recall, he continued to state that while there may not have been an immediate impact as a result of the "No" vote he felt that international investment was based on certainty and confidence, which he felt would be eroded if Ireland continued with the position the Irish people had adopted on that occasion. Recently, I had another opportunity to speak to him. He reiterated the point that while there had not been an immediate impact — perhaps some on the "Yes" side suggested that would happen on the previous occasion and that would have been wrong — he felt that his capacity to continue to attract the type of investment from within Microsoft's pools of moneys that has allowed it to transcend from being a manufacturing facility when it initially arrived in Ireland to a research and development facility working on futuristic projects and to continue to develop would be greatly inhibited if there was a perception, rightly or wrongly, that we had changed our attitude towards Europe. He contended that a "No" vote did that. I accept that it would be a perception that we would
have changed our attitude towards Europe but, unfortunately, we must consider the perception that would be created by a "No" vote and the impact it would have on our ability to continue to attract the next layer of foreign direct investment.

Deputy Ó Caoláin spoke about the potential loss of the capacity to have a referendum to decide our tax policy and about the sovereignty of our tax policy. At present, perhaps unfortunately from their point of view, the Irish people do not decide this by referendum or any suffrage other than by electing representatives to decide what the tax policy is at national level. One vests the capacity to change one's position on tax in elected representatives and the policy which has emerged in this country of low corporate and labour tax bases has worked well and continues to do so. Why would we expect to have a referendum that would require unanimity in the Council before we would change our direction in that regard? Why would any Government want to change control or cede control of our tax policy considering that it has been so beneficial in attracting inward investment and growth in labour?

Deputy Ó Caoláin also spoke about the farming community and the impact he believes the Lisbon treaty will have on farming. I respect his opinion and his interpretation. However, I come from a small farm in the west of Ireland and I meet other such people on a daily basis. I recognise that the vast majority of farmers believe that our engagement with Europe to date has been of huge benefit and I will not go into the amount of money transferred to farming. The Irish Farmers' Association, the ICMSA and others are, on this occasion, enthusiastically supporting a "Yes" vote. I contend that they are the people best versed to represent the views of farming considering that they have a significant presence in Brussels and have very good people there, such as Michael Treacy, who represent them very well.

Deputy Ó Caoláin also discussed workers' rights and, again, not all but the vast majority of trade unions in Ireland and throughout Europe seem to support the Lisbon treaty. They do so on the basis that they represent workers. Perhaps this leads back to the Deputy's statement that he is looking for a change of direction. When I come to understand what that change of direction means, I may be enlightened. I have other points to make but I will not hog the meeting.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin
For clarification, will I take a group of questions at a time?

Chairman

That may be a good idea. I am aware that the Deputy is anxious to leave by noon.

Senator Maurice Cummins

I welcome Deputy Ó Caoláin and thank him for his presentation. He mentioned on a couple of occasions that Ireland was to lose its Commissioner by 2014. On what basis does he believe this to be the case? Has the European Union reneged on any protocol, solemn declaration or commitment to Ireland or any other country since we joined? The answer to that question is no; therefore, why does he believe the Union will do it now in regard to the Commissioner and other commitments?

The Deputy said Sinn Féin was committed to the European Union and the European cause. The UK Independence Party seems to be in the same boat. What does it feel like to be sharing the oars in that boat with a party made up of anti-Europeans and Eurosceptics?

Deputy Noel Treacy

Ba mhaith liom fáilte a chur roimh an Teachta. Mhol mise, dhá mhí ó shin, go mbeadh seans ag ceannairí na bpáirtithe go léir polasaí faoi reifreann Liospóin a chur faoi bhráid an choiste seo, mar go bhfuil sin an-tábhachtach. Tá mé lán sásta go bhfuil an Teachta Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin anseo linn inniu.

Deputy Ó Caoláin said if we rejected the Lisbon treaty, we would be more democratic. Will he elaborate on what he means by this? I have been in the House for 27 years and spent 20 years as a Minister of State. I served on 14 European Councils and never witnessed a more democratic operation. I presume the Deputy agrees that the European Union has been a positive force for good in world affairs, European affairs and international affairs in both bilateral and multilateral spheres.

Deputy Ó Caoláin lives beside the Border and I am very disappointed that he has made no reference to the role the European Union has played in Northern Ireland. If he looks at the Lisbon treaty, in totality and in detail, he will see that what we are doing is enabling the European Union to play a
more active role in bringing peace to troubled parts of Europe and the world. For 30 years we had tragedy in Northern Ireland which, thankfully, is behind us. We lost 3,500 people, while over 35,000 were injured. The European Union was requested, on occasions, to intervene in Northern Ireland but had no legal process whereby it could do so. The Lisbon treaty gives us that legal process. In addition, the European Union has contributed €1 billion in funds through INTERREG III to support cross-Border development. It has spent over €500 million on EU programmes, North and South, but particularly in Northern Ireland.

Deputy Ó Caoláin is a republican Nationalist; I am also a republican Nationalist, as well as an internationalist. It is important we recognise the role of the European Union on neutrality and the positivity of its contribution. The Deputy spoke about defence but unanimity is required in such matters. Even special missions cannot be recommended without the unanimous endorsement of the European Council. We cannot send one person on a mission that involves military activity unless there is a request from the United Nations, a request from the European Union, a decision of the sovereign Government of the Republic of Ireland and ultimate validation by the majority of Dáil Éireann. That is a very powerful triple lock. We are bringing forward a new defence Bill which has been published and will be debated shortly to copperfasten our triple lock to protect the guarantees we have received over and above what is contained in the treaty.

I endorse the point made by Senator Cummins on the importance of the commissioner to the country. Deputy Ó Caoláin's party stated before the last referendum that we would lose our commissioner. Will he now inform us in what circumstances we will lose our commissioner?

The treaty is very clear on tax harmonisation. Each country has total control of its tax mechanisms but I am sure Deputy Ó Caoláín will agree there has to be a need for bilateral agreements on certain taxes. The Republic of Ireland entered negotiations with the United Kingdom for the benefit of the people of Northern Ireland and the Lisbon treaty acknowledges the right to do so, enabling bilateral agreements in certain areas to ensure there is no placing of economic regions or entities within the Union at a disadvantage.

The European Union is based on liberty, equality and fraternity. It is vitally important we understand that at this critical time both for the economic and political affairs of the country. The Union played a role in the embedding of peace in Northern Ireland and the support it provides offers opportunities for our people, North and South. Deputy Ó Caoláin said there would be no threat to international investment or the attractiveness of Ireland as a major investment hub if we
said "No" to the Lisbon treaty but we would send a signal to the international world, including the United States and elsewhere, that we do not have the confidence of the Union. Who would have the confidence to invest in us if we rejected an opportunity to tap into a market of 500 million people which has made such a huge contribution to the evolution, development and economic sustainability of the country?

Senator John Hanafin

I welcome our colleague, Deputy Ó Caoláin, and Mr. Ó Broin. Since the last "No" vote, the European Union has shown good faith by providing protocols in the areas of taxation, the right to life and defence and has given an assurance on the retention of our commissioner. It has effectively given us money at a favourable rate to bail us out of the difficulties we are experiencing in the wake of the property bubble. Given the remarkable good faith it has shown to allay our anxieties, the contention that there will be no consequences if there is a second "No" vote is simply incorrect. The first and immediate consequence will be the fact that we will affect Europe from the Arctic Circle down to Cyprus and Malta and from Portugal over to Russia because the Lisbon treaty will fall. In doing so, we will be looked at by financial markets as having achieved that end and will immediately face a 2% increase in the cost of borrowing because those markets will take fright and then take flight. It will add €500 million to the cost of our annual borrowing. I know Deputy Ó Caoláin would not want to affect the old, the sick and the vulnerable but that is effectively what it would do.

We have our guarantees, underwritten by the European Union, and any inquiries we may have had have been dealt with. We will have severe and immediate consequences, not just in Ireland but throughout Europe, if we vote "No" a second time.

Deputy Billy Timmins

I welcome Deputy Ó Caoláin and apologise to him as unfortunately I was in the Dáil during his contribution. I am aware that Sinn Féin has opposed all treaties to date but I am also aware that it is in favour of Ireland's involvement in Europe. When and why did Sinn Féin change its policy on the issue?

Deputy Mary O’Rourke
We all welcome Deputy Ó Caoláin before us. I serve on another committee with him and his contributions are most assiduous and fruitful there. As I understand it, the protocols and arrangements which have been brought about by the Taoiseach and his colleagues going to Brussels and laying out our stall have been validated by all the countries and laid before the United Nations. Having said that, I also understand that the Good Friday Agreement has been laid before the United Nations and thus validated and adhered to. If the UN was good enough to provide the proper environment for the Good Friday Agreement, I do not see how its role should be denigrated when the protocols as arranged were lodged there. It is a useful repository for what has happened and I hope will happen.

There is a further point in the debate which I find most unusual. We are, altogether, 27 countries and Deputy Ó Caoláin has said he is in favour of Europe. Why is there an aura of a conspiracy in which 26 countries are out to get us? Why do we fear all the other countries? Why are we not prepared to stand on our own, put forward our case and insist on collegiality with all the other countries in Europe? Why should we see ourselves with the potential to be done up by the other 26 countries? It should not be so.

I was a Minister in many Departments and I know from going to the Council of Ministers that when we make our contributions, we are not told that we are such a small country or percentage of the whole that we should not speak again. It is far from that as our words are given as much weight as those of Germany, France or other larger countries.

I am not worried that we are small because our efforts are fruitful. We have had an amazing effect on Europe and not just as a legacy over hundreds of years but in modern times as well. The equality afforded to each country is surely exemplified in us being proud to be the size we are and the weight we attach to that. We should not be enveloped in a cloak of conspiracy, saying that everyone else is out to get us. We work in collegiality with many other countries and there is mutual respect between us.

I do not want to be craven or to believe we are not important. We stand on our own record and rights and surely that is way we should proceed with Europe.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne**

I apologise to Deputy Ó Caoláin because I was not here for all his presentation. As with Deputy O'Rourke, I work very closely with Deputy Ó Caoláin in another forum and he is a very good
colleague. We are glad to have him here and to have this debate, which has aired different but valid perspectives.

Will the Deputy clarify one point of view regarding the Commission and that the agreement only lasts until 2014? That is not what is written in the second paragraph of the Presidency conclusions from last December. It is an unqualified agreement between Ministers and we have that text in front of us.

There has been much speculation in the media that the Sinn Féin organisations in the North and South have different views on the Lisbon treaty and the European Union. As the Deputy is representing Sinn Féin, will he expand on that?

Chairman

We will now go back to Deputy Ó Caoláin. They are all simple questions.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

I do not think so. I sincerely thank all Deputies and Senators for their contribution. When the meeting was being set up, the original start time was 11.30 a.m. and I requested the secretariat to bring it forward to 11 a.m. because I am due to speak in the leaders' contributions on NAMA by 12.30 p.m. at the latest.

Chairman

There were changes over which we had no control.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

That is true. I will take each of the questions and deal with them as best I can. Deputy Timmy Dooley spoke about the direction of Europe and Sinn Féin's vision for Europe in future, and some of the other contributions also touched on this in some measure. Without question, Sinn Féin not
only wishes to be an integral part of Ireland's representation within the European Union but has already demonstrated that uniquely as an all-island party with elected representation on both sides of the Border. Our commitment to working with colleagues not only from Ireland but those who share our respective outlook, hopes and aspirations for the European Union into the future are on record.

We believe the European Union must be responsive to the needs of member states and the citizens of each of them. We believe in equality. Deputy Treacy spoke of liberty, equality and fraternity but the equality buttons cannot all be pushed now or in what is proposed coming from the Lisbon treaty. We are moving to a different position as heretofore and from the outset we were always open to the idea of an amalgam of peoples based on equal opportunity. We understand the proportionality with regard to democratic representation within the Parliament but we are moving to population realities with regard to voting strength within the Council of Ministers.

This is a move away from an equality agenda. We are citizens of Ireland and citizenship of the European Union is of a different variety. If we are to move towards becoming citizens of the European Union while it is based on national population numbers, Ireland's position will be significantly overtaken by the major population centres of Germany, France, Britain, Italy, Poland, etc. We should be mindful of that as we want to protect not only the interests of Irish people but also smaller member states across the Union. We must also protect the respective interests of people within the larger populations which mirror our outlook.

The contributions of Paul Rellis to the sub-committee's deliberations have been mentioned. It is important to note that the quotation I read into the record this morning is absolutely accurate and a valid reflection of Mr. Rellis's contribution. It does not only relate to the absence of any downward trend or cycle relating to the first rejection by the Irish people of the treaty on 12 June 2008. The same reality was shown to be the case after the French and Dutch rejection of the constitutional treaty proposals in 2005 when we saw that economic aid development and inward investment in France during the period immediately following was not an ill reflection. There was a significant upturn. We are not making the point that one is commensurate with the other but are rejecting the argument that claims if one says "No" there is an economic penalty to pay. We do not accept that.

Regarding negative consequences, we are not making the contrary argument. The people who say there will be negative consequences are those on the "Yes" side. It is very important to note that the Taoiseach and others feed the negative perception regarding our position. They give it a currency which I do not accept. As a member state, we have the right to debate the Lisbon treaty on its
standalone merits without the sense of a threat hanging over our heads. That is not the way to conduct a debate and inform the broad electorate on the merits or demerits of the proposition.

Concerning tax harmonisation, I must refer to Article 48. Although the current system is cumbersome with regard to changes in some areas, especially where we achieved and retained the right to hold a referendum on specific changes to the treaties, my party is looking at the situation in respect of Article 48. This concerns the simplified revision procedure whereby the European Council may adopt a decision amending all or part of the provisions of the treaty on the function of the European Union. It goes further to state that the European Council may adopt the decision authorising the Council to act by a qualified majority in that area, or in that case. To reach that point there must be unanimity but a future Irish Government might assent, although I have heard all the political parties assert — including the current Government's major party, Fianna Fáil, during Deputy Bertie Ahern's time as Taoiseach — that they would not countenance a change to that arrangement. One must look at the record of the political parties which make up the Houses of the Oireachtas, where they have stood and what their positions are because there will be changes in Government along the way. Can we be certain that a future Government will not agree to move from unanimity to qualified majority voting?

I need only cite the Bersani report of 2005, with which I am sure the members are familiar. I have a copy here. The report, as introduced by Pier Luigi Bersani, dealt with a common consolidated corporate tax base, or what I have described as CCCTB, something over which we would cherish retaining control. This report reflects not only on Bersani and those who worked with him in its compilation, but demonstrates there is unquestionably a body of opinion within the European Union that wishes to move to this position. Sadly, that report was supported by a number of Irish MEPs at that time. None was from Fianna Fáil.

Deputy Noel Treacy

That is very true.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin
I acknowledge the fact. Please let me finish. It is very important. We are saying the current situation will not maintain the guarantees into the future. A future Government might concede and we believe that situation should not be open to it. We want that protection because we believe, as Fianna Fáil asserts, and has asserted on the floor of the Dáil Chamber on numerous occasions, that it is something we should not only cherish but should protect by every means at our disposal. The Lisbon treaty does not so protect it. The faultline, sadly, may very well lie at home.

Given the time remaining, I shall try to go through some of this. Concerning farming, which was also mentioned, while the major Irish farming organisations have declared for a "Yes" position on this occasion — "enthusiastically", as described by the Deputy — that enthusiasm was not so obvious last year in the arena of Peter Mandelson as Trade Commissioner. When we consider all that happened with regard to Peter Mandelson's whole thrust and approach, we should not mistake the fact that it is a pattern. It went on before him in respect of Pascal Lamy, and with Leon Brittan before him, and has continued since Mandelson's departure from the position of Trade Commissioner. This exists and we need to be very mindful of it.

Irish farming families have every right to be concerned about mixed trade agreements into the future because we believe there is unquestionably a major body of opinion that sees the big prize to be the potential for access to major services contracts in the developing world. It has been shown time and again that these people are quite prepared. Padraig Walshe and his predecessors have indicated and expressed their concerns vehemently about this very clear trend and intent on the part of very important and powerful people within the European Union and at Commission level into the present day. It is expected to continue and is likely to deepen with the confirmation yesterday of Mr. Barroso for another five years. The situation is that these people will trade off the interests of small farming families in order to secure their prizes. The real losers in all this will be Irish farming families and the developing world because these people are out to exploit. We will face big services contracts in the developing world which will affect Irish farming families and farming families across Europe. I have no doubt that if we reject the Lisbon treaty on 2 October, which I believe we should do, countries that have a very solid agricultural food processing sector will continue to work together and address these issues. The French, the Irish and others have co-operated in the past and I believe they will continue to do so into the future.

Senator Cummins spoke of the Commissioner, as did Deputy Thomas Byrne. I can look to the Presidency report of 19 June and cite the various articles. I put the challenge into my opening remarks. With respect, in what way can any of the members convince and show me that we have a
guarantee of a Commissioner post-2014? We do not have the solemn declaration to which Senator Cummins referred and we should not make the mistake of thinking we have. There were four elements to this, namely, the decisions which were made regarding abortion, ethical issues, taxation, neutrality and workers' rights. Only three are to become declarations, with a proposal to become protocols ultimately, namely, those on abortion, taxation and neutrality. We had a declaration on workers' rights. What have we on the Commissioner? An agreement. To be frank, there are many agreements that have not stood the test of day.

Deputy Thomas Byrne

It is not——

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

No, there is no revision of the treaty. One must be very careful regarding these various declarations, protocols and agreements. They have not addressed the range of issues that we in Sinn Féin addressed in the course of the 2008 campaign and which we continue to address today. In page 2 of the Presidency report of the 18th and 19th summits in Brussels, the references are, with regard to point No. 2, that "having carefully noted the concerns of the Irish people as set out by the Taoiseach". With regard to point No. 3 the European Council also "agrees" that other concerns of the Irish people were presented by the Taoiseach. The concerns which we presented to the Taoiseach were not reflected by him or the Irish representatives in that engagement. Our document is there for all to read and it is multilingual. It is also available in French. It is a better deal for Ireland and the European Union. I commend it to members who can take a look at what we argued. It is available on our website and the committee may wish to examine our arguments. With respect to the Taoiseach, the series of presentations and arguments he put was simply prepared and he came up with simplistic responses. I refer to the words of the EU Presidency, not mine — do not depend on Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin. It promises that three of these will form a protocol of a future accession treaty at a time as yet unknown relating to a county or countries yet unknown and such a protocol will arrive. However, page four of the document states that the protocol, when it presents, will clarify but not change either the content or the application of the Treaty of Lisbon. Let us be
under no illusion about it. The people must know this fact. The committee may have comfort from it. We will differ on this issue and I did not expect that I would be able to persuade it. The members probably have known me long enough to realise that I was not going to buckle here today either

**Deputy Thomas Byrne**

We thought the Deputy might.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin**

—even with the eminent Chair in his place.

**Senator Maurice Cummins**

I thought the Deputy might produce some evidence of where they had reneged in the past.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin**

The people need to know the facts. They are being asked to vote on the Treaty of Lisbon on 2 October, but not a comma has changed nor, in the words of the EU Presidency, has the intent or its implementation. It has not changed one iota and we must be very clear about that.

**Deputy Noel Treacy**

They also need to know that if this treaty is rejected, the Treaty of Nice stands and we lose our Commissioner.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin**
No. The Treaty of Nice only obliges when we reach 27 member states that we reduce. It does not actually state that it has to reduce by A, B or C.

**Deputy Noel Treacy**

It does.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin**

No.

**Deputy Timmy Dooley**

A reduction of at least one.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin**

By at least one. I thank the Deputy and that is a correction I appreciate from the committee. That would mean in reality whenever our turn comes——

**Deputy Billy Timmins**

It says that Nice has 62% of voting criteria.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin**

The EU Presidency would happen for each of the current member states once in every 135 years based on a five-year occupancy of the role.

**Deputy Billy Timmins**

The population threshold——
Chairman

One speaker only, please.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

It would give adequate opportunity to address properly what we must see going forward and we wish to see a Commissioner for all member states. That position has not changed.

Deputy Noel Treacy

In that case we should vote for the Lisbon treaty.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

No, we should not vote for Lisbon, with respect. I will move on quickly as I appreciate the time issue. Deputy Mary O'Rourke made the point that the Good Friday Agreement had been laid before the United Nations. Indeed, the Good Friday Agreement has been laid before the United Nations which is the very fact and point that I made in quoting the Presidency report and this responds to that same point. It will have no direct impact or effect on the Lisbon treaty or its outworking. Deputy O'Rourke also painted a view that we are little "Irelanders" and that they are all out to get us but we do not see it that way nor is that our view.

I concur with Deputy Treacy and I am very much a republican in the tradition of James Connolly and others and am very proud of his County Monaghan roots. We are an internationalist party also and we are working with comrades from member states throughout the European Union in terms of our direct involvement in the European Parliament. We are very proud of the engagement with GUE and NGL. That is part of our role there, we will continue to play that part and hopefully Sinn Féin will secure stronger representation in future opportunities. Our concerns are not only for Ireland but for Europe. We believe the French and Dutch also recorded their concerns, not only out of selfish interest but in the interest of the overall European Union in terms of their rejection of the constitutional treaty in 2005.
I refer to the matter of equals. The committee made the point that we are always equals in terms of decision making. However, we are not equals when it comes to qualified majority voting situations. The last contributor was Deputy Thomas Byrne and I have dealt with the matter of the Commissioner as best I can for the Deputy and others but he posed an interesting question which probably gives us a wrap up. I refer to the difference he allegedly perceives between Sinn Féin on one side of the Border and Sinn Féin on the other side. The only difference that I can see, and it is to my great regret, is that especially since 2007 we do not share the same political strength on this side of the Border as our party currently enjoys in the Assembly. If the Deputy were a Member of a party of four Deputies, the smallest, among 166 in the Dáil he would have some idea of the crucifixion we have to bear every day in engaging with all other Members.

**Deputy Noel Treacy**

That is not fair.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin**

I remain an optimist and, along with Deputy Ó Snodaigh and my colleagues, we look forward not only to the decision on the Lisbon treaty referendum but to the general election decision which will come sooner rather than later. I am certain there are some voices in this room who would agree on that point at least in any event.

**Chairman**

Deputy Joanna Tuffy wishes to make a quick point and if there is time to respond we will allow it.

**Deputy Joanna Tuffy**

It is a very short question and I apologise if someone else has made this point. In the last campaign Sinn Féin used the slogan or phrase, "There is always a plan B." Whether one agrees with the new referendum, it is a plan B. Is it the position of Sinn Féin now that it seeks a plan C?
Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

No, this is plan B. I commended it to the Deputy's colleagues only a short time ago. This is the document we presented which has been translated as well. It is available in French for our visitors and colleagues this afternoon. Our position is a better deal for Ireland and the European Union. I have made the point which, sadly and regrettably despite the efforts we employed in the engagement of the sub-committee established under the initial effort and direction of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Deputy Micheál Martin, was not taken on board. Sadly and regrettably, the points we have raised in terms of the deficiencies of the Lisbon treaty have not been reflected in the engagement with other member state representatives. They are well aware of this which is why on what is almost the opening page, the introduction to the issues, they not once but twice refer to the people's concerns as represented by the Taoiseach and use such language elsewhere. I enjoy language and I believe the construction of that phrase is an acknowledgement and an admission that they are very well aware of other real concerns not reflected. This is plan B and I commend it to the committee and most especially to the Labour Party.

Deputy Noel Treacy

Deputy Ó Caoláin has not addressed the peace situation in Northern Ireland, including the contribution of the European Union and the provision of a legal facility that allowed them to engage during the crisis there.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

With respect to the Chair of the Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, of which I am also an august member, I did not purposely ignore it. As one of those who was a member of our negotiations committee throughout that period it has been a very significant and proud part of my life's work and I wish to make that absolutely clear and I hope that by engagement with Deputy Treacy and others on that committee it would confirm that point. Make no mistake——

Deputy Noel Treacy
What about the role of the EU?

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin**

We have acknowledged fully the role of the European Union. I could go further and state that despite many of the misgivings and strong arguments and positions I have held over many years regarding EU treaties as they present, including the Lisbon treaty, and while I can point to serious downsides in terms of sectors of our economy and wipe-outs in some cases, on balance for the greater number of our citizens the European Union has been a good thing. Make no mistake that when I state our commitment is to be directly involved and working with all parties in representing Ireland's best interest in Europe, it is a sincere expression.

**Deputy Noel Treacy**

Let us do it together then.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin**

Now the Deputy has it.

**Chairman**

Let us conclude on that positive note from Deputy Ó Caoláin for which I was waiting. It was not so much a comfort but I was about to comment in conclusion that there are some strange personalities opposed to the Lisbon treaty throughout Europe. They include people with whom the Deputy, the committee and I would have very little in common and whose long-term agenda for Europe is not that described by the Deputy nor one to which we would subscribe.

When we met recently at a public meeting in Kells we discussed the analogy of the Good Friday Agreement and the fact that an agreement or treaty consists of the various views, concerns, vital issues and fundamentals of all participating parties. In 27 member states there are bound to be conflicting views but they are in an agreement. Therefore, no one state can overcome the other and
the group of the others cannot overcome one state. Incidentally, and this has not been much quoted, in the event that all the paranoia we have witnessed in Ireland was correct, that they are all out to get us and that ultimately we will be squeezed to the extent that we will not exist any longer, there is an exit clause in the Lisbon treaty so that nobody can be squeezed to death, economically, socially, culturally or otherwise and nobody can be held within the Union, against their wishes.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin
Share
Or that of their people.

Chairman

Absolutely. It is highly unlikely that would happen. I am aware the Deputy subscribes to that as well and that we all subscribe to that. It is highly unlikely that would happen nor should it happen because it would not be in the interests of the people of Europe or the Irish people. We do not mind what the French did before ratifying the treaty or the Dutch either for that matter because we are still an independent Republic. I thank Deputy Ó Caoláin for appearing before the committee. We realise he has headed in that direction——

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

I am next door.

Chairman

——otherwise the leader of the Green Party will take centre stage.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

There is no chance.
Chairman

I remind members and visitors to switch off their mobile phones because they interfere with the broadcasting system. Before we begin, I draw the witness's attention to the fact that members of the committee have absolute privilege but the same privilege does not apply to witnesses appearing before the committee. Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against any person outside the Houses or an official, by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

We have an important agenda for today's meeting. The first item thereon is a discussion on the Lisbon treaty with our very special guest, the Most Reverend Dr. Noel Treanor, Irish delegate to the Commission of Bishops Conferences in the European Community, COMECE. Bishop Treanor is accompanied by Mr. Martin Long, director of the Catholic Communications Office, and Fr. Timothy Bartlett. They are all welcome. We hope to have an interesting discussion which will assist in enlightening the general public and members with regard to the issues the country faces in the context of the Lisbon treaty.

We welcome Bishop Treanor's attendance at the meeting because we are aware that he made many sacrifices to be present. He is attending this meeting despite the difficulties that arose for him in respect of his schedule. We hope his experience and that of his colleagues at this meeting will be as pleasant as possible. Members should note the fact that Bishop Treanor is attending as Irish delegate to the Commission of Bishops Conferences in the European Community, which is quite a substantial role.

As is normally the case with guest speakers, Bishop Treanor will speak for ten or 15 minutes and there will then be a question and answer session. We can bank questions from members in groups of four or five or the bishop may wish to make a single response to all questions posed.

Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor
I thank the members of the Joint Committee on European Affairs for inviting me to discuss the Lisbon treaty. I do so with respect for their particular role and competence as political representatives. The standing committee of the Irish Bishops Conference will make a statement on the issue of the Lisbon treaty in due course. I have accepted the joint committee's invitation in my capacity as the representative of the Irish Bishops Conference to the Commission of the Bishops Conferences of the European Community, COMECE. I served in Brussels as a staff member of the organisation for almost 20 years and for 17 years as its general secretary. Since June of last year, I have been bishop of the Diocese of Down and Connor.

I join the joint committee today with the support of His Eminence, Cardinal Seán Brady. I convey his good wishes to members and his appreciation for their respectful dialogue with him on this issue in November last year. On that occasion, Cardinal Brady highlighted the critical role played by Irish Christianity in establishing the founding ideals of a united Europe and he spoke of believing "passionately in the European Union". Confidence in ourselves, as a people and as a nation, and confidence in our capacity to mould and shape Europe with our fellow member states, rather than fear or suspicion, should mark our fundamental attitude to Europe. Cardinal Brady also made it clear on that occasion that a committed Catholic or Christian, even before the current legal guarantees had been secured, could vote in favour of the Lisbon treaty.

I begin by echoing that conviction. I state unequivocally that a Catholic can, without reserve and in good conscience, vote "Yes" for the Lisbon treaty. There are no grounds to justify a "No" vote on the Lisbon treaty on the basis of specifically religious or ethical concerns. As to other grounds on which citizens may choose to vote, such as economic or political considerations, this is a matter of prudential political judgment for each individual based on an informed and accurate assessment of all of the issues involved.

Accuracy is essential in this regard. The moral claim on all involved in this debate encompasses the duty to provide accurate information and to avoid provoking, or indeed exploiting, unfounded fears through misinformation. In the debate, the question of values applies not just to the content of the treaty but also to the way in which the debate itself is conducted and the accuracy with which the EU institutions and the institutional method are presented. Here it is worth recalling the statement made by the Irish Bishops' Conference prior to the first referendum on the Lisbon treaty in May 2008. In that text the bishops cautioned against "those who would seek to
influence the outcome of the referendum either by offering misleading or even patently incorrect advice or by introducing extraneous factors into the debate". That still holds and is still most pertinent as an assertion. Unfortunately, there is evidence that there are a number of publications and organisations which are intent once again on influencing the outcome of the forthcoming referendum by introducing misleading or inaccurate information. This includes suggesting, for example, that the Lisbon treaty would undermine existing legal protections in Ireland for unborn children or, indeed, that on the basis of the treaty, euthanasia might be introduced. It is important to point out that no organisation actively lobbying in the current campaign, using either print or other media, speaks for or on behalf of the Catholic Church.

The Lisbon treaty does not alter the legal position of abortion in Ireland. This is further assured by the legal guarantees, which will become protocols in due course, secured, we hope, by the Irish Government in the period since the first referendum. These legal guarantees represent a welcome and significant clarification of existing safeguards in the relationship between the competence of the European Union and its institutions on the one side and national sovereignty on important ethical issues on the other.

In weighing up the Lisbon treaty, citizens will wish to take account of the opportunities as well as the challenges which go with participating in a free democratic political system at both national and EU level. Two vitally important considerations arise in this regard.

The first is the concern about a creeping impact of EU institutions on important ethical issues falling within national competence. While I am satisfied that the Lisbon treaty does not give grounds for such concern, admittedly it is impossible to predict every future direction of legislation, jurisprudence and policy in a democratic system. Here the competent and robust exercise of their representative functions by our elected Ministers, acting in the Council, and by our Members of the European Parliament will be determinative in co-shaping, with our fellow Europeans, the ethical and societal fabric of tomorrow's European Union. There can be no doubt about this. We are part of a process where discussion, dialogue and negotiation among equals, irrespective of size of member state, prevails and is a constituent essential element of the EU achievement and its treaties. Moreover, those who do this work on our behalf will be elected by us, the citizens of this country, as has been the case since Ireland freely chose to become a member of the European Communities.
The second consideration is that the debates about moral values and public policy are as much part of the national cultural and political environment as they are at the EU level. There should be no obfuscation about this. Many of the concerns which have been expressed about the Lisbon treaty and ethical issues arising from it are already a matter of democratic debate at national level. Fear and uncertainty in the face of some of the issues proper to the national level are being projected on to the EU and the treaty. We cannot escape, as a nation, all of the issues being discussed, many of which are being discussed in the context of the debate on the referendum. In the same way it would be unrealistic and inappropriate, precisely because of the principle of subsidiarity, to expect the EU to protect against the outcome of democratic debates about ethics and culture at a national level.

Whether it is the influence of secular ideology, cultural forces which undermine a consistent ethic of life, or concerns about the status of marriage and the family, the ideal of participation in public debate invites Christians to engage fully with the representative and democratic institutions available to them at both national and EU level. As Pope Benedict XVI has said, Christians need to "be actively present in the public debate on a European level, knowing that this discussion is now an integral part of the national debate". We need to promote the dialogue of reason and faith in the life of the EU and its institutions and in discussion about public policy. Citizens of religious faith need to secure and use the opportunities provided to churches and faith-based organisations in Article 17 of the Lisbon treaty on the functioning of the European Union to secure their rightful place in the dialogue about Europe and its values. This article provides an invaluable and unprecedented opportunity for churches and faith communities by recognising for the first time in the primary law of the EU the existing status of churches at a national level, their "identity and specific contribution" to society and by committing the European Union to "maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue" with them.

A rejection of the Lisbon treaty might jeopardise this important achievement for faith and society and might therefore weaken rather than strengthen the influence of our Christian heritage and values on the future direction of the European Union and its prospect as a community of values.

As they cast their vote on the referendum each citizen will remember that the European Union is a project and a process. It is a process which is still young and in some respects fragile. The Lisbon treaty marks an important point in its evolution but it is not the final word on the
potential direction and identity of the EU project. The Union will develop further in years to come. Our political representatives, elected by us, will continue to have the responsibility to shape and develop it further. They will do so within the EU institutional framework on the basis of the democratic and transparent procedures agreed by the member states. The opportunity to co-determine with our fellow Europeans the shape and quality of the future of Europe is enhanced, not diminished by the Lisbon treaty.

Ireland's role in shaping this historic project as a key member state should not be put at risk by a vote based on frustrations or even anger with domestic political parties. Similarly, concerns about our economic or other difficulties at a domestic level should not fuel a "No" vote. It is my belief that the European Union is a necessary and vital support to Ireland and its economy in addressing these issues.

The Catholic church has consistently supported the general aims and direction of the European Union. It has engaged constructively and transparently with its institutions, as I am aware from personal experience of some 20 years. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI:

If, after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, certain excessive hopes were disappointed, and on some points justified criticisms can be raised about certain European Institutions, the process of unification remains a most significant achievement which has brought about a period of unwonted peace to this continent, formerly consumed by constant conflicts and fatal fratricidal wars. For the countries of central and eastern Europe in particular, participating in this process is a further incentive to the consolidation of freedom, the constitutional state and democracy within their borders.

This applies to all of us.

In a participative democracy, such as we enjoy in Ireland, the primary responsibility for clarifying and promoting the Lisbon treaty rests primarily with politicians. The church recognises, respects and does not usurp this responsibility. The church rather reminds all Christians of their duty to vote on matters of such importance on the basis of accurate information, an informed conscience and with due regard for the pursuit of solidarity within the European Union and beyond its borders and with due regard for the pursuit of the global common good through the policies of the Union.

I will conclude with the following words from Pope Benedict XVI in reiterating my respect for your responsible and important task as members of our national Legislature.
I am sure that God will bless the generous efforts of all who, in a spirit of service, work to build a common European home where every cultural, social and political contribution is directed towards the common good. To you, already involved in different ways in this important human and evangelical undertaking, I express my support and my most fervent encouragement.

I thank committee members for their attention.

Chairman

I thank Dr. Treanor for his precise and clear presentation. Many of those here have indicated their anxiety to participate. I remind members that Dr. Treanor must leave before 1 p.m. We must recognise that he came here at considerable inconvenience to himself. I ask members to keep this in mind when making their submissions. I will allow those members who wish to speak to make their comments and then we will have one response, rather than go back and forth. Dr. Treanor will therefore have time to note the submissions of the various members.

Deputy Timmy Dooley

I welcome the delegation led by Dr. Treanor, Fr. Bartlett and Martin Long. I thank Dr. Treanor for his direct and clear statement which reiterates some of the comments made by Cardinal Brady in the past. My first question was going to be to ask whether a Catholic could in conscience vote "Yes" to this treaty. I thank Dr. Treanor for clarifying that so concisely in advance.

My biggest concern is the efforts made by some to offer misleading advice to what I consider vulnerable people. I am speaking about efforts being made by groups with, perhaps, a loose association with the Catholic church or who want to indicate they have an association with it. Some offer this information through a publication known as Alive!. I have no problem with any editorial grouping offering a “Yes” or “No” proposition within the debate, but I find it objectionable as a Catholic when any group goes beyond that by offering extraneous arguments or putting forward misleading and untruthful statements on the treaty.

Others also seek to influence the debate. I have a pamphlet which is circulated widely within churches by what is referred to as the Fatima rosary group. It has a mobile telephone number on it
but no contact address. The pamphlet has a picture of the Blessed Virgin and a child on the front, but it makes what I consider very misleading statements within it. It suggests that a "Yes" vote will end Ireland's status as an independent sovereign state and that it will remove our right to make our own laws. It suggests the EU constitution will be superior to our Constitution and goes even further in suggesting our protocols and guarantees will be ineffective. The pamphlet also mentions euthanasia and says that if we vote for the second Lisbon treaty referendum, we will become part of an army led by former colonial powers. It points out that in January 2009 the European Union gave parliamentary approval guaranteeing access to sexual and reproductive health rights and indicates this is a euphemism to include abortion.

Does Dr. Treanor as a leader in the Catholic Church find this distasteful? Does he find it objectionable that people within the faith seek to use their association with it as a means to win a campaign in a manner which is at variance with the truth and targets vulnerable people who may believe this is a central message from the Catholic Church due to the documentation used or the way in which it is circulated? Is it right for the Catholic Church to continue to allow Alive! to be circulated in Catholic churches throughout the country when it would not be appropriate for any political party to advance its case by distributing information within the church? While a political party might distribute information outside church gates, it would not do so within the confines of the church. That would be going too far.

When making his response, will Dr. Treanor indicate whether the statements he has made and the responses he will make are made with the knowledge and support of Cardinal Brady?

Deputy Lucinda Creighton

I welcome the delegation, in particular Most. Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor. I thank him for his clear exposition of his position and that of the bishops' conference. I especially welcome the bishop's unequivocal statement as it clarifies any ambiguity that could have existed as to whether a Catholic can in good conscience and faith advocate a "Yes" vote or vote in favour of the Lisbon treaty on 2 October.

The Lisbon treaty advances the exposition of a religious ethos and the freedom for a religious ethos throughout the European Union. As the bishop pointed out, this will be on an official treaty basis for the first time. In other words, it will manifest itself in primary law at a European level. This is very
important. If we consider the European project as it has advanced and developed over the decades since its foundation, the European Union essentially has been based on and put forward Christian values to which we and others throughout the Union can subscribe, for example, the values mentioned in the preamble but also those contained within the treaty. Among those mentioned are the dignity of the human being, respect for human life, respect for human rights and democracy, etc. These are values we should stand up for and of which we should be proud.

It is important to refer to the Charter of Fundamental Rights which specifically refers to the right to life, an important aspect of this treaty which has been ignored deliberately in certain quarters. As Dr. Treanor so eloquently pointed out, the formal dialogue which is established with religious institutions — on which our former party leader and former Taoiseach, John Bruton, in particular has placed much emphasis in recent years — is something we can be very proud of. The specific reference to the Christian heritage of the European Union is something we can all be comfortable with and proud of. It has been advanced by certain people that the absence of a specific reference to God in the treaty is in some way deficient or abnormal. I would contend that no treaty has ever had a specific reference to God and as we are aware, this is not a constitution but rather an amending treaty. I would like to hear Dr. Treanor's views on that particular point because it is something that is being used as a stick to beat the Lisbon treaty and in my view is somewhat misleading.

I welcome in particular Dr. Treanor's quoting of Pope Benedict because he has been very clear in his support for the ideals and the values of the European Union and of the European project and indeed, the Lisbon treaty. This is something that has been misrepresented by certain groups and the Pope has been misquoted in some instances.

Dr. Treanor stated in his concluding remarks that it is up to politicians to explain the treaty, to campaign in favour of it and to explain it to the people of Ireland and I agree with him. However, when values-based and faith-based arguments are used against this treaty by certain people who represent themselves as speaking for certain quarters of the Catholic Church and who articulate a view which is portrayed as almost representative of the official view of the Catholic Church, it behaves people such as Dr. Treanor who are in positions of seniority in the church establishment, to counteract these arguments and to clarify the facts of the situation and to put forward the factual arguments as they stand. I do not believe that politicians can do this and neither do I believe that
politicians have the moral authority in terms of taking a leadership position within the Catholic Church and it would be a difficult task for us.

Does Dr. Treanor believe that this kind of counteracting of some of the misleading viewpoints by means of Alive! and other publications could be possible by means of a formal statement, or a press conference? Should official literature be distributed and disseminated in churches around the country as a means of putting forward the legitimate and truthful arguments which support the Lisbon treaty and the legitimacy of the European project? It is essential that the Catholic Church establishment in this country stands up to be counted and to show leadership, as Dr. Treanor has shown here today. It would be necessary to do so in a pragmatic and practical manner across the country because otherwise I fear that those representing inaccurate and untruthful positions will win the moral debate and this would be most unfortunate.

Deputy Mary O’Rourke

I thank the Chairman for going to great efforts to arrange this meeting and I also thank Bishop Treanor because he changed his plans when many of us were unable to attend yesterday. We are very appreciative of this and of his presence. We know Martin Long for a long time and from another life — a very good life, shall we say——

Senator Rónán Mullen

He might lose his job.

Deputy Timmy Dooley

He was in the insurance federation.

Deputy Mary O’Rourke

No, it was before that but I will not bring blushes to his lovely cheeks. I also welcome Fr. Bartlett and I thank the three gentlemen for coming to the meeting.
This has been a very positive start to what I hope will be a positive outcome. I particularly wish to emphasise what Dr. Treanor said in his very first sentence when he stated that a Catholic can vote "Yes" for the Lisbon treaty in good conscience. If this message could be disseminated it would be wonderful. However, as Deputy Creighton said, it is for us to make the arguments which win people but it is very difficult to make a moral argument which appears to have the backing of a branch of the Roman Catholic Church without impugning what is being argued. Dr. Treanor is representing Cardinal Brady and the other bishops and priests and parishes up and down the land and I am sure in his response he will probably argue along the lines that the church as we know it does not have any disciplinary control by which it can upbraid what is published in publications which are not under the remit of the church. However, in the case of publications which are disseminated through the church to which most of us repair each Sunday or for funerals, mass, christenings or whatever, I would have thought the Catholic Church as we know it, as represented here by Dr. Treanor, would be able to instruct the local man in charge of a church that it does not agree with such and such a document.

I refer to Dr. Treanor's very clear, positive thinking, which he has articulated with admirable clarity and which has been wonderfully put together and enunciated — I used to teach English at senior level. However, I was in a very small rural town, Kilbeggan, last Sunday, and I picked up a freely available magazine called Alive!. I know other Deputies have referred to this magazine. Dr. Treanor will say he has no say over the particular order or priest who publishes this magazine. I would normally be in favour of different opinions being expressed but not of opinions which are lies. When we go on local or national radio or give interviews, these are the points that are put to us. I believe there is a psychology in so doing because the people who produce this information want the debate to become mired in defence of lies or in making the attack against the lies and therefore there is no room for positivity. Dr. Treanor’s submission is very positive. We find it very difficult to remain positive when one must constantly argue the negative.

I refer to a page in the September 2009 edition under the title of Éire go Bragh Campaign. It asks such questions as, "Are you or any of your family an alcoholic? Do you suffer from depression, from an unsound mind, from Alzheimer's, autism, drug addiction or vagrancy?" It states that many families know somebody with one of those disabilities and it is a cause for sadness that a new directive under the Lisbon treaty states that a person can be taken up, that the EU can seize a
person's home, family and children and that one must lock up one's children because if Lisbon is passed, they will come to get them.

I know Dr. Treanor's answer will be an example of clarity and he will say he has no responsibility. We all know the priests in our constituencies. Dr. Treanor will say he has no control over such publications. Surely Cardinal Brady, Dr. Treanor or whoever is in a position to do so could say to the clergy within the remit of the Catholic Church in Ireland that he does not believe the absolutely heinous, totally untrue and libellous articles in the newspaper which can be picked up freely. A woman told me yesterday she lit a candle every day in the church to which I referred. She believes everything she picks up in the church is true. We may all say we are far more sophisticated than that but we are not and many believe what is presented to them in the church because that is the way they were brought up. They believe what happens in the church is God sent and that they must, therefore, believe it. A member of their family, Tom or Pat, may be an alcoholic but instead of trying to cure him, they wave this newspaper at him and say he will be detained by the European Union if he votes "Yes". The article is disgusting, libellous, heinous and very disturbing for those who want to live their lives in a correct way. I do not want to make an exhibition of the bishop or myself by marching over and giving him a copy of Alive! but I want to hand it to him before he leaves.

Chairman

There are 11 speakers remaining and Dr. Treanor will have to be given an opportunity to reply. I will call the members in the customary order.

Deputy Joe Costello

I will be more brief than the previous speakers. I very much welcome Dr. Treanor, Fr. Bartlett and Mr. Long. We appreciate the fact that they have given of their time to attend to make an unequivocal statement. That is extremely important from our point of view, as are the questions we must ask. I do not see anything clearer in this campaign than what is stated on the first page of the delegates' submission:
I begin by echoing that conviction. [This refers to previous statements.] I state unequivocally that a Catholic can, without reserve and in good conscience, vote "Yes" for the Lisbon treaty. There are no grounds to justify a "No" vote in the Lisbon treaty on the basis of specifically religious or ethical concerns.

I will not go over the same ground as three previous speakers on misleading material, as referred to in the delegates' statement; suffice it to say misleading material is being circulated in churches and elsewhere, very much in the name of and under the mantle of the church. The Pope himself is misquoted in some statements. If such abuse of the Catholic Church is perpetrated by some of the people on the "No" side, I suggest, in the light of the categorical statement the delegates have made, that the church produce a leaflet to be made available to churchgoers to be picked up at the bottom of the church, at the font or at the location of much of the literature we see so often in our churches that contains so many misleading statements, which statements have been well described today. The church's leaflet should state its position as clearly as it has been in its submission to the committee. This would be very welcome and provide a sense of balance for churchgoers who are confused by the messages they receive.

Consider what was said about the creeping impact, or alleged creeping impact, of EU institutions on important ethical issues that are, in reality, matters for member states' competence. Does Dr. Treanor agree that the additional powers given to national parliaments will serve as an important counterbalance against the described approach in that national parliaments are to be given a specific role in terms of subsidiarity to ensure there is clarity regarding which decisions are pertinent to the European Union and which are pertinent to member states? Does he agree that national parliaments will, under the ratified treaty, be guarantors in this respect?

Let me refer to what Dr. Treanor said about Article 17 and the new basis in primary law of the European Union for dialogue between the churches and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which in Article 10 underlines the right to freedom of conscience and religious beliefs. It is a great opportunity for the churches to get involved and be fully engaged with the Union in considering and debating all these issues, engaging in dialogue and planning the way forward. Many positive points have been lost in the debate to date in many ways and these are issues that should be highlighted. It would be very valuable if the church did so by way making literature available to parishioners.
Senator Terry Leyden

I welcome Dr. Treanor, Fr. Bartlett and Mr. Martin Long. I thank the Chairman for rearranging the meeting for today because we were very anxious to be present for Dr. Treanor's contribution. It is a very well presented document and is very fair and honest. While we are entitled to vote how we like, we must note that the submission states clearly: "I state unequivocally that a Catholic can, without reserve and in good conscience, vote "Yes" for the Lisbon treaty." One can vote "No" if one wants to.

On the question of abortion, the submission states: "The Lisbon treaty does not alter the legal position of abortion in Ireland." There is nothing as clear as this.

Although the committee will receive excellent coverage on "Oireachtas Report" this evening and in the media tomorrow——

Deputy Mary O’Rourke

Not with NAMA.

Senator Terry Leyden

——I hope statements will be circulated.

Concern was expressed by members, including Deputy O'Rourke, about the paid-for advertisement by Éire go Brách in Alive! The editor of a paper must be responsible for its advertisements. It is a legal fact that editorial responsibility attaches to any advertisement in a publication. I appeal to Fr. Brian McKevitt to refrain from publishing lies in the newspaper. The statements are so untrue that I cannot, in conscience, understand how the hierarchy can allow it to be circulated in the church.

How can a church of the truth — that is, the Bible — allow untruths to be circulated freely within it? I cannot understand why any priest would not dump these documents from the church on receiving them. A priest cannot stop them being circulated door to door. Some 350,000 copies of the freesheet Alive! are circulated monthly. I do not know which order Fr. McKevitt is a member of – I believe it is the Dominicans – but surely that order, with its fine tradition in Ireland, should have some responsibility regarding the issues on which we must decide on 2 October. The referendum will affect the future of the European Union. Twenty six countries have agreed to
the Lisbon treaty and Ireland is the one holding up the process. By voting “Yes” on 2 October we will have the treaty ratified.

We are not prisoners of the European Union. In the treaty it is stipulated that we can opt out at any time we want, if we so wish. We could decide on this in the future but doing so would be crazy, particularly given our current difficulties and the European Union's support for us in these difficulties.

Let us be clear that we are a member of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. We signed up to the principles——

**Deputy Mary O’Rourke**

Forty years ago.

**Senator Terry Leyden**

There are 47 countries represented and we have a judge representing Ireland, Ms Ann Power. Nothing on 2 October will change our status within the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights and as a signatory to the principles thereof.

Dr. Treanor has stated the bishops' conference, to be held shortly in Maynooth, will consider this matter, after which a further statement will be made on the Lisbon reform treaty. Regardless of the outcome, I suggest it be circulated widely. The structure is such that each bishop decides in his own diocese whether to issue a pastoral letter on the issue. A document should be circulated based on this document. I challenge Fr. Brian McKevitt to publish this document in the next edition of Alive! which will be issued before 2 October. If he is prepared to take lies and untruths from Éire go Brách, I challenge him to take the truth from an eminent bishop.

**Chairman**
Members are reminded of the parliamentary practice that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official, either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

Senator Terry Leyden

I am availing of parliamentary privilege.

Chairman

I read that at the beginning of the meeting and do not want to have to read it again.

Deputy Lucinda Creighton

The truth is on the Senator's side.

Chairman

I remind members that there are time constraints and that we must appear in the House on another issue soon.

Senator Déirdre de Búrca

I welcome Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor and thank him for his clear and convincing analysis of the implications of the Lisbon treaty for Catholics. I am personally disappointed that more moderate voices in the Catholic church have not been more vocal, although Dr. Treanor's points are welcome. Claims have been made about the Lisbon treaty by those who see themselves as active members of the church that are downright misleading and that prey on the fears of vulnerable people. There has been a lack of leadership on the part of those who expressed concerns in the first instance about the implications of the treaty on issues such as abortion and the family. Given the strong legal guarantees secured by the Government, there is still silence on the part of those who spoke up the first time. They have not yet spoken out to reassure the members of their communities. I welcome the leadership shown by Most Rev. Dr. Treanor this morning because such leadership has been
lacking and is needed because there are those who will look to the church for leadership at a time like this for guidance on whether the outrageous claims being made in newspapers being circulated by the church are true. I hope others who expressed concerns initially will now accept the guarantees achieved by the Government address these fears.

Does Dr. Treanor believe the commitment in the Lisbon treaty to the institutionalising of an open, transparent and regular dialogue with churches and organisations within the European Union is good? Most of us are aware that Islamic fundamentalism and increasing concerns about the potential clash between that religion and the Catholic and other Christian churches may cause difficulty in the future. Is the fact that the treaty puts in place formal structures to facilitate dialogue between churches welcome? Should this be emphasised more?

Senator Rónán Mullen

I welcome Bishop Treanor; it is great to have an expert with us. Few people have as much knowledge of the European Union as the bishop. He has a great love of the Union, while not being blind to the challenges a country such as Ireland might face. He recognises the need to avail of the many opportunities our membership of the Union presents.

On occasion I share the concern about headlines on political matters and misleading advertisements in Alive! but I appeal to the bishop to resist temptation to appoint go-lighters to go round the Catholic churches in the country to throw newspapers out. Some of my colleagues obsess about this. Those who would give out most if the church was to ask a dissenting theologian to desist from teaching dodgy theology in a seminary now appear to want the church to police the newspapers available in church porches. The newspaper The Irish Catholic took a pro-Lisbon treaty position at the last referendum, as it was entitled to do. It would be better if periodicals gave people the facts in order that they could then make a judgment.

Senator Maurice Cummins

The truth is important.

Senator Rónán Mullen
Absolutely. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan said a man was entitled to his own opinion but not his own facts.

The bishop has rightly said the guarantees on social and ethical issues represent a welcome and significant clarification of existing safeguards. Would he not go further, given that there is a political reality in decision making, and say the existence of the guarantees might be helpful when courts come to make certain decisions as they interpret the Lisbon treaty? The existence of the guarantees strengthens the possibility that there will be respect for Ireland's constitutional traditions on education and the family. It is good that for the first time we have a clear acknowledgement this goes beyond the abortion issue which, to a great extent, was put to bed by the Maastricht protocol on issues that are peculiar to Ireland because we do not form part of the majority consensus on a number of social and ethical issues at EU level.

As good as these guarantees are, however, and they are a reason to vote "Yes" to the Lisbon treaty — many believe their concerns have been assuaged by them — does the bishop agree that there is an existing corpus of EU treaties that may be interpreted in ways that might be of concern to many? I was not impressed by a briefing we received on the Maruko case which offers an indication of how the European Court of Justice can enter areas within the competence of member states.

Chairman

The legal guarantees confront that issue.

Senator Rónán Mullen

No, because they only address the Lisbon treaty.

Chairman

They do.

Senator Rónán Mullen
I am asking the bishop a question.

Chairman

The legal guarantees are entered into and a commitment has been given by all the member states.

Senator Rónán Mullen

I am satisfied with that as far as the Lisbon treaty is concerned, but I am asking a different question. Does the bishop think it would be useful if the Government acknowledged that the existing corpus of EU law prior to the Lisbon treaty could present challenges in the areas of the family and marriage, equality and non-discrimination? It would be positive if the Government sought to resolve this issue once and for all in future negotiations in order that the legitimate concerns about existing treaties could be addressed to allow people to focus on the great project the European Union represents.

Deputy Noel Treacy

I congratulate Dr. Treanor on his appointment to the see of Down and Connor. Cóir, an organisation which claims it is a quasi Catholic church group, distributed up to six leaflets outside churches in my area containing outrageous untruths. Last weekend its members were able to get into the churches in question and leave individual leaflets on the pews. I do not understand how that could have happened. I have one final simple question. Cóir has launched a new poster this morning stating the EU wishes to control people's lives and urging them to vote "No". Dr. Treanor has a long history of outstanding service to his church, his country and to the Union in Brussels. Did he find that the European Union wished to control his life or those of the people he represented while he worked there in a professional capacity?

Senator Feargal Quinn

I welcome Bishop Treanor and will be brief. He stuck closely to his prepared script except for one sentence in which he made a change. When referring to the legal position of abortion in Ireland, the script stated "This is further assured by the legal guarantees, which will become protocols, secured by the Irish Government", into which Dr. Treanor inserted the words "we hope".
Deputy Mary O’Rourke

He means if the vote is "Yes".

Senator Feargal Quinn

Perhaps. Does this imply a doubt in Bishop Treanor's mind as to the certainty of those protocols?

Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor

If I may, I will respond to that question immediately. Absolutely not. However, I am a realist and my inclusion of that phrase was simply to make the point that the evolution of these legal guarantees into a protocol, following the processes that are evident to all members and which I will not repeat, is dependent upon ratification.

Chairman

Absolutely.

Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor

However, I thank Senator Quinn for giving me the opportunity to clarify this.

Chairman

We will move on.

Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor

As I must be in the far north of the country this evening and the time available is not terribly long, I ask for questions that have not been repeated or that have not been articulated.

Chairman
Dr. Treanor has been very patient and I agree. I will take questions that have not already been raised.

**Senator John Hanafin**

As the church does not involve itself in when individuals or media become involved in lobbying or campaigning, I ask that when such groups give the impression they are speaking for the Catholic Church, as some would easily and quickly do, the church should keep a constant vigil to ensure that none of these groups gives a strong impression that they are speaking for the Catholic Church. I also warmly welcome Dr. Treanor.

**Deputy Seán Power**

Would the bishop consider making his statement available at churches next weekend or the following weekend?

**Chairman**

It will be done.

**Deputy Beverley Flynn**

The bishop noted that a statement would be made on the Lisbon treaty by the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference. I ask that it be made sooner rather than later. Will it reflect the bishop's comments at this meeting?

**Chairman**

Dr. Treanor now has comprehensive knowledge of members' opinions, as well as their personal experiences nationwide, which is important. He has been most forthright in the manner in which he has addressed the joint committee and I thank him for being so. I apologise for delaying him but we did the best we could.
Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor

I will try to do justice to the burden of all the questions. Perhaps I will begin with the second last question on whether my experience of the European Union has been in any way limiting or controlling of my freedom.

Deputy Noel Treacy

I asked whether it sought to control Dr. Treanor or the people he represented.

Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor

Not at all. All states that decide to join the European Union choose freely to do so. As those present know, both as political representatives and as citizens, this is a community and a union of free sovereign member states which decide, according to agreed processes and rules, to pool partly in agreed areas their sovereignty for the common good. It is evident and is written right across the texts that the European Union is anything but some kind of budding dictatorship. It is a community of free member states. One of the new or new elements in this treaty is a facility for a member state eventually to withdraw.

Deputy Noel Treacy

To opt out. That is correct.

Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor

Consequently, this is a pertinent point in respect of Deputy Treacy's question.

The second subject to which I will turn in this august chamber relates to the comment I made towards the end of my statement, in which I discussed responsibility for promoting the debate and information resting — and I underline this point — primarily with politicians. I said "primarily" and not "exclusively". I accept the point that while politicians must give a lead in this debate and must inject correction where necessary, this debate is wider than simply the participation of politicians.
All members of civil society and all citizens have a duty and obligation to elucidate the debate, to enlighten ourselves and our fellow citizens in order to make an informed decision for the good of our citizens, the country and our future. While this is a shared responsibility to that extent, I repeat the word I used, which was "primarily". I agree that when obfuscation arises, all of us must endeavour to clarify and I will return to this subject when I try to address the issue of publications to which members have alluded.

A number of questions referred to Article 17 which is included in the treaty on the functioning of the European Union and again, as I noted, this is a new reality. I wish to point out that the decision by the convention to include this article marked a significant constitutional development in the self-understanding of the European Union. All members are aware that prior to the work of that convention, there was no explicit verbal reference in the primary law of the European Union to churches or to religion. However, in time this had become a notable legal and constitutional void because inevitably and inescapably, over the almost 50 years of the community's existence, it was involved in developing secondary law that directly took into consideration and was obliged to take account of, the religious datum element of life. Senator de Búrca asked me whether this was a positive development. In the text I supplied to members I stated that it is a positive development for both churches and society. I argue that evidence of this is to be found in the issues which have arisen, for example, from the recent economic and financial crises. Religions or churches are not the only source of addressing such issues but the spiritual, moral and ethical dimensions of human consciousness and experience also are integral and necessary sources, with other philosophical, social and ethical traditions, to developing a system of regulation and governance at national, supranational and international level. Consequently, this integrated approach to public policymaking involving churches, while respecting the separation between the sacred and secular and between church and state, is a positive development that is evident in the text of the Lisbon treaty.

The question was posed in terms of a specific reference to Islam. The first point to make is that the implementation of this article and particularly its third paragraph will require discussion on the part of both the European Union and its institutions and the parties concerned, namely, churches and religions. Arising from a long tradition, the Presidents of the Commission, Council and Parliament already informally meet once a year with religious representatives and leaders to discuss issues which generally are on the agenda of the European Union. On the basis of practice, this has been developed by President Barroso and in time the Council became involved, followed by the
Parliament. A meeting takes place in or around May of each year and the theme for this conversation or discussion is chosen by common consent and consultation.

Representatives of all religious traditions recognised within the member states are invited to those discussions. The Senator mentioned issues attendant upon fundamentalism of any kind and I believe she connected that precisely with Islam. The most potent and effective way of addressing any form of the expression of fundamentalism is dialogue. As for how effective such dialogue has been or what is its promise, first one must state that the development itself is positive. Second, its implementation will of course involve its implementation at different levels. This connects with some of the questions raised by the committee regarding matters of sovereignty and creeping impact. This will occur at the apex level of the EU Presidency and high representatives. However, at the level of everyday draft and proposed legislation, offices of the churches and religions, through presences in Brussels or the interests of citizens in organisations in member state societies, may engage in consultations at any time and contact civil servants of the Commission, as committee members know, and Members of Parliament. The article is full of promise and is positive for all religious traditions within member states and for the EU and its member state societies as well.

Perhaps I will address Senator Mullen's question, the first part of which I took to relate to the interpretation of treaty provisions by national courts. The second part related to how the European Court of Justice decided in the Maruko case.

**Senator Rónán Mullen**

The first question was not only on whether there was a clarification in the guarantees but also on whether it would positively impact on the court's future decisions. The clarification made Ireland's constitutional traditions in education and the family explicit.

**Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor**

Right. The guarantees are a consolidation of what has been there and a positive promise and achievement in respect of the remit and competence of the European Court of Justice. They indicate a clarification.
As the Senator knows, the Maruko case, which was referred by Germany to the court, related to a pension right of a male member of a civil partnership. The ECJ's final decision in the case was marked by a certain tension. It asserted that the decision should be taken by the national court competent to do so. The matter eventually went before an administrative court in Bavaria. However, the ECJ decided that a member state should be held by the non-discrimination provisions set out in the treaty article. This type of tension may be the source of the understandable concern among citizens.

Several points must be underlined. In the Maruko case, the ECJ sent a decision back to the national level while making it explicitly clear that national legislatures lacking provision for such partnerships would not be compelled. The ECJ did not exercise its right to force a member state to decide contrary to the provisions of national legislation. The point in the Senator's first question was that the guarantees, which will become protocols, are a consolidation of this situation.

Senator Rónán Mullen

I might disagree on that because legislation is precluded.

Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor

It is not.

Chairman

The Senator had his intrusions.

Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor

I wish to continue on that point because legislation is not precluded. We have reached a simple and clear point, that is, the responsibility of matters in this regard lies primarily with our national legislatures and political organisations, which are directly elected by our citizens and with whom our citizens are in debate. This is a characteristic of the EU, for which reason I emphasised the matter of confidence in ourselves and our traditions. The provisions of national law exist for reasons
of philosophy and because of a vision of life that we, as citizens, must present to our political representatives. In turn, they must represent our democratic processes within the context of the EU. We cannot predict what type of developments will occur in legislation or jurisprudence, but we can ensure our body politic and citizenship are active vis-à-vis our representatives. I am aware of the publications to which many members referred. Alas, I do not share the privilege enjoyed by members in this room.

**Deputy Noel Treacy**

There should be no intrusion.

**Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor**

In Catholic churches and church buildings, no material should be disseminated without the permission of the parish priest.

**Deputy Mary O’Rourke**

Yes.

**Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor**

He is in contact with his bishop. Recently, some of those who published some of the material to which members referred may have sought permission. In those cases, parish priests emphasised their responsible discretion, but let it be clear that no material may be disseminated without their permission. Everyone, including church authorities, are confronted by the tension between freedom of speech and responsible information. For whatever reason, publications are playing on fears, disseminating absolute misinformation and erroneously suggesting that issues like euthanasia are somehow purveyed by the Lisbon treaty and its texts. Deputy O’Rourke suggested that I might be able to do something.

**Deputy Mary O’Rourke**
Yes, through the network of parish priests.

**Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor**

She also suggested that the Irish may believe everything they read within such publications.

**Deputy Mary O’Rourke**

Some people.

**Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor**

None the less, our population has a healthy critical capacity and we must promote the idea of examining the content of such publications. For example, poets such as Philip Larkin discussed what is often said in the name of clergy. People know that a publication without an imprimatur is not an official text of the Catholic Church. Those with responsibility for publications, including within the religious orders mentioned, should recognise that the publication and dissemination of error is civically irresponsible.

A question on my statement was asked. I understand that it will be made available. Many members asked about the bishops' conference. I will be precise in that the conference's standing committee will meet next Monday. It is the committee's intention to publish a statement shortly thereafter. Far be it from me to predict whether all of my comments will be reflected therein. The text will address the issues and we look forward to its publication.

**Deputy Beverley Flynn**

It could not be any better than the bishop's statement.

**Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor**

In terms of all the questions asked, I will conclude by underlining the fact that the EU is a project characterised by dynamics, disagreements and the possibility for the co-determination and co-
shaping of Europe's future, including in the much debated areas of ethical and social ethical import. Legal guarantees that will become protocols have been achieved to assure all of us that we can have the confidence to go forward as representatives of our country, and civil servants of our country in the Commission, to ensure the Union is marked by being a community of values.

In reference to church publications, a number of the publications have been forthright in their espousal and explicitation of the European Union as a community of values. One of those, to which I draw the attention of the members, is the publication by the office for which I formerly worked, the Commission of the Bishops Conferences of the European Community, called "The Ethical Dimension of the European Union". In this document, we explicitated the separate areas in which the European Union pursues in concrete form the implementation of values within the policy range for which the European Union is responsible.

Deputy Mary O’Rourke

Will that be available in the churches?

Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor

It is a long document and it is available, as will be the statement of the bishops standing committee, on the website of the bishops' conference. In that sense it is readily available, although admittedly electronically. It is available to committee members.

Deputy Timmy Dooley

Can the bishop comment on whether his statements are made with the knowledge and support of Cardinal Brady?

Deputy Mary O’Rourke

I asked that question.
Deputy Timmy Dooley

Dr. Treanor referred to the church imprimatur but the difficulty I have is with the Blessed Virgin and Child being on the front of a publication that is structured in the same way as most prayer leaflets and matches the books that people bring to the church. Finding this on the seat of the church in the name of the Fatima rosary group, with all the negative points that Dr. Treanor has indicated are untrue, raises a great difficulty for people, despite what Dr. Treanor said about voting “Yes” in good conscience. This document is circulated within the confines of the church. I hope the conference of bishops can go further in working with bishops and priests on the grounds with regard to information that seeks to associate itself with a document of repute in the Catholic environment, using imagery to which we are accustomed in a way that seeks to promote a “No” vote. I hope the conference can be stronger in the action it takes to ensure there is a balanced debate. I do not suggest that we prevent the Alive! magazine or any other publication advocating a “No” vote but that it should be done on the basis of fact and not by trying to bring people closer to believing that this is a document of the Catholic Church.

Deputy Mary O’Rourke

I am very happy that this is all done electronically but the people to whom this shameful paper is addressed do not have access to electronic documents.

Chairman

I refer to the use of this type of propaganda. I will not be critical of the church but I have a view on it.

Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor

I repeat what I said at the beginning, that I am speaking with the full knowledge and support of Cardinal Brady.
Deputy Timmy Dooley

Thank you.

Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor

Regarding the materials to which members refer, I regret that they cross the threshold of churches and that erroneous assertions have been disseminated. I regret that many citizens with golden hearts are being misled for one reason or another. However, the responsibility to counter all of this is shared by all. The balance between freedom of speech and——

Deputy Mary O’Rourke

Lies.

Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor

——how one implements these decisions is a fine line. We must respect freedom of speech but also call for accuracy of information. We all seek this.

Chairman

I want to bring the meeting to a conclusion. The point raised is fundamental to the debate, namely, the theory that Irish people believe everything published by or distributed through churches. That is not necessarily the case but our research shows that powerful lobby groups outside this jurisdiction are well placed, well funded and highly organised throughout Europe. They believe that the documentation and misinformation distributed through the church is a good way of achieving their target. That is dangerous and sinister but that is the way it is. Committee members have met people who express views that were alarming. It is clear that they have a different view about what Europe
is about and what it should be about. Their clear ambition is that the European Union would not
progress or proceed and that it would disintegrate even though they claim otherwise.
Even in politics, it is virtually impossible to control some of the points raised by members
throughout the country. Occasionally we take restrictive action but that does not always work.
People outside this jurisdiction know that there is deep religious fervour in this country, in various
churches, and they have clearly identified the distribution and dissemination of their message
through the churches as the most fortuitous path to take. That is alarming.

I thank the bishop and his colleagues for attending. He has been most informative and has gone to
great pains, as well as coming here at great inconvenience and disruption to his schedule. We
appreciate that and hope that the views expressed will be taken on board by those who pick up on
the webcast and those who want to quote, for other than negative reasons, all of the debate.

Most Rev. Dr. Noel Treanor

I want to pick up on one point referred to by Senator Cummins. The treaty enhances the democratic
control of the national member state parliaments and the European Parliament.
Vice Chairman

The Minister for Foreign Affairs is with us this morning but must leave by 11 a.m. We will try to assist him in that regard by asking him to begin his presentation immediately and keeping questions to a minimum afterwards.

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin)

Thank you, Vice Chairman. I wish to be associated with the expression of sympathy to Senator Donohoe.

I welcome this opportunity to meet the joint committee to review the agenda for next week's General Affairs and External Relations Council. I will briefly summarise for the committee the key items discussed at the July meeting before turning to the items on the agenda for this month's meeting.

The July meeting of the GAERC was the first of the Swedish Presidency. In line with tradition, my Swedish colleague outlined the main priorities of the Swedish Presidency. In addition, the European Commission presented a communication on the Baltic Sea strategy. The Council discussed Iceland's application for EU membership which had been formally made on 16 July by letter from the Icelandic Prime Minister to Prime Minister Reinfeldt of Sweden. The Council referred the application to the Commission for its opinion, giving strong support to referring Iceland to the next stage of the process. Our discussion of external relations focused on Iran, in particular a review of relations following the disputed presidential elections. In addition, the Council discussed Georgia and stressed the importance of extending the EU monitoring mission's mandate and its full access throughout Georgia.

I now turn to next week's Council meeting. Ministers are expected to hold a short preliminary discussion on preparations for the European Council which will take place in Brussels on 29 and 30 October. Issues expected to arise at the European Council include the European Union's
preparations for the climate change conference in Copenhagen in December, institutional questions, economic issues, the Baltic Sea strategy and illegal migration. Ministers may also have a brief discussion on the security of energy supply. The Russian-Ukraine gas crisis last January brought this issue to the fore and the European Union has since been working hard to ensure energy security challenges are met. This is being done through action in areas such as infrastructure development and revising the EU legislative framework on security of gas supply. On the external relations agenda, Iran is an issue to which we will return over dinner on 14 September and will follow on from the discussion which took place at the informal EU Foreign Ministers' meeting which I attended in Stockholm last weekend. No conclusions are anticipated. Instead, Ministers will continue their consideration of post-presidential election developments in Iran and prepare for further discussion of Iran's nuclear programme in the margins of the UN General Assembly later this month.

While the immediate crisis arising from the disputed outcome to June's presidential election may have passed, the reality is that the overall human rights situation has deteriorated considerably since the events of last June. There is continuing suppression of the political opposition now coalescing around defeated candidates such as Mir Hossein Moussavi, as the hardline supporters of the supreme leader and President Ahmadinejad work to consolidate their position and control. We have witnessed what can only be described as mass show trials of opposition political activists and others who participated in peaceful demonstrations against the election result. Among those on trial are the French national, Ms Clotilde Reiss, and former local employees of the UK and French embassies who were previously arrested. Those on trial often have had no access to any kind of proper defence, with the show trials to date manifestly falling short of international legal standards.

Ireland and the European Union will need to continue making known to the Iranian Government our serious concerns at these developments, as has been constantly done since the start of the crisis. Any failure on Iran's part to ensure the observance of international legal standards in conducting the trial of those now charged will have serious consequences and will require an appropriate response from the European Union. We must continue to keep human rights in Iran at the forefront of our relations with that country since we should not underestimate the potential for further serious deterioration in light of the current internal political situation.

On Iran's nuclear programme, it has already been made clear that time is pressing on and the international community expects Iran to respond in some meaningful way to the offers to engage
seriously on the nuclear issue which have been made by the E3+3 and President Obama's Administration. As yet, perhaps not too surprisingly in light of recent events, there has been no real indication from the Iranian Government that it is willing to suspend its enrichment activities. The issue will be one of the principal matters discussed at the launch of the new United Nations General Assembly later this month as well as at the G20 summit in Pittsburgh on 24 and 25 September.

The EU also needs to revisit this issue and this is the primary purpose for organising the ministerial discussion at the General Affairs and External Relations Council. Nationally, we have always made clear that, in the event of continuing non-compliance by Iran with the demands of the international community, we could contemplate the necessity for further restrictive measures being adopted against Iran. It obviously would be preferable for these to take the form of a new Security Council resolution although, if this does not prove possible, the European Union may need to look to adopting further measures of its own. The ultimate priority remains the attainment of a diplomatic resolution to this most sensitive of current international issues.

Once again, Afghanistan will be discussed at the General Affairs and External Relations Council. There can be no doubt that the security situation in the country has deteriorated considerably in recent months. News reports of major incidents involving the deaths and injury of a great number of people, including innocent civilians, remind us with alarming frequency of just how dangerous the situation in Afghanistan has become. It is clear that we have reached a very important juncture where the future of the country is concerned.

Presidential and provincial elections were held on 20 August and it goes without saying that the results will be extremely important for the future of Afghanistan. As members of the committee are aware the Electoral Complaints Commission decided on Tuesday to order a partial recount of votes, on account of the many allegations of fraud. The EU election observation mission, in which two Irish monitors served, also urged immediate action against large-scale fraudulent results. While the Electoral Complaints Commission did not indicate how many ballots may have been tainted it has been suggested that the number could exceed 500,000. I trust and hope that this recounting process will be carried out expeditiously. It will of course take time but the democratic process in Afghanistan must be credible and be seen to be credible. Fraud is simply not acceptable.
Ministers at the General Affairs and External Relations Council will also discuss the development of EU strategies and policies for the post-election period, with an emphasis on how best we can contribute to the development of Afghanistan in areas such as national and sub-national governance, agriculture and rural development, the police sector, including EUPOL Afghanistan, the justice sector, the electoral framework and human rights and reconciliation. We will take this work forward to the October meeting of the General Affairs and External Relations Council. Following the discussion on Georgia at the July meeting of the Council, the Presidency intends to discuss the situation in the southern Caucasus within the framework of the EU neighbourhood policy's eastern partnership. The Presidency wishes to focus on the potential for improving relations with the three southern Caucasus states — Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia — and to make progress with the existing plans to conclude association agreements, as well as deep and comprehensive free trade agreements, with those states.

I am grateful to have had an opportunity to give the joint committee some information about the agenda for next week's meeting of the General Affairs and External Relations Council. I will be pleased to hear the comments of members as I finalise my preparations for the meeting in the coming days. I will be happy to give clarification in response to any questions members may have.

Vice Chairman

I thank the Minister for his comments.

Deputy Billy Timmins

I apologise for missing the Minister's opening remarks. I thank him for his submission. Is it fair to say that the European Union is preoccupied with the Iranian issue? Having listened to the Minister's remarks, that seems to be the case. He mentioned that Ireland and its EU partners have told the Iranian Government they are not satisfied with recent developments in Iran. Have the Irish authorities been in direct contact with the Iranian Government, as opposed to contact through the EU? Have Irish officials spoken to the Iranian ambassador? Has the Minister contacted his counterpart in the Iranian Government? Is the Minister concerned that the United States is leading the way in dealing with the Iranian issue, and the EU is merely following suit? Does he believe
Europe has concerns in its own right? I refer in particular to concerns about the abuse of the human rights of several small minorities in Iran.

I was surprised that the Lisbon treaty was not mentioned in the Minister's submission. It seems that it will not appear on the agenda at all. Can the Minister indicate whether he believes it will be discussed? Given that a new European Commission will have to be formed around the end of November, regardless of the result of the forthcoming referendum, I would be surprised if the matter were not discussed at all. Would the Minister care to elaborate on that?

**Deputy Noel Treacy**

I thank the Minister for his presentation. We wish him well at next week's meeting of the General Affairs and External Relations Council. Can he bring the committee up to speed on Iceland's application to join the EU? Can he indicate a timeframe within which Iceland may join the Union? It is important for Ireland to try to accommodate Iceland as we have common interests in many areas, particularly fishing. Iceland's inclusion in the EU could be advantageous for us.

Following the discussions on energy security at the most recent meeting of the General Affairs and External Relations Council, how satisfied is the Minister that the supply of gas from Russia and Ukraine into the EU and ultimately into Ireland is sustainable? Has the Union been assured that the supply will not be interrupted in the future?

How confident is the Minister that the United Nations, the United States and the European Union can exert the necessary pressure to improve the situation in Iran? Is he optimistic about that? Does the Minister agree that this country's second referendum on the Lisbon treaty is critical to Ireland and the EU as a whole and could have a positive impact on countries like Iceland that are anxious to join the Union at some future stage?

**Deputy Micheál Martin**

As I said in my opening remarks, the European Union has been closely monitoring the situation in Iran. It is obvious that the major issues on the agenda at the moment are Iran, Afghanistan and the Middle East. We had a long session on the Middle East at the most recent informal meeting, in
Stockholm. We discussed the efforts being made behind the scenes to try to secure the resumption of talks between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian leadership. It was suggested that the timeframe for the General Assembly could represent a key window of opportunity that might lead to a new breakthrough in the talks process. Ireland reiterated its position on the settlement issue, which is that there should be a freeze on settlements and, in return, the Arab states should establish missions, etc., in Israel, thereby facilitating the start of talks.

On Iran, Ireland, with our EU partners, firmly condemned the oppressive nature of the post-election response of the Iranian authorities. The European Union has been particularly strong in this regard.

I consider the ring tone of a person's mobile phone to be a reflection of his or her personality. I am not sure, however, if the optimistic ring tone of Senator de Búrca's mobile phone relates to the Lisbon treaty or the National Asset Management Agency.

**Vice Chairman**

Perhaps it is related to the programme for Government.

**Deputy Micheál Martin**

To return to the discussion, we have unequivocally rejected any suggestion that foreign intervention or interference can be blamed for the tensions and violence which afflicted Iran following the announcement of the results of the disputed presidential election. This charge which has been made is completely bogus.

At national level, Ireland has expressed its concern directly to the Iranian authorities at a number of meetings between senior officials of my Department and the Iranian ambassador which have taken place in the period since 12 June. At these meetings we made clear our solidarity with the United Kingdom, in particular, and France over the entirely unwarranted arrests of locally employed British and French Embassy staff and of the young French academic, Clotilde Reiss. I met the British Foreign Secretary, Mr. David Miliband, during the period in question to reassure him of Irish support for the United Kingdom's position. In a concerted action with other member states we have called in the Iranian ambassador on a number of occasions, most recently on 13 August, to express
our strong concern about these detentions and the treatment of detainees generally and underline our continued commitment to a strong, collective European Union response.

I also wrote a strong letter to my Iranian counterpart prior to the election setting out our view on sustained violations of human rights in Iran, particularly against religious minorities, and our overall concern about the lack of respect for the application of human rights. The matter will be further discussed at the General Affairs and External Relations Council. The European Union is considering the prospect of introducing further graduated diplomatic measures. Any such decision will depend on developments in the cases of British and French employees in Teheran against whom charges have been laid. As I indicated, human rights remain at the forefront of agenda items concerning Iran. We have set out our strong position to the Iranian Foreign Minister on the deterioration in human rights in Iran.

On the Lisbon treaty, member states are, to put it mildly, conscious that a referendum is under way in Ireland. There is a genuine desire to refrain from any activity which could be construed as somehow impacting on the conduct or result of the campaign. The outcome of the Lisbon treaty referendum is uppermost in people's minds and our partners speak to us informally at meetings about how matters are progressing and so forth. There is genuine anxiety across Europe that the Lisbon treaty be passed.

This point feeds into the issue of energy security, including the supply of gas, raised by Deputy Treacy. The issue was raised at a meeting I held with the director general of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe this week. The OSCE is very concerned about medium-term prospects in the area of energy security which it regards as a fundamental issue. The reforms and additional competency provided for in the Lisbon treaty will make the European Union more effective in dealing with energy security on the world stage, for example, in negotiating with Russia and other countries across the globe. Without the weight and strength of the Union's negotiating position, member states on their own, particularly smaller states, cannot realistically expect to guarantee their energy supply.

The sustainability of energy security is central to the Lisbon treaty and key to our economic future. It hinges on the reforms contained in the treaty which will make the European Union more effective in addressing the issue. One should remember that last winter a number of member states went without gas because of the dispute between Gazprom and Ukraine. It was a very serious situation and the Czech Presidency intervened. This is the reason we need an EU Presidency and President
for two to two and a half years who can build relationships and will be in a position to negotiate on our behalf on major global issues such as energy security and climate change. The latter equally is an issue of the present rather than the future; there is no question but that the impact of climate change on all our lives constitutes an emergency. It is not merely the Irish summer we have just experienced; it is far more serious than that. One should consider Africa and other parts of the globe that are suffering the impact of climate change. This is where the Lisbon treaty comes in.

What is happening in Iceland is extraordinary. In a country that traditionally wished to stay independent and never had anything approaching a majority contemplating membership of the European Union the global economic crisis clearly has given rise to a transformation in opinion. This does not mean membership is a done deal as obviously there will be significant internal debate within Iceland. However, the application for membership has been made and will be considered over time. In general, in principle, we are supportive of Iceland's application for membership. Nevertheless, it is interesting that the considered opinion of the Icelandic Government is that the future of Iceland and its economic future, in particular, are very much bound up with membership of the European Union.

People had made reference to Iceland and Ireland and the difference of one letter. However, there was a more fundamental difference — we are a member of the euro zone and have benefited significantly from the European Central Bank in the context of the current financial and banking crisis. This has not gone unnoticed in Iceland; there is strength in unity and in being part of a large trading bloc such as the European Union. It is instructive that such a transformation in opinion has taken place in Iceland largely as a result of the global economic crisis and we would do well in Ireland to reflect on this. Deputy Treacy was correct in raising the issue.

I have dealt with the Iranian question. I am not optimistic in that regard. It has been a very long saga. The Iranian Government has been skilful in maintaining channels of diplomacy and so forth on the nuclear issue, albeit with very little response to the offer made by the E3+3 group. Although President Obama has reached out and made overtures, to date there has not been a substantive response.

Deputy Pat Breen
Does the Minister consider that Iceland's application for membership of the European Union has taken priority over that of other candidates such as Turkey, Croatia and Macedonia? Why does the Minister think progress on the applications of these countries but Croatia, in particular, has slowed considerably? The Minister should also update members on whether there have been developments in the territorial disputes between Turkey and Cyprus. As there were some developments in this regard last year, have there been further developments on the part of the Presidency? If Ireland passes the Lisbon treaty, does the Minister believe it will speed up progress on the applications of the aforementioned counties, given that it has slowed?

The Minister should update members on the position within Afghanistan. How serious is the situation there? Has he received feedback from the EU election observation mission, in addition to media reports? Will this issue take priority during his discussions next week?

What relationship does the European Union have with Iran? As a body, how trustworthy is the European Union? Is there much dialogue with Iran? My colleague, Deputy Timmins, asked about Ireland but I refer to the EU as a body in respect of what is happening in Iran. It is a very serious situation and dialogue is needed. The EU needs to build a better relationship with Iran.

Senator Déirdre de Búrca

I ask the Minister to excuse me for not having turned off my mobile phone before coming to the meeting. He said my ringtone was optimistic but we need optimistic ringtones on our mobile phones, anything that can help to improve the general mood.

I have a copy of a paper delivered to my house yesterday, which is being distributed widely by Alive!. It concerns the Lisbon treaty about which it contains a range of factually incorrect assertions. Hearing the statement of the Minister today, I was concerned that the matter of the Lisbon treaty is not on the agenda. I have no doubt it is a matter of extraordinary concern to members of the Council of Ministers. I heard the interview with the Minister and Nigel Farage of the UK Independence Party. I wonder if anything can be done about people who make fundamentally incorrect assertions to the public about the content of the Lisbon treaty. One expects people to hold different points of view in a debate but this is a publication. I do not know who produces the Alive! magazine——
Deputy Noel Treacy

It is published by a priest.

Senator Déirdre de Búrca

There is a priest's name on the back of it. It informs people that the legal guarantees the Government spent so much time securing and receiving support from other member states for are not legally binding. The Charter of Fundamental Rights is described as dangerous and the leaflet suggests that, if implemented, the charter will give major powers to the European Court of Justice, affecting the right to life of the unborn, the nature of marriage, the rights of parents to protect their children and religious freedom. These are the very matters we have secured conclusively in the legal guarantees. Are there any sanctions for people who put out information that is factually incorrect? Is the Minister aware of the parties involved in this initiative?

Iceland's application for EU membership will be discussed at the meeting. I hope Ireland will support the application. It is important that we point out in the campaign for the Lisbon treaty that it is strange that Iceland, which is in a more difficult economic situation than Ireland, is applying for membership of the EU when those who make the case against the Lisbon treaty suggest that it is bad for workers and will not be good for the Irish economy. We should emphasise this point.

The issue of economic recovery is not included on the agenda for the GAERC meeting. It was on the agenda for previous meetings and I am concerned about this. Discussions will take place on the EU preparations for the climate change conference in Copenhagen in December. If the EU is to sign up to its ambitious commitments, this will have implications for the EU economy and it will provide an opportunity to create a stronger, greener economy across the EU. This brings us back to the issue of an EU stimulus or recovery package, something much more ambitious than the current recovery plans being discussed at EU level. Ireland's economy is in difficulty and needs the prospect of some stimulus assisted by the EU. Is it on the agenda of the Council of Ministers or has it slipped? It is pertinent to Iceland's application for membership that the EU be in a position to
provide an economic stimulus for all member states. To date, the economic recovery programmes are somewhat underwhelming. In light of the climate change conference and the commitment the EU is likely to make at that, is there serious thinking going on about attempts to stimulate a truly green economy? If the Lisbon treaty is passed we will have shared competence in the EU on an energy policy, which will provide many opportunities to all EU member states for economic recovery.

With regard to the Iranian situation and sanctions there is general concern that where sanctions were implemented in the past, such as on Iraq and Cuba, they did not always manage to be as effective as we would have liked. Sometimes the international community finds itself having implemented sanctions which are not having the required effect but from which it cannot withdraw. What types of sanctions are being considered? Are we aware of the danger of sanctions isolating a particular country? As much as possible we should encourage Iran to remain as full a member of the international community as possible. Is there a danger that sanctions might have the opposite effect and isolate Iran?

**Deputy Micheál Martin**

Deputy Pat Breen raised a number of issues. The talks between Turkey and Cyprus are ongoing and there has been no major development. With regard to Croatia, each membership application is decided on its merits and various chapters are opened and concluded in negotiations with applicant member states which must reach certain standards. As we discussed previously, a significant issue arises with regard to a border dispute between Croatia and Slovenia and the intensive mediation under way has not yet yielded an outcome. That is the major stumbling block to Croatia's application for membership. Turkey's application is a long saga and certain chapters have been opened on it. However, there are many difficulties and challenges and it will involve a longer timeframe. There is no real connection between enlargement and the Lisbon treaty and the treaty has no impact on the applications being received. Despite what various people may say that is the factual position.

We are very concerned about the situation in Afghanistan. A fundamental review is under way at EU level on Afghanistan and its neighbour, Pakistan. We began informal discussions in Stockholm last Friday; the bulk of Friday's discussion was on the Middle East but we had a significant discussion
afterwards on Afghanistan. The elections and the importance of minimising civilian casualties in the military effort are key issues as are the development of economic and social sustainability in Afghanistan, governance in the regions, local governance, corruption, security and justice.

Our inputs must be strong on alternative crop production to the poppy, particularly with regard to aid. That is very important. Through Irish Aid we have a potential role in agricultural technique, expertise and knowledge. There will be a stronger call for co-ordination of aid among all donors and we have been stressing that for quite some time. We are concerned about the broader issues of governance, corruption and human rights. We would like to see these being significant parts of the new policy and strategy on Afghanistan that will emerge from our discussions over the coming weeks, particularly at the next GAERC meeting. It is not just a military issue; it is about developing the capacity to facilitate good governance at local, regional and national levels that will ultimately determine a successful outcome.

In regard to the European Union's relations with Iran, we are very conscious of the role of sanctions. The High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, is involved in ongoing and exhaustive discussions with Iran, particularly regarding the nuclear file. The EU has been very patient and has persevered along the diplomatic road. Without question, our objective is the diplomatic resolution of all outstanding issues and we are pursuing diplomacy to avoid the unthinkable in terms of the nuclear issue. It is a cause of great tension for the region and it does not solely concern the EU and the US. The EU’s approach has been strategic and temperate but there is no escaping the fact that the response has not been good.

Sanctions have always been directed against the regime rather than the populace because we are anxious that they do not make life worse for ordinary citizens. Senator de Búrca is correct in saying there is no point in using sanctions if they are counterproductive or do not achieve their goals and we will bear this in mind when we consider other graduated measures against Iran, particularly in regard to the treatment of foreign nationals and embassy staff. We may, for example, consider visa and travel restrictions on senior Iranian officials or other restrictive actions against Iranian Embassy staff in EU capitals. Again, however, we do not want to introduce measures that will be counterproductive or undermine our longer-term objectives in regard to engaging with Iran and resolving the significant issues currently on the table.
The Senator expressed her surprise that the Lisbon treaty is not on the agenda. It is not on the agenda because a referendum will be taking place in Ireland. If we pass the treaty, it will be put on the agenda for implementation. She also made reference to the Alive! newspaper. I appeal for a factual and accurate debate. We live in a democracy and I agree that many false claims can be made but it is up to those of us who support a “Yes” vote to firmly rebut them. I saw a good example of this from Blair Horan of the CPSU, who responded to a press release and website presentation from Joe Higgins, MEP, on the Charter of Fundamental Rights. This is an example of the kind of solid rebuttal required and I pay tribute to Mr. Horan for identifying a deliberate distortion of the charter to suit a particular construct of workers’ rights. It is regrettable that such issues arise. Mr. Higgins, MEP, has acknowledged the matter as a mistake and, although others may have a different perspective on the matter, at least it was exposed. There is a similar need to expose the untrue claims made in Alive!. According to the Eurobarometer report, 60% of people are aware of the guarantees that were secured in June. It is accepted that a comprehensive and effective, legally binding guarantee has been achieved with respect to the provisions in the Irish Constitution relating to the right to life, the role of the family and education. This guarantee is in addition to the Maastricht protocol, which has existed for 17 years and has been honoured throughout that time. We have no experience of an agreement concluded with the European Union that has not been honoured.

This raises the issue of trust and distrust. Some of the debate conducted by the "No" side presupposes the EU is out to do us down and acts in a conspiratorial way to undermine us but that is not our experience. We need to trust ourselves and the European Union, which works on the basis of consensus and of people working together for the advancement of the common good. The Referendum Commission was set up to clarify and provide information to people in a non-advocacy manner, by giving the facts.

Senator de Búrca mentioned Iceland and the progress of its application to join the EU will be fascinating. I have watched it keenly and have received a number of reports on the matter. Just as we are allowed the space to discuss our relationship with Europe so the people of Iceland should be allowed to hold their own debate. Given that we are also an island nation I would encourage Iceland to join as it would be good for it. There will be issues, as there always are in a discussion between an applicant state and the Union, but Iceland has strong associations with the EU and it is compatible in terms of the various chapters, so I welcome its application.
Senator de Búrca is right to draw attention to the climate change reference in Copenhagen. One of the great achievements of the French Presidency was the breakthrough in the December Council on climate change, which was followed up during the Czech Presidency. It is a very significant achievement to bring 27 member states to an agreed position on climate change, given the differences between the new member states and the more developed economies. Some member states, including ourselves, are over-reliant on fossil fuels but France and the UK have more diversified energy profiles. The conference in Copenhagen is a significant milestone. People say we have three big forthcoming issues, namely, the Lisbon treaty, NAMA and the budget but I would add a fourth.

A Member

The Cork county final.

Deputy Micheál Martin

Yes, and the all-Ireland final is also very important. However, the conference in Copenhagen is make or break for the world. We lost ten years on climate change and it is interesting that President Obama has moved on the issue, as have the Australians where the Prime Minister, Mr. Rudd, has changed his country's position. Europe has led in this regard. I mentioned the impact on Africa, which has been significant in terms of desertification, flooding and the vulnerability of poor communities to those events. The great tragedy is that while climate-related issues such as CO2 were created by the developed world those who will suffer the most are the poorest, and many of those are in African states. It is vital that we achieve a result and the Swedish Presidency, in line with all the Nordic countries and the United Kingdom, is very strong on the issue. We have held an internal debate on the issues and have played a role. There will be challenges and many people still think climate change is a distant issue or has been exaggerated but that is not the case. It is a crucial issue that relates to our economy and the Senator is correct to say the challenge is to turn an imperative into an opportunity for economic growth.

On green technology and renewables, we must grab this opportunity as it will form a significant part of the economic recovery if we do it well. If we develop our indigenous industries to a degree where they become part of the solution to the global problems which arise as a result of climate
change, we can create jobs in what is termed green technology or the green industry. Long before these terms were coined, there were firms across the country involved in processes such as water treatment solutions. I was kept abreast of them when I was the Minister working in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland. We have a lot of good technology to help us grasp the opportunities that climate change will open up. I am an enthusiastic supporter of the Copenhagen process and hope the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Deputy Gormley, will realise what he has been fighting for over a long period on the issue.

There has been a very significant EU stimulus package and the European Central Bank has pumped approximately €120 billion into our financial system. It is an extraordinary contribution underpinning our financial and banking system, of which we should be conscious. There will be a special European Council meeting next Thursday to prepare for the Pittsburgh G20 meeting. It will focus on all aspects of economic recovery, financial sector regulation, in particular, which will be a key issue. There is also the stimulus issue which has been raised, as well as the so-called exit strategy from stimulus packages.

I have covered most of the issues raised by members.

**Vice Chairman**

We have a number of other speakers offering and in order to confine our discussions to the Minister's timeframe I will take five or six together. I do not like to ask members to confine themselves to questions only but on this occasion we would be facilitating the Minister and allowing everybody some time to participate. I appreciate their co-operation.

**Senator Feargal Quinn**

We were very impressed by the Minister's recent visit to Sudan to seek the release of two GOAL workers, one of whom is an Irish citizen. In the past when kidnappings took place, they were taken off the agenda very quickly. I remember the time when Don Tidey was kidnapped many years ago; his colleagues had to go out ten days later to seek publicity because the matter had been taken off the agenda. The same has happened more recently in the case of others. Following his efforts in Sudan, does the Minister consider there is anything the European Union can do to put the kidnapping of two GOAL workers back on the agenda? As somebody working on behalf of the Irish
victim, does the Minister consider there is anything that can be done at a European level? I fear such events are quickly taken off the agenda and almost forgotten.

My second query concerns President Barroso who has come out very strongly in today's edition of the Financial Times looking for a vote next week. I understand all 27 member states are supporting his nomination as President for the next five years. The vote will take place at the European Parliament on 16 September. Can anything further be done with regard to his nomination or is the matter out of the hands of the Commission and entirely in those of the European Parliament? It is a matter of seeking a simple majority? If he does not achieve this, will other candidates come into play? The French Prime Minister, Mr. Fillon, has been proposed as a likely alternative but perhaps it is not an occasion on which the Minister can comment as the issue may have been passed.

The Minister spoke about the importance of climate change in the world economy and to the world's population. The WTO and related issues are in danger of being taken off the agenda. It had high priority up until last December. The world's future will depend to a very large extent on trade talks which I fear have slipped from the agenda. The danger is they will not return to it. Perhaps it is up to the European Union to decide to take the next step.

**Senator John Hanafin**

I have a specific question about the Nord Stream project. It appears that, in their remembering past events, some EU members have not been co-operative in one of the most important energy security proposals in recent years. By all accounts, Finland is on stream but the co-operation of other Baltic states is required too. Some 25 million homes in Germany are to be supplied by this very important and secondary route which would give the EU the security it needs, and not leave it entirely dependent on the Ukrainian transit pipeline route. Will the Minister impress on his colleagues from the Baltic states the need to progress and move forwards with the Nord Stream project?

**Senator Paschal Donohoe**

I wish to return to the issue of Afghanistan which was raised by my colleagues. I do so because I am aware the deterioration of the situation in that country will affect the security of our country, especially with regard to the supply of drugs in our cities and towns. The situation in Afghanistan
appears to be at a tipping point because so much international support into that country was tied to a particular administration. There are serious claims being made regarding the veracity and conduct of the election by which that administration will probably be returned to power. My question concerns the conference that will take place in Kabul, as discussed in the briefing papers supplied to us by the Department of Foreign Affairs. Given the big debates that are taking place in the United States, the United Kingdom and perhaps even in Germany regarding those countries' participation in Afghanistan, how will the EU address the issue of Afghan security? What would happen in Pakistan if the situation were to deteriorate?

**Deputy Seán Power**

I wish to raise three issues with the Minister. He has shared some of his views and ideas on Afghanistan with us. It is most unfortunate that, despite the considerable resources allocated to dealing with that problem, the situation appears to have deteriorated seriously. Why is that? The Minister mentioned a review; perhaps he might give us some understanding of the nature of that review, and the timeframe in which we are operating.

Second, regarding Cyprus and Turkey, I always felt it was most unfortunate that when Cyprus applied for EU membership we allowed only part of the island to join. It was a missed opportunity. Does the Minister see the Turkish application as being coupled with the resolution of the Cyprus problem, or is it possible to deal with Cyprus on its own?

Third, regarding the Icelandic application, it appears there is widespread support for it. In view of that apparent support, and the magnitude of the difficulties experienced by Iceland, does the Minister see a possibility of that country's application being fast-tracked? Is there such a facility?

**Deputy Edward O'Keeffe**

I welcome the Minister. I am substituting for Deputy Michael Mulcahy who is abroad. I compliment the Minister on his wonderful and outstanding work on the Lisbon campaign. He is available everywhere and anywhere and makes four of himself rather than one. I wish him well in that campaign and I believe we will have a successful outcome.
I have some questions. First, there is a great deal of uncertainty in the southern Caucasus region, near Ukraine. The Minister mentioned the security of energy supply. This is not a very stable part of the world. Georgia has had difficulty with its nearest neighbour. How secure are the relationships between Georgia, Ukraine and Russia? How much progress has been made in that area? The Minister talked about the European neighbourhood policy which involves Armenia and Azerbaijan. However, this is a very unstable part of the world and regardless of what signatures are signed it will remain a difficult area. Is there any way to avoid having pipelines and sources of energy for this part of the world coming through that region?

My second question is on Iceland. There has been much support around the table for Iceland. Iceland has got itself into huge difficulty arising from investments outside its own country during the past four or five years, somewhat similar to our own, but much more horrendous than our situation. By joining the European Union, does the Minister see this as a bailout for Iceland? What was its relationship with the EU during the past 20 years? Am I correct in saying that it was an associate member and that it opted out? I am aware of its closeness to the Nordic countries, principally Denmark and Sweden.

On the issue of a bailout, the Minister made a welcome point that the European Central Bank has been very generous to Ireland during the past 12 months and a huge amount of money has been pumped in here at very low interest rates which is trying to prime the pump in our economy. Much of the money is loaned at a 1% plus margin. Is Iceland trying to capitalise on a similar basis? My colleague, Senator Feargal Quinn, mentioned the Financial Times. Having read the Financial Times fairly regularly during the past five or six months, Iceland came across as being very reckless in its investments and its banking system totally collapsed as a result. I am beginning to wonder whether Iceland, going cap in hand to the European Union seeking membership based on its recklessness, is hoping for a bailout. As a long-standing member of the EU we must have protection. We have toed the line on all the rules and regulations and have been the strongest Europeans in the EU. Can a country apply for membership based on difficulties of its own making?

**Senator Terry Leyden**

I welcome the Minister and his officials. I thank him for enhancing the role of the European affairs committee by appearing before it prior to the meetings in Brussels. The Joint Committee on European Affairs and, particularly, the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny are very much part
and parcel of the Lisbon treaty. A "Yes" vote on 2 October will further enhance the role of the Oireachtas in respect of our conduct of business with the European Union.

I support Senator Feargal Quinn's views on the Minister's visit to Sudan. During what is a very busy time for the Minister it was very impressive that he travelled at the weekend and went to Khartoum where he met representatives of the Government. I hope his efforts will be successful.

Regarding the situation in the Middle East, I do not see any reference to it in the Minister's report. As the Minister is aware, 500 new settlements have been approved by the Israeli Government in the West Bank. The Israelis are making no effort whatsoever to secure a peaceful settlement in the region, irrespective of the presence of George Mitchell and Tony Blair on a regular basis. The situation is deteriorating and the Palestinian Administration will not deal with the Israelis once these settlements continue. The Minister has had first hand experience of settlements in the West Bank area where they have taken the best land and waters and have deprived the Palestinians of their right to earn a living in their own land. The issue appears to be off the agenda of the Council meeting, unless there is a flare-up in Gaza or the region. Perhaps it is on the agenda for the meeting but, if not, I would appreciate if the Minister would raise the issue again and keep it to the fore. As Senator Quinn said these issues can disappear from the agenda very quickly.

There is also the question of Cyprus. Deputy Seán Power referred to its dependency on the application by Turkey for membership of the European Union. Certainly, under no circumstances, can Turkey join the European Union without a settlement in Cyprus. It is totally out of the question that it will put forward an interim solution, or promise or commitment, for the reunification of Cyprus and it should not be dependant on the question of Turkey's membership of the EU. Cyprus has a right to reunification and a settlement. It is a divided country in Europe. Famagusta is actually a ghost city between the south and north of the island. It is totally unacceptable. When there is no flare-up, the matter is off the agenda and never discussed at Council meetings. That is a fact. I accept that other issues such as Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and so forth are at the forefront because they are current. However, this issue is very important to the people of Cyprus. There is goodwill for an interim arrangement or a settlement like that in our country.

I wish the Minister well in his work.
Ms Marian Harkin, MEP

I have two brief questions for the Minister. A number of speakers have raised the issue of Iceland. That country has extensive fishing grounds. What impact will this have, particularly given that there is due to be a review of the Common Fisheries Policy? If we vote "Yes" in the referendum and the Lisbon treaty is ratified, the European Parliament will have a greater say in that area. What is the Minister's view on the matter?

Mr. Barroso improved his chances of election yesterday when he said he was looking again at the posting of workers directive to perhaps strengthen and tighten it. The socialists, in particular, were seeking this from him and I am pleased that he intends to do it. It is also useful in the context of the Lisbon treaty. What is the Minister's position on the matter? Given that it took quite a while to get the temporary agency workers directive through, what is the position of the Government on Mr. Barroso's commitment to examine strengthening the posting of workers directive?

A number of speakers have commented on the Lisbon treaty. I agree with the Minister on the need to deal with the false propaganda circulating. However, he made the assumption that all the false propaganda was coming from the "No" side. He is probably generally right in that regard but not entirely. Yesterday in Brussels I drew attention to what is nothing short of a scurrilous advertisement in the current edition of Alive! placed by an organisation called Éire go Brách which is deliberating targeting vulnerable people. I received calls from carers in County Clare yesterday about it. The half page advertisement states Article 6 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights will take people's children from them if they suffer from mild depression or alcoholism. That is the best part of the advertisement which sets out to target vulnerable people. I see somebody has passed a copy of the advertisement to the Minister; he can see for himself how scurrilous it is. Alive! is entitled to take the “Yes” or “No” side of an argument but its publisher has questions to answer when he or she permits the publication of something so patently false and which is designed to frighten and terrorise families, particularly those who have children with special needs and who are autistic, who are mentioned in the advertisement.

Deputy Micheál Martin

Many eminent churchmen have taken a very positive approach to the European Union, from Pope Benedict XVI to senior churchmen in this country. They are positive about the European Union and
the fact that it was founded on strong Christian social principles. Recently, the Jesuit priest, Fr. Edmond Grace, wrote convincingly and in an informed way in The Irish Times in welcoming the guarantees we had secured regarding the protection of the right to life as well as the family and marriage provisions of the Constitution. The guarantees state nothing in the charter impacts on these in any way. It is sad, therefore, that a minority of people from a religious background would engage in such glaring untruths as are included in that advertisement. It is wrong and unacceptable that these fears should be created. The fear described is completely without foundation. I pay tribute to Ms Harkin for drawing attention to it yesterday. As I stated, it is important that any misleading or false comments made on the Lisbon treaty from any side are firmly rebutted and highlighted and that we should move on to concentrate on the positive agenda of the treaty which includes steps towards economic recovery.

We have listened to the people who raised concerns about issues such as the retention of a Commissioner by each member state, ethical questions, neutrality and taxation. We also secured a national declaration on workers' rights. These were the key areas identified in our research and in talking directly to people. The Oireachtas also identified them in the work of the special sub-committee chaired by Senator Donohoe. We have responded comprehensively to the voice of the people as articulated in the last referendum, which is why we have a different package being put to them on this occasion. It is important, therefore, as we rebut misleading claims that we also keep in mind the key issues on the positive side of the agenda and not allow ourselves to be distracted.

Senator Quinn raised a number of issues. We have kept our colleagues in the European Union informed about the situation in Sudan. EU countries provide help and support in such situations. We have developed a strong bilateral approach to the issue and immediately dispatched a multi-agency team, led by the ambassador, Mr. Gerry Corr, who is based in Khartoum, to Sudan on hearing of the kidnap of Ms Sharon Commins and Ms Hilda Kawuki. We also had a team in El Fasher closer to the kidnap zone. I pay tribute to all those involved for their commitment. It has been a difficult 60 days, particularly for Sharon and Hilda and the Commins family who have visited regularly and have borne this situation with great dignity and fortitude, but it is still difficult and frustrating for them. We will continue to do everything we possibly can to resolve the matter and it will certainly not be taken off the agenda. I met Mr. John O'Shea of GOAL two days ago to reassure him again that we were in it for the long haul which is something I hope it will not be. I hope our visit created momentum. I greatly appreciate the space all Members of the House, particularly the
spokespersons, Deputies Timmins and Higgins, have given me and the Department to work with the Government of Sudan to resolve this complex and sensitive issue. We do not want to discuss operational matters or details, as the issue has been very difficult for all concerned. However, we are hopeful and will keep at it. Until I see Sharon and Hilda I will not be happy. That is a view all members would share.

Ireland was an early supporter of President Barroso, an issue a number of members have raised. We hope there will be a vote next week when I hope he will be endorsed. I support his moves on the EU posting of workers directive which we have implemented quite well in this country and has been placed on a good legislative basis. In fact, many of the labour law issues that arose across Europe were case and country specific and the position has been appallingly distorted also. On the Laval judgment, for example, Sweden did not have a statutory minimum wage, whereas we do in Ireland. Whether one agrees with it, it is a matter on which we decide. That is how the matter is determined and provided for in legislation. The appointment of President Barroso will send an important signal because there are significant challenges ahead for the European Union in that regard.

Senator Quinn raised the issue of climate change, a matter about which I have spoken comprehensively. It is an important one for us.

**Senator Feargal Quinn**

What about the WTO?

**Deputy Micheál Martin**

Obviously, the Barroso decision is in the hands of the European Parliament and I do not want to interfere further, other than to state we have a position on the matter.

There has been no breakthrough yet in the WTO talks, although there have been discussions, as the Senator will be aware, with the EU Trade Commissioner and the United States recently. In fact, the Boeing-Airbus case might well be the catalyst for comprehensive talks or engagement, but there are challenges and difficulties.
Senator Hanafin referred to the Nord Stream project. That project is not necessarily proper to the EU. A number of member states are involved but there are also a number of competitor projects. Our view is that we must avoid dependency, from a strategic point of view, on any one source, transit route or delivery mechanism. That is obvious. We received significant support, approximately €110 million in financial terms, for the interconnector between Ireland and the UK from the EU stimulus package.

Senator Donohoe referred to Afghanistan. I already spoke at length on that matter. The Senator is correct with regard to the impact. In the context of the review that is taking place, a broad-based, multifaceted approach is being taken. That is important. Economic sustainability, particularly in rural areas in the context of the development of alternative forms of crop production in agriculture, is key. Education is also vital and there is a need to put in place good education facilities and good educational provision for the Afghan people. Governance is also a key issue. Regional and local governance are of central importance in the context of how Afghanistan will evolve.

Deputy Seán Power referred to the enormous level of resources that have been invested in Afghanistan. The agenda is extremely challenging and that has been the case for decades. It is important that we continue our work in this regard. It is also important that we be intelligent from a strategic perspective. We must move forward in an intelligent manner with regard to the responses we offer. I am confident that this is also the view of the US Administration. When we discussed this matter at our meetings in March, the US Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton, was anxious that Ireland should examine its aid programme in Afghanistan from the point of view of sustainability.

I take the Deputy's point in respect of Turkey's application for EU membership. Turkey originally applied to join in the 1980s, so it has been a long saga. The negotiations have been in train for four years and there is a long way to go. The question of Cyprus is one among many that remain to be resolved. Our relationship with Turkey is important in the context of stability and so forth.

I agree with Deputy Ned O'Keeffe with regard to the southern Caucasus. This is a matter of concern and the practical response must revolve around stabilisation agreements between the EU and the countries of the region, particularly Georgia. I visited Georgia last year and it was interesting that in the aftermath of the conflict there seemed to be a greater impulse on the part of the Government there towards Europe than might have been the case beforehand. I am of the view that over time we can stabilise the situation in the region through various associative agreements and the development
of relationships with the relevant countries. We should take a proper, incremental approach in this regard and there should be no great gaisces because the latter can destabilise.

The Deputy also referred to the ECB in the context of how helpful it has been to Ireland. I genuinely do not perceive the Icelandic application for membership as a bailout. The situation in Iceland came as a severe shock to its citizens but also to people and societies across the globe. Iceland has been a member of the European Economic Area, EEA, for a long period. In that context and as a result of its participation in this free trade area, a large number of its practices approximate to what we would consider the norm in respect of many matters. When the application is considered on its merits, therefore, those factors will be taken into account. In some areas, Iceland will have fewer hurdles to jump than other applicant countries. However, in other areas — reference was made to the fisheries question in this regard — I anticipate that extremely challenging discussions will take place. We are at the preliminary stage at present and we should move forward on a step-by-step basis.

On Senator Leyden's questions, I said earlier that the Middle East was discussed at great length at the informal meeting last week. I know the Senator is committed to this issue and has raised it on many occasions. Significant attempts are being made to get talks going and, in my view, we should allow that to happen. President Obama has made a determined effort to prioritise this issue and has invested a great deal of his own time and energy into it. The President, George Mitchell and others are working very hard on this and it is important we allow those who are trying to create the framework for peace the space to do so. We are experienced in terms of peace building and realise the necessity at times to call it as it is, as we did during the Gaza conflict.

We are continuing to push hard to allow humanitarian aid to flow into Gaza. What is going on there is unacceptable. I am unhappy with the situation in Gaza and voiced my concern in this regard again last week. Anything we do in terms of development must be relevant in that context. Javier Solana gave us a comprehensive briefing of the current position. For example, the view is that President Abbas is stronger now as a result of the Fatah convention and is more self-confident in terms of his power and support base. The freezing of settlements remains the crucial issue. We wish the current efforts success and we will do all we can to support them.

I hope I have covered all of the questions asked. I dealt earlier with the questions on Cyprus, fishing and President Barroso. On the temporary agency directive, the compliance agency, the National
Employment Rights Authority, NERA, has been set up on an interim basis. It is interesting how issues and people's perspectives on them transform. When the Gama worker situation developed, there were calls in the House for urgent action in this area including the need for more inspectors and so on. We responded, through Towards 2016, with the establishment of NERA which is now being put on a statutory basis in the Houses. We now hear calls from every corner of the House to slow down and not go too far, which is interesting. It is an important issue.

There have been movements in terms of the transposition of the directive and there has been a great deal of engagement with the social partners in this regard. As I stated, we would welcome the posting of the workers' directive. Members will be aware that it is a directive to which all member states will have to be a party. In the meantime, we have a strong body of law in this area. The EU has been strong in terms of the advancement of workers' rights. It is logical that we pass the Lisbon treaty which includes the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which is a plus for workers. If we do not pass the Lisbon treaty we will not have the charter which in turn will be a negative for workers. It defies logic that any trade union could vote against Lisbon. I do not understand how they could so do. I do not wish to be arrogant but it is a no-brainer. Not to vote "Yes" to the Lisbon treaty will result in a disadvantage to workers. I hope I have responded to members' questions.

Vice Chairman

I thank the Minister for attending the committee and wish him well in his deliberations next week.
Chairman

The next item on the agenda is No. 2, Ireland needs Europe and the Lisbon treaty. I welcome the Taoiseach who is accompanied by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Deputy Martin, and the Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Roche. In the past the committee has expressed its views on the importance of the Lisbon treaty and ensuring the widest possible amount of useful information is made available to the public prior to the referendum on 2 October. To this end, it decided to invite the leaders of the various political parties represented in the Oireachtas to address it on these issues. The Taoiseach is the first to address it and I ask him to address its members.

The Taoiseach

I thank the Chairman and members of the committee for the invitation to join them in their deliberations during the course of this campaign. I am glad to have my two colleagues, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Deputy Martin, and the Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Roche, with me. I welcome the opportunity to meet members of the committee today just weeks before the people vote again on the Lisbon treaty. It is not my intention to go into every last detail of the provisions, rather I intend to concentrate on a number of reasons for which I believe an Irish endorsement of the treaty is vital for the country's interests.

For fear of losing sight of why we negotiated the treaty in the first place, I want to recap quickly on what we see as the key positive features of the treaty for the country. We benefit greatly from our membership of the European Union. Anything that improves the way in which the Union functions is, by definition, in our interests. The treaty aims to make the Union more efficient and effective by updating its decision-making arrangements to take account of its increased size and to give it a stronger voice in global affairs. It seeks to make the Union more democratic, not least by giving a greater role to democratically elected parliaments, including, of course, the Oireachtas.
The entry into force of the Charter of Fundamental Rights strengthens the position of citizens in so far as they are affected by EU law. We support the advancement of rights, including the right to liberty and security, the right to freedom of conscience, religion and expression, the right to gender equality, the right of cultural and linguistic diversity, the right of non-discrimination, the right of collective bargaining, workers' rights to information, the right to fair and just working conditions and the right to protection against unfair dismissal.

The Lisbon treaty advances our shared capacity in a number of areas, perhaps most importantly our ability to counter cross-border crime. That is another positive reason we should vote for the treaty. The treaty makes the Union more coherent externally. It improves our ability to advance our interests and values on the world stage.

There should not be any doubt that the Government strongly endorses the values that Ireland and its fellow member states have set out in Article 2 of the treaty. I refer to respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of people who belong to minorities. While we take all of these values for granted, they are not universally held in all parts of the world, unfortunately.

There are further reasons to support the treaty in addition to those I have set out. First, the legal guarantees on the issues of concern to the Irish people provide additional safeguards to those who were worried last year about certain aspects of the treaty. Second, only by implementing the Lisbon treaty can we ensure each member state will keep a commissioner. I accept that the fear of losing a Commissioner was a real concern for many people during the first referendum campaign. Perhaps there was a sense that Ireland might lose access or influence. The Government took that concern on board when it negotiated with its partners in other member states. The outcome of that process could not have been better or clearer. We received a commitment that there will continue to be one commissioner per member state. That decision can only come into effect if the Lisbon treaty enters into force.

The concerns of many people about key issues, which were elaborated during the last referendum campaign, have also been responded to by our EU partners. Regardless of whether those concerns were genuinely heartfelt or based on hypothetical or conspiratorial scenarios, they can now be put to rest by the legally binding guarantees we have secured.
Today's focus is on the need for a "Yes" vote on 2 October, which is fundamental to our economic recovery. I want to focus on two reasons I believe this to be the case. I refer to the relationship between employment and Ireland's place at the heart of Europe and to the issues of consequences and confidence. I will also make a few brief comments about the role of the Oireachtas with regard to EU affairs. I would like to mention specifically the greatly enhanced role the Oireachtas will have in respect of future EU deliberations if the people vote "Yes" on 2 October.

The outcome of next month's referendum will be interpreted as a signal for our future intentions regarding this country's place in the European Union. It will make a statement about whether we want to continue to be an influential player at the heart of Europe or whether we want to move to the periphery on the basis of our suspicion and mistrust of the EU's direction and intent. If we say "No", it is inevitable that our commitment to Europe will be called into question by our partners and others. The other member states have given a comprehensive response to the concerns we laid out. They would, perhaps justifiably, be at a loss if they were to consider how they might be expected to respond to a second rejection of the treaty. One way or another, it is difficult to imagine that the same spirit of understanding and co-operation will prevail beyond a second rejection.

Some people have asked whether Ireland might be evicted from the European Union if it rejects the Lisbon treaty. That is a pure red herring and a distraction. There is no provision for a member state to leave the Union in such a manner, nor is there any real suggestion of it as a possible outcome. That argument is intended to deflect attention from a much more real question, which is whether there will be negative consequences for Ireland if we vote "No". I do not doubt that a second rejection of the treaty would have very serious and damaging consequences for this country, especially now that our partners have responded in detail to the concerns we expressed following the first referendum. To those who suggest otherwise, I would say that it is time to get real. It is naive and dangerous to subscribe to the notion that there would be no consequences for Ireland if it were to continue to stand in the way of a package of measures that all other member states, which have responded comprehensively to the specific concerns which were raised here, consider to be necessary to improve the operation of the Union and enable it to function more effectively in the global arena. Ireland, like any other member state, is a member of the Union to protect and promote its interests, which often and increasingly overlap with those of other member states. While we are a member of a club in order that we can benefit from it, part of the price of any club membership is a commitment to respect the concerns and needs of other members. We have responsibilities and
commitments to our fellow members just as they have commitments and responsibilities to us. Membership cannot be à la carte.

In the case of the European Union, the interests we want to protect and promote can be described in two ways. First, there are those interests that are bound up in the relationships we have with other countries of the European Union such as our trading relationships with them and the rights of our citizens to come and go freely among them. Second, there are the interests we want to pursue in the wider world where increasingly we can best advance our aims and goals by working closely with like-minded partners and neighbours.

The challenge to us, as a nation, is to find how best we can promote, protect and pursue our interests internationally and influence the world in which we live. The answer of successive Governments has been to endeavour to place us at the heart of Europe. Sometimes those of us who use this phrase may be guilty of not explaining the reason; let me spell it out. In any organisation of member states influence can arise in various ways. Sometimes it can come from a country's size or the extent of its contributions, especially if they are disproportionately large. Smaller member states have to find different ways to exert influence. In our case, we have always won influence by consistently acting in a constructive way where our national aims are aligned with the broad collective interest and where we appear supportive of and non-threatening to others. In that way, we gain their trust, respect and support, have our voice heard and concerns met. This approach has served us well in the past and we want to be able to use it in the future.

Some recent debate about the Lisbon treaty implies that we should consider our membership of the European Union solely in terms of what we can get out of it. Others go further, implying that the Union is some sort of malign force and that our aim should be to disrupt its business. The tone and substance of these attitudes are dangerous and damaging to our interests. It is not the approach we take to international affairs. Were this approach to take hold, it could very quickly undermine the respect we have built over many years of constructive engagement, both in the European Union and other international bodies. Since its accession in 1973, Ireland has acted as a constructive and progressive European partner and has been central to shaping the economic, social and political development of Europe. This approach, based on enlightened self-interest, has not been the sole preserve of any one political party but has enjoyed support throughout our membership, including from the two main Opposition parties, whether in opposition or government. Even those who have resolutely opposed the European Union at every turn now say they accept that our membership has
been a key factor in contributing to our economic and social development. Many of the arguments being aired against the Lisbon treaty today are the same ones we heard in the past from those who were more openly hostile to our membership of the Union and each previous treaty put to the people.

We have a shared responsibility and interest in ensuring the European Union is fit for purpose. All our partners are keen to see the Lisbon treaty reforms introduced as soon as possible in order that the Union can function more efficiently and effectively. This is true of the Union internally but especially in terms of its place in the wider world. This is a perfectly sensible and reasonable aim and, as a small nation, it is a goal we should share.

Having agreed guarantees on the specific concerns identified last year, our European Union partners have struggled to understand Irish resistance to the treaty. They may be reluctant to voice their concerns too loudly or to be seen to be interfering in our domestic debate but nonetheless they find it strange that opposition remains to something that is intended to make our collective work in the European Union more effective and efficient. Members of the joint committee and I may or may not think it so strange, being used to the extent to which suspicion and conspiracy theories have permeated debate in this country from time to time about the European Union, but sadly suspicion and conspiracy theories have become the norm for many of those who think we can somehow go it alone in the 21st century.

Consequently, the fact that the Union has no role in setting the minimum wage in Ireland does not prevent the appearance of thousands of posters implying it would be reduced to bizarre levels, were the Lisbon treaty to come into force. While we may be getting used to this style of campaigning here, it is not so easily understood by those looking on from the outside. Given the enormous challenges we face at present, instead of looking inward and inventing bogeymen we now have an important opportunity to help ourselves. A "Yes" vote would be a message that Ireland welcomes an efficient and effective European Union. It would help us to continue to forge alliances, to generate understanding and support for our particular positions and ultimately to protect and promote our vital interests. Given the challenging times in which we now live, we might never have needed this aspect of our affairs as much as we do now.
This brings me to the issue of jobs. I am unequivocal in my view that a "No" vote in October will cost us jobs. In the business world, sentiment matters and one need only consider how the international money markets work. At present, Ireland is paying more then one would wish for borrowings, in part because of negative sentiment towards us. Although the base point spread has narrowed recently, reflecting the positive steps we have taken to tackle our public finances, there is little doubt that reaffirming our commitment to Europe and to working closely and constructively with our EU partners also would help to restore confidence externally in our ability to manage our way forward.

The same point also applies to inward investment. People do not need to take my word or that of any particular party for this. All the main business groups and the Irish heads of many multinational companies in Ireland, such as Jim O'Hara of Intel, Paul Rellis of Microsoft and Shane O'Neill of UPC to name three, are crystal clear on this point. Reluctance to endorse the Lisbon treaty and a constant perception that we are somehow à la carte in respect of our commitment to Europe will make the task of attracting and securing inward investment and the jobs it supports more difficult. Those who argue otherwise would do well to listen to the employers’ representative groups, the exporters of Ireland, the farmers’ representative groups, the employers themselves and the trade union movement. Those who have experience of pursuing and securing inward investment, developing and exploiting export markets or growing and expanding businesses are united in their view that rejecting the Lisbon treaty could cost jobs and these views matter.

As a small open economy with a domestic market of a little over 4 million people and with the majority of our exports coming from foreign firms based here, our unequivocal membership of, and commitment to, the European Union is key. When the IDA competes with another region, whether from Europe or beyond, any possible undermining of our EU membership will be exploited fully and the chances of investment and jobs ending up in Ireland will shrink. I for one do not wish to see this happen. Furthermore, it is highly significant that the General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the country's largest trade union, SIPTU, are supporting a "Yes" vote. They perceive a "Yes" vote to be a vote for jobs and employment rights and so do I.

I wish to turn briefly to the role of the Oireachtas in European affairs under the Lisbon treaty, which I imagine is one topic on which this joint committee will wish to focus. That role would change significantly and positively under the Lisbon treaty, as national parliaments will assume a much greater role. This will include their role regarding proposals as they emerge from Brussels, as there
will be scope to influence such proposals at an early stage when the parliaments of one third of the member states agree. In this regard, the vote of the Irish Parliament will count equally with that of the German Parliament or any other member state. Without going into detail, I wish to make three points about the new role that would come about, were the Lisbon treaty to be implemented.

First, as with any responsibility, it brings challenges as well as opportunities for the Oireachtas. It will be important that the Oireachtas is efficient and makes best use of existing structures such as this joint committee. Second, cross-party discussion will be required within the House, possibly in the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission or a different forum, on how this is to be managed. The important work of the Sub-Committee on Ireland's Future in the European Union, chaired ably by Senator Paschal Donohoe last year, shows that in such matters, the Oireachtas has a keen interest in this area which augurs well for the prospects for an agreed and effective approach. Third, discussion on the detail is premature just now as we first must ensure the successful conduct of the referendum and a resounding endorsement of the treaty. We should spend our time in the next three weeks meeting the electorate, explaining the treaty to them and answering their questions. In that task, as elected representatives each of us has a shared responsibility that includes making sure the potential consequences are fully understood by the public.

Our changed economic situation has given rise to frustration, anger and feelings of helplessness among the public. Many argue that they did not cause this change of circumstances, yet they feel powerless to influence the outcome. Much of this is understandable. However, Lisbon represents an opportunity for the Irish people to help themselves through positive action. Ireland's economic recovery will rely heavily on our ability to rebuild our export capacity. Some of these exports will be destined for other European countries within the Internal Market. Others will be targeted at wider markets and our membership of the EU and our involvement in its wider policy development are crucial to our ability to reach and exploit these opportunities.

Supporting Lisbon and showing solidarity with our EU colleagues will help us to rebuild our international reputation, improve our export market prospects and protect and create jobs in the future. Most members of this committee agree with that argument, as do those outside these Houses who deal with issues of investment, exports and jobs. The food and agribusiness, information technology and services sectors agree. Irish exporters also support the proposition. Our standard of living ultimately depends on our ability to sell goods and services abroad, not least so that we can pay for the items we import, be they cars, electrical goods or clothing. When those in the front line
of Irish businesses who are responsible for production management, pursuing export markets and closing sales say clearly that we need to vote "Yes" to the Lisbon treaty, we should listen carefully.

In the referendum of 2 October, every citizen can make a concrete contribution to our recovery. This is not about whether one supports or opposes the Government. It is about exercising a right and responsibility in the best interest of this country, its people and its future generations. In the coming weeks, when members meet people who are frustrated or angry about our current economic challenges, this is one specific opportunity for positive action. A vote in favour of the Lisbon treaty will strengthen our position with our EU partners, help Ireland as part of Europe to compete more effectively in global markets and improve and hasten our prospects of economic recovery.

Much has been done in recent months to inform people about developments. We are in the midst of extensive campaigning and in addition to posters and leaflets, the party I am privileged to lead, Fianna Fáil, will campaign throughout the country to explain to people why Ireland needs Europe and the Lisbon treaty. During this campaign, we intend to focus on the real issues, which will be decided by the people, and not the agenda of others. We will strongly rebut false attacks on the treaty and the European Union. The people are entitled to hear the positive case for a "Yes" vote and we are determined to make that case.

I welcome the commitment of other parties and groups on seeking a "Yes" vote. The referendum is not about politics as usual. It goes beyond any issue of party, organisation or locality. It is about our country's future and it deserves a serious debate based on facts. Everyone who cares about our future in Europe should take the time to participate in the campaign and bring a positive message to every community in the country.

Chairman

I thank the Taoiseach. His attendance, along with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs, is an indication of the importance of this issue. Eleven members have expressed a wish to contribute, and the list continues to grow.

Deputy Billy Timmins
I thank the Taoiseach for coming before us to set out clearly and concisely the reasons we should vote "Yes" on 2 October. It has been argued that a "No" vote will not have any consequence. He clearly outlined the context in which this vote will take place and the importance of a "Yes" vote to our economic recovery and the creation and protection of jobs. This issue is difficult to describe in tangible terms but he referred to the CEOs of companies. According to a survey conducted by the Small Firms Association, eight out of ten of its members believe there will be positive consequences to a "Yes" vote.

In addition, the argument is made that those on the "Yes " side do not outline the positive content in the treaty. In the first paragraphs of his speech the Taoiseach clearly outlined the positive — the updated decision-making arrangements; the greater role for national parliaments; our ability to counter cross-border crime; the values in Article 2 of the treaty with respect to the rule of law and respect for human rights; and now, in addition, the legal guarantees that we have received since the last referendum. Apart from the guarantee regarding the extra Commissioner, these do not change the content of the treaty but should clearly change the understanding people had of the treaty.

I have some questions for the Taoiseach. When he was talking today I detected a certain sense of frustration in his contribution. Human nature being what it is, I see that he is nodding "No" to that. Does the Taoiseach find it difficult that while during the last campaign groups campaigned on certain issues that were do-or-die issues, such as the Commissioner and taxation, it is clear these are issues no longer and the posts have moved so that other issues that were not important before have now been created issues of importance? I find no reason in the treaty to vote "No" and many to vote « Yes".

Was it difficult to get agreement on retaining the Commissioner? With respect to maintaining control over our corporate tax rate, did any countries, local political parties or any part of the political establishment lobby recently, or in the past, to have a common corporate tax rate across the European Union? The Taoiseach mentioned misinformation on posters. We in Fine Gael do not want to spend much time on any of this but it is important to nail misinformation. Many genuine and committed commentators can fall into the trap of repeating misinformation such as, for example, that our voting strength would be halved. Will the Taoiseach comment on that issue? It is clearly untrue and is a misrepresentation. Our voting strength will not be halved because it is double majority voting, namely, a system with two legs and two arms rather than one arm.
I noticed a headline in today's Irish Independent stating that at the Socialist Party campaign launch there was a comment to the effect that the Government should be punished for wrecking the economy. I do not know if that comment is accurate but I take it to be so because I did not see any denial of it. I cannot analyse or fathom what type of warped thinking creates the notion of voting “No” to punish the Government for wrecking the economy. Has the Taoiseach any view on the logic behind that sentiment? It is a case of cutting off our nose to spite our face.

**Deputy Timmy Dooley**

I welcome the Taoiseach and the Ministers. I recognise the clear and concise language that was used to set out the reasons the Irish people should vote "Yes" on this occasion, acknowledging what the Government has achieved by the retention of the Commissioner and the legal guarantees obtained. A number of questions arise from that. Some of the research done to date indicates that young people are somewhat hesitant about supporting the treaty. Why is this the case? Is there anything within the treaty for younger people and what they might expect from it?

The Taoiseach spoke about the posters on the minimum wage, clearly setting out their folly and the deceitful argument involved. There is also a series of posters which suggest the leaders of 1916 would have been against the European Union. The Taoiseach is a scholar of history and might have a view he would care to share with us on that. Does he agree the message that Lisbon makes the EU more democratic has been lost to some degree? There seems to be a suggestion that as we continue with the evolution of the European Union we are somehow ceding power or democracy to an unelected elite. Will he comment on that and set out clearly what the Lisbon treaty states in that regard?

The Taoiseach has been at the coalface of negotiating throughout the economic crisis facing this country and others throughout Europe. Can he enlighten us as to how helpful our membership of the Union has been in the discussions with the European Central Bank and in assisting us in shoring up funding for our banking system?

**Deputy Joe Costello**
I thank the Taoiseach for a fine and clear presentation about the issues surrounding the Lisbon treaty. I particularly emphasise the issue of democracy and addressing the democratic deficit in the treaty. I was interested to hear his emphasis on democratising the institutions to make them more accountable and the value of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in strengthening the position of citizens in the European Union.

There is an issue that is most pertinent to members of the committee, an enhanced role for national parliaments. This is an issue members of the Joint Committee on European Affairs and the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny have laboured to get to grips with during the years. Now, there is a clear statement on an improved and strengthened role for national parliaments in policy and decision making at every level. There is equality of space and powers for national parliaments. I look forward to a restructuring of the business of the Dáil and the manner in which Members conduct themselves in the House. I take on board the Taoiseach's remarks relating to cross-party consultation in ensuring the new enhanced role for national parliaments can be implemented in an effective fashion. That is enormous progress which has not generally been recognised in the debates that have taken place to date. I am glad the Taoiseach focused on it to a considerable degree.

Likewise, I am glad the Taoiseach focused on the issue of jobs, inward investment and the colossal degree to which our exports depend on finance from abroad and companies that have established in this country. Approximately 300,000 jobs are dependent on such companies and 80% of everything this country produces is exported. We have flexible and diverse markets within the European Union due to the Single Market; in the past Ireland was totally dependent on the British market which sought lower prices for Irish goods. In the European Union we have the capacity to ensure this inward investment continues, whereas if we vote against the Lisbon treaty, we will raise a doubt about our future intentions and, therefore, a doubt among international companies about what our true position is in the Union. The vote can put us clearly at the centre of Europe rather than on the periphery.

The guarantees have been mentioned previously and the Taoiseach referred to them. In the current debate there appears to be scant regard on the part of the "No" campaign for them. On the issue of abortion, for example, Cóir claims the guarantees are worthless. People say the Charter of Fundamental Rights will change the position entirely in terms of the powers given to the European Union. Perhaps the Taoiseach will discuss the effect of the guarantees and how they will allow Irish sovereignty to apply in respect of this and other matters.
What is the Taoiseach's opinion on people coming from abroad to campaign against the Lisbon treaty? I understand the leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party is speaking at a meeting on the issue today and that the party has announced it will send 1 million leaflets to households throughout this country. What is the Taoiseach's view on a party from outside this country, particularly a eurosceptic party like that, getting involved in the referendum in such a fashion?

Deputy Timmins questioned the Taoiseach on the leader of the Socialist Party being quoted as stating that people should punish the Government and vote "No". How would the Taoiseach counter that? People could be confused into voting, dare I say it, against an unpopular Government and at the same time they would be doing the country an injustice in the expectation of getting at the Government in some fashion. The Taoiseach might address that issue.

Deputy Beverley Flynn

I also thank the Taoiseach for his presentation. The research done indicated that women had considerable difficulty with the Lisbon treaty and that they had issues that were of great concern to them. Will the Taoiseach outline what there is in the Lisbon treaty that protects women in particular? For example, cross-border crime and the trafficking of women for prostitution. Is there something in that area, for example, that would sell the Lisbon treaty to women? Conscription into a European army was also an issue for women the last time around. What can we do in that regard? The Taoiseach clearly highlighted some of the key issues for the population as a whole, but I wonder what makes the treaty attractive to women in particular.

On the binding nature of the legal guarantees, guarantees are in a protocol and will become part of a future treaty and that obviously makes them legally binding. As of now, however, will the Taoiseach reassure us on the binding nature of guarantees? Is this legal agreement registered with the United Nations? I ask him to give us a clearer understanding of exactly how binding they are.

One aspect the Lisbon treaty debate has highlighted is that there has always been a lack of understanding of European issues among the population and this debate has brought about a greater interest among the general population in European matters. I would also maintain that there is a lack
of understanding — even in the Houses of the Oireachtas — and that in Dáil Éireann the European programme has not received the attention it deserves in terms of the scrutiny of EU regulations. What is the Taoiseach's opinion on that? In terms of its relevance to the Lisbon treaty referendum, what can be done to improve the communication and understanding of European issues for the population and also within the Oireachtas?

We have rules and regulations on misleading advertising. I am of the view that many of the posters around the country are extremely misleading. From a legal point of view, is there anything we can do about statements on posters that are designed to mislead the people?

**Chairman**

Before we proceed I want to bring to members' attention that there are two possibilities, that the Taoiseach would reply to two tranches of debate or that it would all be done in one go. As there are 12 speakers, how does the committee wish to proceed?

**Deputy Noel Treacy**

A brief comment from the rest of us would be okay.

**Chairman**

Does the Taoiseach agree?

**The Taoiseach**

I am in the Chairman's hands.

**Chairman**

We will proceed as we are. The next speaker is Deputy Pat Breen.
Deputy Pat Breen

I welcome the Taoiseach, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Deputy Martin, and the Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs with responsibility for European affairs, Deputy Roche. It is universally recognised in the EU that the Lisbon treaty must be ratified and implemented if the EU is to carry out its functions democratically. The Taoiseach does not like talking about defeat, but in the event of Ireland rejecting the treaty on 2 October, does he believe that other EU members will move ahead without Ireland, in other words, that a two-tier European Union, of which Ireland will be a part, will evolve? Does the Taoiseach have — as the GAA did in Croke Park on Sunday last — a plan B to put in place?

Deputy Seán Power

Following the rejection of the treaty by the Irish people last year, the Government set about carrying out research in respect of it and this proved quite revealing. Thereafter, the Government worked quite hard with its counterparts throughout Europe in order to secure certain guarantees in respect of the concerns which the people expressed. I am of the view that a sizeable number of people voted against the treaty on the previous occasion because they simply did not understand its contents.

Much of the debate on the treaty seems to focus on the consequences of people voting "Yes" or "No". It is important that people should understand the consequences that will result from the way they cast their votes. Equally, however, it is also important that they should understand the content of the treaty. I accept that it is a substantial document but it would be a welcome development if we, as elected representatives, could find a way to explain or outline to the people what the treaty involves. Much of the material that has been produced to date is quite confusing. If we could simplify the information being disseminated, we would do members of the electorate a favour by assisting them in understanding what the treaty contains. As stated, it is important that people understand the content of the treaty as well as the consequences of their voting in a particular way.

The Taoiseach referred to some of the posters that have been put up, particularly that which relates to the minimum wage. Will he outline the implications for workers if Ireland was again to vote "No" to the Lisbon treaty?
Senator Feargal Quinn

I welcome the Taoiseach. Last year, I did not reach a decision on the Lisbon treaty until I had weighed up all the arguments. Any of the matters to which I will refer at this meeting will reflect the changes that have occurred since last year. I almost feel like a bride at a wedding saying to her husband to be "Of course I love you darling, but do you mind if I keep the furniture in my own name?" It appears as if we are seeking special treatment.

I have two queries which relate to what has happened since last year's referendum. The first of these relates to Ireland's commissioner. If the referendum is lost, I understand that we will return to the position which obtained post the Nice treaty. In such circumstances, would it be possible for the EU to state that it is only going to have 26 commissioners instead of 27? I read a report which indicated that the high representative for foreign affairs could come from the 27th country.

Concern has arisen in respect of the use of the word "suggestion", instead of that of "propose", in the context of who might be the Commissioner. I do not know what is the difference between those two terms. However, there are those who state that we would no longer be in a position to propose who should serve as Commissioner, that all we could do would be to make a suggestion in this regard and that the President of the EU, advised by his or her colleagues, would make the final decision. Will the Taoiseach put my mind, and those of the people who have expressed concerns in this regard, to rest?

Deputy Noel Treacy

I thank the Taoiseach for his very informative contribution. I congratulate him and his ministerial colleagues on the extremely successful negotiations they conducted in order to ensure that the fears expressed by the people last year would be allayed and to obtain guarantees which can be copperfastened for the future.

When one reflects on the past three and a half decades, one realises that the European Union has been critically important for Ireland. This is most particularly true in the case of agriculture. The Common Agricultural Policy and single farm payments have facilitated the massive transfer of
resources necessary to provide sustainability in Irish farming. How vital will the passage of the Lisbon treaty be to ensure we can continue to successfully negotiate financial instruments and the single farm payments post-2013? Where will the instruments of ratification be lodged once the people make an affirmative decision?

**Senator Maurice Cummins**

I thank the Taoiseach and I welcome his comments. There was severe criticism about the perceived lack of information during the previous referendum campaign but it is recognised more information is available for this campaign. Attitudes are, based on my experience canvassing, more positive. A "No" vote would result in a two-tier Europe with Ireland on the periphery. What would the consequences of such a vote mean for the country, particularly in the context of job creation?

**Senator John Hanafin**

I thank the Taoiseach. People had concerns and a majority voted against the treaty in the previous referendum. Some concerns were genuine but since that vote, we have seen nothing but good faith from the EU. Consistently since that time, the retention of an Irish Commissioner has been secured, we have secured guarantees on the pro-life issue, non-military involvement and taxation but an issue as significant as all of these has been lost in the mix, that is, we can borrow money from the ECB at an interest rate of 1.5%. The nation has given €7 billion to the banks and they have been charged 8% interest. We also have shares, yet the ECB saw fit to support NAMA at its lowest interest rate. In other words, we can provide €37 billion in funding for NAMA through the €7 billion put into the banks. That is proof positive the EU has shown good faith on every occasion since the last vote. Will the Taoiseach confirm this?

**Deputy Lucinda Creighton**

I apologise to the Taoiseach and Ministers for my late arrival. I was trying to make it back from the Fine Gael parliamentary party meeting but, unfortunately, despite the boom, the road between Dublin and Cavan has not improved particularly.

Deputy Flynn referred to the issue of women voting in large numbers, and disproportionately, against the Lisbon treaty on the first occasion, which is a worrying development. I am concerned
that we are trying to find women-specific issues in the treaty and I am not sure this is the way to go. I do not know that we can pigeonhole women. This treaty and the European project is for man, woman and child. However, communication is an issue. The three Ministers present are men and there is a case for ensuring more women are engaged in the debate. That would make it easier for women to relate to the treaty. It seems to be a bureaucratic male dominated enterprise to many people. While that may be an incorrect perception, all of us and the Government, in particular, need to bear that in mind during the coming weeks. I do not believe trying to pluck women-friendly policies from the Lisbon treaty will be a particularly worthwhile exercise.

Deputy Flynn also referred to the lack of understanding of the Lisbon treaty, which is a much bigger issue and one that will not be addressed in a matter of weeks. The fundamental problem with the treaty is that it is one about reforming institutions, which is not particularly glamorous or engaging. Most do not understand what the institutions do. The ordinary man and woman on the street, perhaps because they have more important matters to worry about, do not know the difference between the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council. It is difficult to explain how these institutions are to be reformed when people do not know what they do in the first instance. Addressing this issue will be a huge challenge for us at Oireachtas level and our education system. However, it is one that requires to be addressed by this or a future Government.

On the campaign, what does the Taoiseach believe is different on this occasion? In this regard, I am speaking not about the content of the treaty but of the nuts and bolts. Is he satisfied that the campaign under way on this occasion is better and that the "Yes" side is better organised and articulating better its case for a "Yes" vote? Also, I am interested to hear his views on what he believes needs to happen in the coming weeks; what we can expect in terms of leadership from the Government, himself and his Ministers and what he believe needs to happen on the part of the "Yes" campaign as a broad church, including all of the political parties on the "Yes" side.

As I was driving through town I saw a poster stating EU policies had failed and that 20 million people were unemployed. Such erroneous, inaccurate and misleading statements on posters leave me speechless. Unfortunately, however, there is nothing we can do about the matter. A few people have referred to the poster on the minimum wage. I would specifically like to hear from the Taoiseach if there is any mechanism contained in the Lisbon treaty that will force the minimum
wage in Ireland down to €1.84? If there is such a mechanism, in what article is it contained? I have read the treaty at least twice and have not seen it. There are also posters which state we have been milked dry, as though during the past 35 years the European Union has been draining subsidies from Ireland to support German farmers. Perhaps the Taoiseach will comment on the matter and the particular interests of the farming community in terms of a "Yes" vote.

I have two final brief questions, the first of which relates to the consequences of a "No" vote, with which I believe the Taoiseach dealt well. I do not have any sense that people have an understanding of the tangible consequences of voting "No" to the Lisbon treaty this time round. One statistic which I believe comes from IBEC is that we are paying a €400 million premium on our debt repayments and that this could potentially be reduced or eliminated by restoring confidence in the Irish markets if we vote "Yes". Perhaps the Taoiseach will say whether he agrees with that statement which I believe is important. It is one about which the people need to hear.

Proponents of a "No" vote claim that following the "No" vote in 2008, the Taoiseach and the Minister for Foreign Affairs went cap in hand to the European Union apologising profusely on bended knee to the other 26 Heads of Government and were instructed to come back and force the people to hold a second referendum. While I do not believe that is what happened, perhaps the Taoiseach will comment on the matter.

Deputy Finian McGrath

I thank the Chairman for giving me the opportunity to attend the meeting. I also thank the Taoiseach for his contribution. As many of those present will be aware, I voted "No" in the previous referendum on the Lisbon treaty. I had a number of reasons for doing so and the majority agreed with me. My reasons centred on issues such as the retention of the Commissioner, taxation, neutrality, militarisation and the undermining of our sovereignty. However, there is another issue that those present are failing to address, which is that at the time many felt that those involved in the "Yes" campaign were talking down to the people and that arrogance crept in during the first Lisbon treaty campaign. It is important to say this. Today there is a sensible and balanced debate. I know people are raising issues that came up on the "No" side in recent days, with which I disagree. It is important to have a balanced debate in the coming weeks. I have moved from being a "No" voter to one who does not know. That is my position and the recent opinion poll showed that
25% of the people are in the same position. There is nothing wrong with this. If those on the "Yes" side want to sell the Lisbon treaty to the people, they need to deal with the treaty, not engage in spin and talk down to the people.

This morning I met people in a working class area of my constituency who were talking about the economic side and jobs. Nearby was the poster which Deputy Creighton mentioned referring to 20 million unemployed people in the European Union. I ask the Taoiseach if that is an accurate figure, particularly given the enormous and growing unemployment problem we have in Ireland and within the European Union.

I am concerned that people have failed to address the foreign policy issues in this debate. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Deputy Martin, was in Sudan in recent days working on the kidnapping case involving a constituent of mine, Ms Sharon Cummins. I thank and commend him on the work he has done in recent weeks on the issue. However, I am concerned that if we are part of this big club post ratification of the Lisbon treaty, when we go to places such as Africa and the Middle East, we will lose the international respect we have enjoyed historically as an independent nation. That is a genuine concern to which I would like the Taoiseach to respond.

That leads me on to the European Defence Agency. During the last referendum campaign I spoke at public meetings at which many women raised this issue in respect of Article 42.3 of the Lisbon treaty regarding the European Defence Agency and spending on defence. Many want the money spent on health and education rather than defence. I ask the Taoiseach to outline how the proposed European Defence Agency legislation will deal with this issue and when it will be addressed in the next few weeks.

I have a question on the issue of the retention of the Commissioner. Article 17.7 deals with the issue and, as Senator Quinn rightly pointed out, includes the word "suggestion". I agree with the Senator and seek clarification on the matter as it is an issue that is also coming up. How can the Taoiseach convince me that the big countries will not go for a big power grab to take control of the European Union? That is an important issue, on which the people would like straight answers. How can the Taoiseach convince me that there will not be a big power grab by the big European Union states post ratification of the Lisbon treaty?
Senator Rónán Mullen

Ba bhreá liom fáilte a chur roimh an Taoiseach. Gabhaim mo leithscéal leis freisin os rud é go bhfuil orm an choiste a fhágáil go luath. Ní bheidh mé in ann fánacht go dtí go mbeidh mo chuid ceisteanna á fhreagaírt ag an Taoiseach. Gheobhaidh mé amach céard a dúvida sé. Aontaím leis an méid a chur mo chomhghleacaithe, an Seanadóir Quinn agus an Teachta Finian McGrath, maidir leis an gCoimisinéir. Cé go bhfuil tábhacht ag baint leis an cheist an mbeidh Coimisinéir ag an t-seo amach anseo, muna nglacfaimid le chonradh Liospóin, í mó tábhacht a bhainfidh leis an cheist cé aige a bheidh an cheart an Choimisinéir Éireannach a roghnú. An mbeidh sé níos laige amach anseo, sa chás go nglacfaí le chonradh Liospóin? An mbeidh aon difríocht ansin? Cén mheas atá ag an Taoiseach faoi sin?

Bhí mé an-sásta an bhliain seo caite nuair a stop an Rialtas ag caint faoi ceist an ghinmhillte amháin. Glacadh leis go raibh daoine buartha faoi réimse níos mó ceisteanna sóisialta agus eiticiúla, ar nós córsai clainne agus cúrsaí oideachais. Bhí mé an-sásta go raibh sé mar aidhm ag an Rialtas dul ar thóir gealltanaíse a mbainfeedh nó hamháin le cúrsaí gheannhiltéach le cúrsaí oideachais, cúrsaí clainne agus cúrsaí na mbeo freisin. B'fhéidir go mbeidh leas polaitiúil amach anseo, toisc go bhfuil attheantas oifigiúil tugtha don chéad uair dos na hAilt i mbun i Maastricht a bhainfeadh ní hamháin le cúrsaí na mbeo — bhí prótacal ar leith i chonradh Maastricht cheana féin — ach le cúrsaí clainne agus cúrsaí oideachais freisin.

É sin ráite, ba mhaith liom aird an Taoiseach a dhíriú ar rud a d'ardaigh mé i litir a scríobh mé go dtí an Rialtas roinnt seachtainí sular ndeachaigh an Rialtas i mbun idirbheartaíochta. D'íarr mé an mbainfeedh cibé gealltanaíse a bheadh ann le chonradh Liospóin amháin, nó le gnéithe de chonradh Liospóin, nó an mbainfeedh siad leis an chorpas iomlán de dhlíthe na hEorpa. Is ceist, níos mó ná ráiteas, atá in aigne agam. De réir mar a thuigim é, baineann na gealltanaíse le gnéithe de chonradh Liospóin agus, dar ndóigh, leis na cearta bunúsacha. Bhí an prótacal a bhí i gconradh Maastricht maidir le cúrsaí gheannhilté leathan — bhain sé le dhlíthe na hEorpa ar fad. Cén fáth nach bhfuil an cothrom a bhí ag an gconradh Liospóin agus, dar ndóigh, leis na cearta bunúsacha. Bhí an prótacal a bhí i gconradh Maastricht maidir le cúrsaí gheannhilté leathan — bhain sé le dhlíthe na hEorpa ar fad. Cén fáth nach bhfuil an cothrom a bhí ag an gconradh Liospóin agus, dar ndóigh, leis na cearta bunúsacha.

Nios mó ná sin, tá mé an-sásta leis an chaoi ina mbeidh cibé rud atá socraithe daingnithe amach anseo. Tá mé ag caint mar ghell ar an gconradh a bhaineann le dallraíocht an Chróit san Aontas Eorpa. Os rud é go mbeidh an stádas conraithe ag na gealltanaíse seo, cén fáth nár chuaign an
I am pleased to have an opportunity to say a few words at this meeting. I welcome the Taoiseach and his colleagues.

I concur with what Deputy Treacy said about the challenges and opportunities being faced by Irish agriculture. Like me, the Taoiseach comes from a rural constituency. He is aware that when we debated EU policy in the past 30 years in the context of referendum campaigns, people from rural areas were generally the strongest proponents of Ireland's involvement in the European Union. In successive polls there was strong evidence that Irish farmers supported the Union in sizeable numbers. That was not surprising, given that substantial amounts of income flowed directly from the Union to the pockets of those involved in Irish agriculture. However, there was a significant change in that regard when Ireland voted in the first referendum on the Lisbon treaty in 2008.

I accept that there was a debate about the WTO in the run-up to that vote. There were also some difficulties with the farming organisations, although the largest organisation came on board towards the end of the campaign. Despite the figures presented to us after the referendum, all of us who represent rural constituencies have to concede that a significant proportion of farmers voted "No". In my opinion, most of them voted against the treaty last year. On this occasion the Irish Farmers Association has firmly indicated its support for the proposal, which is very welcome. It has published a list of five items that prove the Lisbon treaty is important for Irish agriculture. I ask the Taoiseach to confirm that the Government will continue to use its contacts among our European partners — its ongoing channels — to try to tackle in the immediate future the problems being faced by Irish agriculture. I refer, in particular, to the dairy crisis. While this issue may be more appropriately debated in another forum, the Irish dairy industry is in danger of shutting down as a result of cost problems and low prices.
Substantial further support from the European Union will be required if the dairy industry and agriculture are to continue ticking over. As the referendum on the Lisbon treaty approaches, the Taoiseach must reassure farmers and the broader agri-industry that, once the referendum has been passed, Ireland will again be in a position to punch well above our weight in agriculture and we will secure further support for the dairy industry and agriculture in general. If those living in rural areas, most of whom have been supportive of the European project, do not row in behind the Lisbon treaty, the referendum will not be passed and the country, including areas such as those to which I refer, will go down the tubes. The Taoiseach must provide firm reassurance that the Government will work closely with our European partners to defend and preserve Irish agriculture.

I raised my second point, a slightly more philosophical issue, with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Deputy Martin, during a recent debate on the treaty in the Seanad. It is interesting to note that this debate is taking place on the 20th anniversary of the momentous changes which took place in central and eastern Europe. Twenty years ago, people marched for freedom and, within months, people power brought down the Berlin Wall, freedom marched across the Continent and the European political landscape changed completely.

It is interesting to consider which groups are to the fore in demanding that we vote "No" to the Lisbon treaty referendum. They include far-left groups which, despite having new titles, consist primarily of old Trotskyites, as well as the Workers Party and many more such groups. If these individuals had had their way 20 years ago, the Berlin Wall would still be standing and those who were locked behind it would still be imprisoned in the communist bloc which prevailed at that time. That is the ideology of these groups. I am old enough to remember far-left members of Cork City Council refusing to back motions in support of groups such as the Solidarity trade union in Poland. Their failure to do so demonstrates their true respect for workers and their rights. It is significant that the current President of the European Parliament is a former member of the Solidarity trade union. If workers in Leinster House, Dublin and elsewhere were to examine the track record of those urging a "No" vote, they would find that the individuals in question were not the friends of workers when they were literally in chains.

The European Union has created real jobs and employment. Deputy Creighton referred to posters stating that 20 million people are unemployed. The European Union has created tens of millions of
jobs. Given their appalling track record on the fundamental issue of workers' freedom 20 years ago, the "No" campaigners should be silent.

**Chairman**

The Taoiseach, the Minister and the Minister of State have heard members deliver tours de force on this issue. While they may not have spoken with one voice, they certainly spoke with conviction.

I refer to an issue which was not raised in this discussion. I and other members have become aware of considerable outside influence being exerted in the current and previous referendum campaigns. An attempt is being made from outside this jurisdiction to scare, convince and coerce the electorate into voting in a certain way. Those behind this effort are well organised and funded. In attempting to undermine our institutions of State, they use slogans such as "The political classes have lost their touch". In their view, we are all members of the political classes.

The ultimate objective of those involved in this scaremongering is to have Ireland leave the European Union. While they are not saying this, that is their agenda and has been for a long time. I need not enumerate the people who have spoken along these lines but they have done so recently. I believe, as I hope does everyone else in Ireland, that this is a republic and that people are entitled to make up our own minds and that they are quite capable of so doing. We have, as several speakers suggested, done so in the past in the interests of the people.

One point everyone must recognise is that we have no evidence of ever seeing the European Union treat a member state, its citizens or any of its institutions badly or with disrespect. In the situation in which we now find ourselves we must recognise that there are powerful forces arrayed against us who perceive this referendum in a member state of the European Union as providing the best possible opportunity to eventually break up what has become the European Union. This point may be stark but that is the way it is. I revert to the Taoiseach and his Ministers as he sees fit.

**The Taoiseach**
I thank the Chairman and if it is in line, I can ask my colleagues to say a few words on some of the issues raised to be as helpful and comprehensive as possible. I thank all members for their contributions and questions. Before getting down to the specifics, I wish to make some brief points.

It is important to point out that the people spoke in the first referendum. It was the duty of their representatives to ascertain how they could address the issues raised were there to be another referendum. Much work was undertaken by the Oireachtas in so doing and I thank everyone who was thus engaged. Moreover, I note our European colleagues are prepared to provide us with the protocols we require to give certainty, to avoid any semblance of doubt and to try to deal with genuine concerns. One can have a view on the merits or otherwise of any side of a debate on any particular argument. However, we have been engaged — this campaign must be so engaged — in persuading those who may have voted "No" the last time to vote "Yes" on this occasion, as well as in persuading those who voted "Yes" to come out and vote again. This is an exercise in democracy and we must be mindful of that fact. The determination of people on all sides of the argument to have a public debate or provide a forum for this important question must be predicated on a need for everyone to be accurate and truthful in what they have to say in order that there is a basis for their contentions.

Sometimes there is a reference to a lack of information. In response to some of the questions posed by colleagues previously, one big difference is that a highly proactive effort has been made to provide information in a way that it will be usable and accessible. The Department of Foreign Affairs, civic society groups and others, as well as the European Commission, have been helpful in bringing forward documentation that provides the essentials people want and information on where further information may be obtained in a more accessible way. Through the websites www.lisbontreaty.ie or www.eumatters.ie, one has an interactive opportunity to raise specific questions over and above the broad issues involved. Consequently, the provision of information on the content of the treaty is better this time. This is generally acknowledged and it is a positive development.

The Referendum Commission, under the chairmanship of Mr. Justice Frank Clarke, also has an important statutory role to play, which is being discharged in a fine manner. However, from my perspective and that of all members, the issue pertains both to the content of the treaty, which is important, and to the context in which we are now dealing with this matter. The situation in Ireland is incredibly different from that which obtained 15 or 18 months ago. It has brought into sharp relief
and focus people's understanding that Ireland cannot stand alone in finding the solution to all its problems. In the modern world in which we live, Ireland has to be part of something greater than itself if we are to ensure the sovereignty provided for this republic is exercised creatively and in co-operation with others who share our values.

When we ask what is in this for particular sections of the community or for Ireland, we should remember that the European Union is not simply an economic entity; it is a community of values. Senator Bradford gave a good example of this in his contribution. The President of the European Parliament, Mr. Jerzy Buzek, is visiting Ireland today, and he is most welcome. Mr. Buzek is Polish and I am sure when he was a prominent member of the Solidarity movement, the idea that he would become a democratic member of his own parliament, let alone President of the European Parliament, was not predicted. As Minister for Foreign Affairs, I recall meeting a colleague from one of the Baltic states whose parents had suffered in the Soviet Union. The President of the European Commission gave an eloquent speech to the Forum on Europe on his experience as a young man under the dictatorship in Portugal. It is important we do not take for granted this Community of values.

The European Union has been the great progressive force which has brought Europe together. When we were growing up, we thought we lived in a bipolar world divided into communist and non-communist camps. We all recall the geography maps of the time. The fact is, however, that things change very quickly. After the fall of communism, in the absence of a European Union which was able to ensure progressive forces in the countries of post-communist eastern Europe would look to democratic values as a means of resolving problems and charting out a future, one does not know what might have emerged. That has happened in our lifetime. It is difficult today to retain a sense of wonder at this world but the collapse of the Berlin Wall was a wonder, as was the fact that an organisation called the European Union has enabled the enlargement of a Europe in which everyone subscribes to democratic values and the rule of law. We do not often recall that ten states became members of the European Union during our Presidency in 2004. That was a moving moment for those nations. We recall their Prime Ministers and Heads of Government coming to Ireland and the joy we all shared. That was part of Ireland in Europe and it is what the European Union is about.

Apart from technical provisions, the detail of which we should comprehend, the bottom line is that the political project of the European Union has been the great conflict resolution mechanism of the modern world. It has changed the continent of Europe from a byword for conflict to an area of co-operation. It was born out of the simple idea that one should co-operate with those holding shared
values rather than enter conflicts. That is a very simple idea but it has worked tremendously well for all who have been members of that Union and have witnessed its progression.

The wider context is important in terms of explaining why the country has to look at this referendum as a pivotal point. For the past 35 years, this country has moved in a strategic direction. Our economy has developed on the basis of being part of an open marketplace. We are prepared to work with others to develop rules that provide an internal market. They have brought an investment policy to this country which has been very successful, has created jobs and has helped us overcome the historic constraints of underemployment and forced emigration. That all happened because the context in which Ireland was operating was no longer polarised into what was available in our own domestic market and our historic economic dependence on our nearest neighbour but on the fact that we opened up horizons and new opportunities for this country. It was a result of the vision of people and the political vision of a prior generation.

I recall a question asked by Deputy Dooley. I do not want others to set the agenda for our discussion today but I refer to the posters alluding to the leaders of 1916. They were progressive men and women of vision who did not see Ireland as out on its own in the Atlantic. Their vision spoke about Ireland taking its place among the nations of the world, not being separate from them. It was also about giving freedom to future generations to chart the future of this country as we saw fit, based on the common good which we could establish and recognise. That is our responsibility now, as it was that of the previous generation in 1973 to make the historic move towards membership, as it was the responsibility of Lemass and others in the 1950s and 1960s to say Ireland should consider applying for membership. There were many at that time who said "No", that Ireland should recoil and would not be able to compete, that Ireland would not last and would not be able to take on membership.

The creativity, resilience and capability of our people is always there, however, when the challenge is put to them in the proper way, namely, in a political context. Domestically and internationally in our lifetime we must consider these events in such a way that we do not bring the argument down to whether a slogan on a poster is inaccurate, one way or the other. It is much deeper and more important than that and concerns the signals Ireland wants to send at this time in the aftermath of the biggest financial crisis we have seen in 70 years and the economic dislocation caused by that. A small open economy like ours has been even more greatly affected than most others. What signal do we wish to send next month? We are part of a European Union which has brought great benefits to
our country over many years and in which, objectively, everyone sees us as being one of the main beneficiaries and as having used membership more beneficially than any other country. Are we saying now that we will step back from the consensus which was painstakingly built up and negotiated? Is it in our interest to send that signal? Will it be understood that Ireland should send such a signal at this time?

Ireland is part of the euro area, a currency greater than our own which provides us with the capability to withstand the financial tsunami that hit us in the past 15 months. The European Central Bank has been pivotal to maintaining financial stability in this country in the past 12 months and will play a crucial role in the months and years ahead. Are we saying this is an obligation which is à la carte from our point of view? I do not believe for a moment the Irish people take that view. The discernment and common sense of the people is what we must look to when those who wish to make their case and, through over-enthusiasm or for whatever other reason, depart from the truth.

Let us stick to the facts. There are pros and cons in every argument but in public debate and on an issue of national importance, we owe it to the people to put to them a passionate and accurate debate that will enable them to make their final judgment themselves. That is the ultimate exercise in sovereignty for those of us who want to ensure we respect sovereignty in this republic. That is a responsibility we all have. We must not be irresponsible but responsible.

I am prepared and willing at all times to engage in debate and I recognise there is more to the debate than my side of it, or that of the "Yes" side. However, I believe that in any objective analysis, the weight of the debate for Ireland is very much in favour of a "Yes" vote when it comes to protecting and promoting our interests. That is why I am a committed European. I believe Ireland can and will come through this crisis as it has come through others. Membership of the European Union is an important means by which we can do so and we can effect our economic recovery more quickly if we have a more competitive European economy. A more competitive and efficient European economy can be achieved more quickly if we adopt a Lisbontreaty that simply seeks to make the Union fit for purpose. When one considers that in the past five years the Union has almost doubled in membership from 15 to 27 and that in the previous 20 years the number of member states increased from six to 15, there is a need to change the rules to ensure it can take on the challenges that are, in many cases, beyond the remit or certainly the geography of a nation state.
Many of the problems we must solve today are not confined within the boundaries of national jurisdictions. How do we deal with climate change? How do we bring forward sustainable development? How will Europe lead the world and be a leader in the argument for sustainability in order that we can pass on to future generations a world that can sustain itself? How do we ensure there is energy security for Europe in the future? Can Ireland do it alone at the end of the pipeline? No, we cannot. We must work with others. We must find common means by which we devise policies that help to protect our interests as well as others who are affected by these issues. That is fundamentally what this treaty is about.

Let us talk about the economy and look at how it has been constructed and has developed. The great selling point for Ireland has been to build up an entrepreneurial climate that has generated more businesses and SMEs. In addition, our foreign direct investment policy has been hugely successful and many of the front-line corporations in all major fields of industry and professional services are located here as a result. They have located here because Ireland has been a platform into the European market. However, it is not just that market. Ireland is now a platform into the far eastern and other markets as the global reach of the Irish economy has extended way beyond the boat to Holyhead. That is how much progress this country has made.

Yes, today we are experiencing and confronting difficulties, which are no less because of where we are. However, as Deputies Breen and Costello said, why should we look at this as something other than just part of the usual domestic debate? It is because it is bigger than that. It is about a long-term future for this country and how effective the organisation which is central to our prosperity will be. It is bigger than that because it will dictate the role of future Governments of whatever political composition for many years to come. The idea that it is about a reaction to the immediacy of our problems today is to fundamentally misunderstand what is at stake and why it is so important for us to view it as a matter of the national interest. In the same way as joining the EEC in 1973 was bigger than the result of the 1973 general election, the 1977 election or any other election that followed, in this instance it is about a decision by Ireland not to stand in the way of a hard-won consensus that has been developed with 26 other member states.

Those issues that were of concern to us on the last occasion have quite rightly been discussed in the Houses of the Oireachtas by the democratically elected representatives of the people, from all parties and none. We discussed the issues that affected us and what we needed to get from our
partners to try to address concerns and alleviate worries, to ensure people can see there is something bigger involved than the issues that permeated the debate on the last occasion. We decided on that practically unanimously. In fairness to the European Union, as has always been the case, its modus operandi is that it seeks to accommodate and recognise diversity and to ensure that solidarity is shown to the Irish people because we believe fundamental issues are important such as the position in the Constitution on abortion and other issues, and our policy of neutrality. Our policy of neutrality is not a policy of disengagement from the world, and never was. It is a policy consistent with our tradition of peacekeeping, with our soldiers in the blue helmet under the UN flag, and using the European Union as a regional organisation that works to the United Nations, as has been outlined here by Kofi Annan and other prominent members of the United Nations in recent years.

On that issue, the autonomy of taxation and the need for a Commissioner, we have secured the agreement of the other member states to the requests and requirements set out by the House. Having established that, which is totally in the traditions of the European Union in any event and one of the reasons it is so successful, the responsibility falls back on us to show our solidarity with the European Union and with those whose membership may be more recent who want to progress as we have and who provide for us the prospect of an increased market and increased co-operation, trade and mutual benefit, as has been our experience in respect of every enlargement of the European Union since we joined in 1973. That is why it is critically important that we say "Yes" to this treaty. When people speak of getting down to the specifics, it is terribly important that we keep that big picture in our mind in addressing these issues. Of course, I will address the specifics, but it is not down to whether it was 55% of the member states and 65% of the vote, or whether it should have been 60% of the member states and 67% of the vote. It is beyond that. In politics and in the way the European Union works, Ireland's influence in Europe has never been based on the mathematical formula deciding how many Irish people are there in the European Union, be it 2%, 1%, 0.4%, which is a ridiculous way to conduct politics. Politics is about the shared values of member states coming to the table to resolve problems on a common basis and seeking to accommodate the particular requirements of member states without affecting the coherence of the policy itself; that has been the experience of successive Governments, with successful Commissioners and Ministers at Councils of Ministers and with success at European Councils. This has been the experience of all political parties — it is not a party-political point — because there is goodwill towards Ireland. It brings me back to the basic point in my speech, that the reason Ireland has been successful is that we are constructive and engaged members of this project and if we say "No" to the Lisbon Treaty,
then we will no longer be viewed — how or on what logic could we be — as constructive and engaged members of the project but as members of the project present at the meetings.

To answer the question Senator Bradford and others raised about the Common Agricultural Policy, for example, and the idea about which Deputy Timmins spoke, there are consequences to our actions. There are consequences to all of our actions, whether in any aspect of our life and in public life, and certainly in terms of how a nation determines how it will decide an issue of this magnitude. There is the idea promulgated on the last occasion that there are not consequences, that one goes back and starts again. There are consequences, such as how we are viewed. With the mid-term review in the Common Agricultural Policy, with significant challenges presently in Irish agriculture does anyone seriously suggest that the present Minister, or any other, would be more influential on the back of a "No" vote than a "Yes" vote? Does anyone seriously suggest that the Minister for Finance attending the ECOFIN Council would be in a stronger position on the back of a "No" vote than a "Yes" vote?

I stated in my speech and, for the information of Deputy Finian McGrath, I say it out of respect for the people, that we need to be real about this. This is not an optional extra. This is something fundamental to the future of this country. I say that as Taoiseach, with the significant issues we must confront at this time. I do not want us shooting ourselves in the foot.

I respect people who voted "No" the last time. I must put my case more persuasively and better this time to try to persuade some of them across to what one might call the "Yes" aisle, but there is a obligation on us in having this debate to stick to accurate and truthful statements. On the question that there would be a minimum wage of €1.84, for example, it just is not true. There is nothing in this treaty about it at all. That is a national decision. We decide our own minimum wage in this country through the well established processes of which we are all aware. No one outside this country can determine what the minimum wage will be here. Such a determination is the responsibility of the people.

One of the great benefits of the Lisbon treaty is that the conferral of rights principle and doctrine is far more clear than was the case in previous EU treaties. The treaty specifically states what the European Union's competence is in any particular area, what the national competence is in any area and what the mixed competences are. One of the great benefits of the treaty is that it sets out, in a much clearer way than may have been the case heretofore, how the European Union works.
only powers used by the Union and its institutions are the ones conferred by member states. The argument relating to the creation of a superstate is at variance with the facts and also with the provisions of the treaty.

The Lisbon treaty was drawn up by member state governments and ensures balance is brought to the argument. With a European Union of this magnitude which has the ability to integrate so many of our affairs in this way, matters can be rather complex. However, that complexity does not take away from its importance or the centrality of what it does in the context of how we conduct our affairs in this country in a successful way or how we might rebuild confidence and bring about economic recovery.

The other point I wish to make revolves around the need to bring about such an economic recovery as soon as possible. Voting "No" would not assist us in our efforts in this regard. I am not stating this rhetorically; it is being said by those who are in a position to convey to the rest of us what is involved. I refer to those who understand the position such as persons involved in industry and who know how the decisions are taken. Regardless of whether they represent workers, management or others, they have made their point clear and it should be given the weight it deserves.

Deputy Timmins inquired about the retention of our Commissioner. Member states reached agreement on that matter in an unequivocal fashion. The Nice treaty does not provide for the prospect of 27 Commissioners. There is a commitment in the protocol that there will be one Commissioner per member state. There is no practical significance with regard to the idea of confirming or that of making suggestions. What will happen is that the Government will nominate a person to serve as Ireland's Commissioner and the European Parliament, as is its role and right under the provisions of the treaties, will accept him or her. From our point of view, there is no effective change with regard to our right to appoint a Commissioner. There is always a consultative process with the incoming President of the Commission. However, there has never been an issue in this regard and I do not expect any to arise in the future.

On voting rights, it is a double majority system. It is not a question of basing it on population, there is also the question of at least 15 member states — 55% of the total number of member states — agreeing to a proposal. In that part of the equation Ireland is the same as Germany, that is, each will have one vote. Germany's population is 20 times greater than that of Ireland. These matters all come into play when one considers the institutional balance involving the Commission, the Council and
the Parliament. For example, Ireland has 12 Members of the European Parliament. If matters in the Parliament were dealt with in a proportionate manner, Germany should have 240 MEPs. However, it only has 96. The balances are outlined in the context of the Parliament and the Council. The double majority system relating to the Council's decision-making process is part of that overall institutional balance, which has also been confirmed for Ireland in the context of there being one Commissioner per member state.

Members referred to the need to provide adequate information. It is important to point out that there is a need to avoid the provision of unnecessarily contradictory information. Both sides have a responsibility to put their case based on the facts. Neither case should be at variance with the facts. That is important but there is a genuine belief more information is available now.

Deputy Costello referred to the jobs issue which I highlighted in my opening contribution because it is important. That people, unfortunately, are unemployed in the European economy in this recession, as they are in every other part of the world, is due to the failure of the banking and financial systems which has brought about the dislocation we now see; it is not about the failure of the European Union. Because we have a European Union member states can co-operate on financial regulations and ensure we can work together to make sure the banking systems have common rules and that fair play and a level playing pitch can be established. The fact that the Union is committed to competition and open, fair and free trade means it has avoided protectionist tendencies which would have very much militated against Ireland's interests in the context of the international recession because larger economies have larger markets that would still be able to function were there protectionist trends in the Union. That has been avoided.

As a member of the European Union, we not only have access to a market but we also help to shape the rules that govern the operation of the market. That is where the success of the Union has been assured in these circumstances. The social policies devised in previous recessions helped in providing funds for training for the unemployed. Members will recall the European Social Fund grants given to all students attending many of our institutes of technology. The Union still provides significant resources for research and development which are accessed by this country and others. Assistance is provided by the Union in times of recession which, far from indicating its failure, indicates why it remains central and important to us, even in difficult times. There are difficulties
we cannot dump on the Union which has been a means by which we have overcome problems but it has not been their source.

I wish to concentrate on the electorate considering this issue as a national question. I am sure many outsiders have a view, to which they are entitled, but I do not subscribe to their way of thinking. I do not have to say much about that because I have enough positives things to say about my own point of view without worrying about them.

Deputy Flynn brought up an important issue. There were sections of the committee who were less enthusiastic than others the last time and various points of view were expressed that affected this. With regard to women, the issue concerns the commitment to ensure non-discrimination. I have referred to the early articles of the treaty which set out its aims. People will be comfortable with them in the context of women's rights and how we have been able to avoid discrimination in the workplace, etc. The modern corpus of labour and employment law originates from the European Union, as does much of that which is progressive in our social legislation. Regulations governing health and safety in the workplace, terms and conditions of employment and adequate maternity and other leave provisions for those who leave the workplace temporarily resulted from progressive legislative proposals implemented in Ireland as a result of discussions at European level where we had our say and were able to work with others to achieve a greater good.

Were we to pass the treaty an important issue in terms of where we go from here concerns the narrative of European politics in domestic politics. We have been far too complacent and unimaginative about how we incorporate what happens in the European Union into domestic politics in a manner that is relevant to the people. Those of us who are practitioners in politics know, through our job, in terms of what comes through the Dáil, committees, Departments or Ministries and so on, that the European Union has a daily influence on what happens here in public affairs. It is not something that is presented in the tome of a treaty once every ten years. Everything we do in this country, in the preparation of legislation, our law-making and the impositions we place on sectors of the community, is influenced by or originates in the European Union. We must find a way to ensure politics integrates these agendas far more easily. We must broaden the context in which people understand and discuss our problems. Too often we consider matters purely in the national rather than the wider context in which many issues are developing and must be addressed. That is a matter which requires this generation of politicians to address issues, on an all-party basis, far more imaginatively than before. For a lot of reasons, there are views about the European Union
which are prominent in societies that do not accurately portray what the European Union is about. While we should not be uncritical, we need to avoid thinking the European Union is a malign force. It is a benign force in world politics and, in many respects, a benign force in so far as this country is concerned. This is an issue we need to address.

Deputy Breen asked what would happen if the treaty was rejected. If it is rejected, it cannot be ratified and therefore become a corpus of European law. What will happen then is the relevant question. One can only speculate in this regard, as there is no definitive answer. What we do know with a degree of certainty is that Ireland's place in that debate will be lessened and that its interests will not be as well protected. I cannot state with accuracy any more than that at this point. While I am not suggesting the question put by Deputy Breen was a rhetorical one, in response I ask why we would put ourselves in that position. What would be in it for Ireland? Why should Ireland stand aside from the consensus? What benefit would we derive from rejection of the treaty?

There are those who suggest rejection of the treaty would mean a new treaty could be drawn up. When we went back to our colleagues in the European Union, they asked, short of renegotiating the treaty, what they could do to assist us. They did not want to reopen the discussion to 27 national agendas. One is not inclined, having engaged in long negotiations and worked out a compromise, to reopen the issue again, as people might change positions. What have we to fear from the Lisbon treaty, given that the fears and concerns expressed have been addressed? What else is there that would cause fear or concern?

It is interesting to note that the "No" side is not revisiting the issues addressed precisely for that reason. It is not possible to raise contradictory fears on these matters. We are now hearing for the first time of concerns in regard to a reduction in the minimum wage to €1.84, an issue I do not recall being raised the last time. This is a new one and I suspect there will be a few more in the weeks leading up to the referendum.

There are other reasons those on the "No" side may put forward to which I do not subscribe. We need to respect the people by expressing views that are grounded on the facts and reality. We do not show much respect for the sovereignty of the people if we conduct a public debate of this importance in any other way. I do not wish to labour that point but there are many positive reasons we want to vote "Yes" and it is on that we are concentrating. However, if something is gaining
traction because of a poster on a pole somewhere, we must comment on it if it is not correct and there is no basis to it.

Deputy Seán Power mentioned the issue of the content of the treaty. There is more information available and more access to information. The European Commission and Commissioner Wallström have also brought forward a good document.

With regard to workers, the Charter of Fundamental Rights brings together the rights which have been established in European law and gives legal effect to them in a formal way. In the evolution of European Union development representatives of workers will always seek further protections and improvements. That is the nature of democratic politics. However, we can say with certainty that ascribing a legal status to those rights in this treaty is an improvement on where things stood previously. From the point of view of all those on that side of the argument, no one suggests the treaty represents the ultimate nirvana for workers' rights, but it is a far better position. One should not be absolutist. Even if every issue one is still struggling to achieve has not been achieved in the treaty, this does not mean it is a bad treaty. It is an advancement on where we were before. The fact the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and others support it within that context is fine by me. The bottom line is they support a "Yes" vote for the treaty.

The first Ministry I had the privilege to hold was labour and I recall the working time directive going through at European level. Such advances have come year on year over time. The forum in which such advances can be developed is the European Union. A "Yes" vote is clearly the best vote for workers, not only in terms of making the economy more competitive but because of the good track record of social protection in the corpus of European law, a corpus of law available to all European citizens, including Irish citizens, in the future.

I have dealt with the issue of the Commissioner as referred to by Senator Quinn. There is no practical difference involved in that semantic argument. I know the argument is considered to have substance by some and it warrants a reply, but my honest view is that the capacity of this country to nominate its Commissioner under the new arrangements is not an issue of substance about which we need worry.

Deputy Treacy raised the issue of the Common Agricultural Policy. I mentioned that it escapes me how in practical and political terms voting "No" would strengthen Ireland's negotiating position. A
"Yes" vote is imperative and the current difficulties reinforce rather than dilute this. The Deputy also asked about the instrument of ratification. If we vote "Yes" to the treaty the agreement we reached with our Heads of State and Government in June will be lodged as an international agreement in the United Nations. That is a further reinforcement of the legal validity of what has been achieved. The decision at the European Council meeting in June also has legal merit, but the fact there is a commitment and undertaking to attach it as a protocol to a future treaty makes legally watertight the argument as to its validity and substance.

Senator Hanafin has outlined clearly the important role the ECB has played on an ongoing basis in recent times. However, we are a member of the euro zone. We have taken on that obligation. It provides us with a wider zone of stability than would have been the case were we relying on our own currency. One can only speculate what might have happened were we not in the euro zone at a certain point. That further reinforces how important it is for Ireland to continue to be a very active member of the European Union. We need to influence that area of policy as others in a very important way.

Deputy Creighton spoke about the context in which some of the issues were raised about the minimum wage and the cost of borrowing, among others. There is absolutely no room for complacency in the campaign. We have a big job of work to do in the coming weeks. I have great faith and belief in the discernment and common sense of the Irish people. Once we do our job of putting the case accurately and with passion and clarity, then people will see where the balance of advantage lies. I do not put my case on the basis of being dismissive of other people's views. I put my case on the basis that I am convinced that the balance of advantage for the country is in a "Yes" vote. To portray that as scaremongering or as anything other than a democratic politician putting the position as accurately as he can does not reflect the motivation behind our position on that. This is the first time I have spoken to a "don't know", Deputy Finian McGrath.

**Deputy Finian McGrath**

There are 25% of us out there.

**The Taoiseach**
The Deputy looks far better than he did when he was on the "No" side. It must be the haircut. There are people who are undecided and that is a very important point to make. We are in the midst of a campaign. There are people on both sides of the argument who are quite convinced of their arguments. However, we need to look to those who have not yet made up their minds and put our case in a respectful but forceful way so that we rebut any effectiveness that may reside on the other side of the argument as it is being put.

Regarding the European Defence Agency, if one considers the protocol and what we achieved in June, we cleared up much of that argumentation. There is no obligation on Ireland to increase its defence expenditure in this area. It does not affect the right of Ireland or any other member state to determine the nature and volume of its defence and security expenditure and the nature of its defence capabilities. It is also a matter for each member state to decide in accordance with the provisions of the treaty whether to participate in permanent structural co-operation or the European Defence Agency. Nothing in this section affects or prejudices the position or policy of any other member state on security and defence.

The great benefit of what was achieved in June in practical terms is that it ends the Tweedledum and Tweedledee arguments of he says this and the other says the opposite. The protocols make clear what those who sign the treaty mean by what is in the treaty. The member states are bringing clarity to those issues thereby addressing interpretations that were brought to the provisions during the last debate which were contradictory, sowed confusion and left people wondering what way to go on this. That has been clarified on the basis that the guarantees that have been given in all these areas are very clear.

On taxation, nothing in the treaty makes any change of any kind to the extent or operation of the competence of the European Union on taxation; therefore, it is not an issue. We have already discussed security and defence. As we go down through the other ones it is the same. On the solemn declaration on workers' rights and social policy, while of course it is a solemn declaration it is a very strong political signal by all member states of the European Union as to what their view of the treaty is in these areas and the importance they attach to it. The inclusion of the social clause is also important. All of these areas are consistent with what the experience of the European Union has been. If one examines the aims and objectives of the treaty, one will see that it refers to a social market economy, combating social exclusion and all the issues that would be regarded as
progressive sentiments in areas of social protection, such as dignity for workers and families in the workplace.

When Senator Mullen spoke as Gaeilge, he also made a point regarding the guarantees. The fact of the matter is that the Lisbon treaty was not renegotiable. The guarantees we have obtained confirm that there is nothing in the Lisbon treaty that attributes legal status to the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Nothing in the provisions of the treaty regarding freedom, security and justice affects in any way the scope and applicability of the protection of the right to life in Articles 43.1, 43.2 and 43.3 of the Constitution; the protection of the family in Article 41 of the Constitution; and the protection of certain rights in respect of education in Article 42 of the Constitution and elsewhere. It has been confirmed that these are matters for our own Supreme Court — for our jurisdictional decision. That these are matters which have been set out by our own people is a position that is respected.

I emphasise that our EU partners have no interest in interfering with Ireland's position on these issues. In all of my discussions and negotiations, no one has ever asked me to spell out the basis on which this or that came about. When the Oireachtas decided that certain issues needed to be addressed, we proceeded to engage with the Union and with our legal experts. In my opinion, the guarantees that emerged from that process are in full compliance with what was sought by the Oireachtas. That had to be done in a way that did not impinge on the constitutional provisions of other member states. A great deal of legal work and discussion needed to be done up to and during the meeting of the European Council. It often works out that way. During that process, it became apparent that Ireland's EU colleagues strongly wished to ensure that Ireland could find itself in a position to hold a new referendum and to approve the treaty. The other member states have a strong wish for Ireland to be part of what is emerging in the European Union. They want Ireland to be there. Our membership of the Union is valued. We have to step up to the mark by making sure we can accommodate others. We have nothing to fear.

We need to rediscover some of the sense of adventure — the can-do approach — that was at the heart of our initial involvement in the European project. Even in the midst of a recession, we are in a far stronger economic position than we were when people of a previous political generation were determined to move in a certain direction and face certain challenges. Those people understood the economic and social benefits to Ireland of its membership of the European Union. They appreciated that it was also a question of opening up Ireland's sense of where it was in the world in order that its
citizens realised they could be part of something bigger than themselves. They helped us to understand we did not have to think we were constrained by our history. They showed us we could make our own history. In recent years we have been able to agree new political arrangements on the island of Ireland. This country is now making its own history. As a divided Europe becomes united, we should be prepared to see Europe as our natural home. I see Europe as our natural home. I genuinely believe this country's progress will be determined by the quality of its relationship with the European Union, which plays a wider role in the wider world, in turn. Ireland's voice is far greater as part of this organisation or enterprise, which comes with many benefits, than it would be if we were on our own. That is my genuine and honest belief. I am absolutely convinced that it is the case. During this debate we need to convey to the people that it is not just a question of Article 42.3 or Article 17.7. While clarification can be provided on such matters, the issue is much bigger than this.

At this difficult time for the country we need to enthusiastically move forward by saying, "Yes, we are part of the European Union and want to continue to influence what happens in it." What happens in the European Union affects us fundamentally — hourly, daily and weekly — in everything we do. In the world in which we live things affect us and we can either shape and take control of events or be controlled by them. The European Union is the best mechanism yet devised for a region to pool its resources and deal with the challenges of our time. That is the reason we need to vote "Yes".

Chairman

Does the Minister wish to comment?

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin)

After the Taoiseach’s tour de force, it would be superfluous to do so.

Chairman

I thank the Taoiseach, the Minister and the Minister of State for coming before the joint committee and compliment them on their even-handed and objective presentation. I also thank members for
their constructive and objective words and welcome the views expressed by colleagues who are not members of the joint committee.

Deputy Finian McGrath referred to the role of the European Union in humanitarian issues and overseas development. It goes without saying the Union has been to the forefront in providing development aid and addressing poverty and many other humanitarian issues both in Europe and across the globe. It will continue to perform this role.

Senator Bradford made a good point when he referred to the hard left. The hard right and hard left have converged in opposition to the Lisbon treaty, as they did on various issues at different times in European history. A short study of European history will show that when such convergence occurred, it was not to the benefit of the people of Europe. We should bear this in mind.

It has been a privilege to meet individuals such as the former mayor of Strasbourg, Mr. Pierre Pflimlin, whose family were killed at the end of the Second World War and who is totally committed to the concepts outlined by the Taoiseach, and Mr. Altiero Spinelli, an Italian communist who spent most of the Second World War imprisoned for his views. Nothing that either man has said is in conflict with the sentiments expressed by the Taoiseach and members today. This should be a lesson to all of us. We must examine the past to try to ensure it has a positive influence on the future. I also thank members of the diplomatic corps and media for their attendance.
Speaking at the Labour Party campaign meeting for a ‘Yes' vote in the forthcoming Referendum on the Lisbon Treaty in Raphoe, Co. Donegal, Deputy Joe Costello said that he was delighted to be attending the campaign meeting with Frank McBrearty the newly elected Labour Councillor. "Frank is a man of great integrity who has had to fight against the odds to vindicate his rights. We are particularly proud to have Frank in the Labour Party and representing the Labour Party. The Labour Party is fully committed to the European Union and to ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. Essentially the Lisbon Treaty is a reform Treaty which seeks to improve the working of the European institutions, make them more transparent, more accountable and more democratic. Membership of the European Union has been beneficial to Ireland to date. The Institutes of Technology that contribute so much to third level education in Donegal and Sligo were funded with European Union money, as was the necklace of Regional Colleges and Institutes of Technology that were built all over the country in the 1970's and 1980's. They, above all, supplied the technology graduates that produced the Celtic Tiger.

The Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Market enabled Irish farmers to access new markets with agricultural goods and obtain better prices. Until 1972 British policy of cheap food from Ireland for its industrial workers beggared Irish farming, as there was no alternative market. Now over 75% of Ireland's €8.2 billion agri-food exports are sold into the European Single Market. The EU initiated and part funds the REPS Programme which provides a valuable source of income to thousands of small and medium farmers. But it also ensures that farming is carried out to the highest environmental standards. I would strongly urge the Government to give its full support to the REPS Programme and to make the part funding of the programme which is the Government's responsibility available for future programmes.

Above all the EU Single Farm payment contributes almost 60% of net national farm income. But Europe is not all about colleges and agriculture. The European Union has contributed hundreds of millions as part of the Good Friday Agreement that brought peace to this island for the first time in centuries. It was John Hume who used the principle of the EU, the partnership of 27 different countries, to broaden people's thinking on the possibilities of a partnership on the island of Ireland.
He famously said that: «the European Union was the best peace process the world has ever known». Until we joined the European Union in 1973, the place for Irish women was quite literally in the home. There existed a marriage ban on women working in the civil and public service. The message was: ‘get married and give up your job’. In 1973 the marriage ban was lifted and in 1974 equal pay for equal work was conceded by the Irish Government. Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome provided for equal pay for equal work for men and women. Other socially desirable legislation followed on from Europe over the intervening years. The Trade Union Group, Charter, which launched its campaign for a ‘Yes’ vote last week has estimated that over 90% of all employment protections in the workplace which are now in Irish domestic law originated in the European Union.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights builds on the existing social agenda. It is a legally binding statement of the body of rights to be enjoyed by the citizens of Europe. Those rights cover the gamut of human endeavour – dignity, freedoms, equality, solidarity, citizens' rights and justice. The founding fathers of the Labour Party James Connolly and James Larkin would be proud to sign up to such a charter and such a partnership of equal, sovereign states. SIPTU, by far the largest Trade Union in the country recently came out in favour of the Lisbon Treaty. Last year SIPTU advocated a ‘No' vote in "the hope of persuading the Government to legislate for an entitlement to collective bargaining" which SIPTU had been seeking since their establishment 100 years ago. On this occasion SIPTU have switched their attention from the Government to the Charter of Fundamental Rights "Our legal advice is that, while it is by no means straightforward, the prospects of any legislation for it (the right to participate in collective bargaining) would be enhanced by the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which is an integral part of the Treaty. Accordingly, and also in view of the Labour Party's clear statement on collective bargaining, we believe the balance of advantage for working people and their families rests with ratification of the Treaty. The Charter Group of Unions and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions are also supporting the Lisbon Treaty. John Monks, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) which represents the unions of the Member States at EU level has stated that: "There is no conditionality whatsoever in the ETUC's support for the Lisbon Treaty. Also the Swedish and Finnish Trade Union Confederations, whom I visited in the course of the summer to tease out the implications of the Laval and Viking cases, made it quite clear to me and others that they were 100% supportive of the Lisbon Treaty and wanted us to convey that message to the Irish electorate. The assertions by those advocating a ‘No' vote that Europe has been bad for workers' rights and that the Lisbon Treaty is also bad is completely without substance. There is nothing in the Lisbon Treaty which diminishes in any way.
the existing entitlements of the Irish people. Concerns expressed in the first Referendum last year were addressed. There are now legally binding guarantees to ensure that issues like taxation, neutrality, abortion, education and the family remain entirely in our own hands for us to decide on as and when we choose. We are determined to play our part in ensuring that Ireland stays fully engaged with Europe and that we continue to work with our EU colleagues for the benefit of our country and our people.


Speaking at the Galway West Labour Party's launch calling for a YES vote on the Lisbon Treaty, Party President Michael D Higgins urged that the referendum be passed on 2 October. The truth is: workers' rights are being advanced. Deputy Higgins said:

Voting yes in the referendum will establish the European Charter of Human Rights as primary EU law for the first time. This would give a wide range of human and civil rights, including workplace rights and the right to collective bargaining and collective action, the same legal status as existing EU laws and treaties governing internal trade and the free market. The struggle for changes in labour law in our own country will still remain but the Charter will be a valuable extra tool in interpreting European law in Europe and Ireland. It is unqualified and is a real gain. Lisbon improves the rights, and the prospects for further improving the rights, of workers. In addition, the 'solemn declaration on workers' rights and social policy' adopted by a recent European Council is regarded by European trade unionists as an important step forward in the battle for social Europe.

Voting yes is voting yes for a more democratic Europe. Saying yes in the referendum is saying yes to empowering national Parliaments within the decision making structure of the European Union. If the treaty is passed, national Parliaments will have the opportunity to see Commission proposals before they are adopted. If one third of Parliaments disagree with a given proposal, amendments can, and will, be made, and, if half the Parliaments disagree, the proposal can and will be withdrawn.
Lisbon would, further, empowers citizens all across Europe to join together in a ‘citizens’ initiative'-a new mechanism whereby one million people- out of an overall population of over 500 million- can petition the European Commission if they feel EU policy should be altered.

It is in Europe that we can have most influence on issues such as climate change. Saying yes in the referendum is the most effective way of dealing with climate change. On such issues, the impact of which go beyond national borders, an agreed approach with set aims and targets must be fostered. This challenge can simply not be met by individual countries acting in isolation.

Ireland has nothing to fear from the Lisbon Treaty. This referendum is important for Europe's future, because it strengthens the European Union, giving the EU the chance to act as a genuine global counterweight to the USA in what has become a unipolar world. But it is, just as much, in our interests. A yes vote on Lisbon keeps us at the heart of the European project. It helps to further construct a Europe which would be a strong body on the international stage at a time when this is vital. It further democratises that project at an important time of its own history. It continues to offer us complete access to a common market the size of which was almost unimaginable just one generation ago.

We have nothing to fear from the European Union. It has been an agent for progressive change and integration ever since we joined it. It has helped Ireland take its rightful place at the heart of Europe and has helped change the political and social landscape here.

Similarly we have nothing to fear from the Lisbon Treaty. A yes vote copperfastens our position in Europe and distances us from the influence of self-interested and dangerous groupings like the United Kingdom Independence Party as well as segments of the Conservative Party in Great Britain. It would show us continuing to be a confident progressive society which cannot be held back by the forces of conservatism or the politics of fear.

The European Union has been a positive influence on social policy in Ireland. In social legislation, also, the EU had has a highly positive influence. Be it in gay rights, environmental protection laws, laws seeking to end any view of women as second class citizens as regards their pay- the drive towards these hugely progressive ideas came from European partnership.
At a time of concern about the future, the position in which very many of us find ourselves at the moment, it is perhaps useful to consider some of the small, easily overlooked, but very real benefits which membership of the EU has given us. We have the ability to live, and work, in 27 countries; Women have the right to equal pay as well as transformed levels of maternity leave; Students can study all across Europe, availing of the Erasmus scheme; and additionally, their qualifications are recognised all across the EU; there are far lower mobile phone roaming charges, an EU-wide common level of consumer rights, as well, of course, as the same currency in 16 countries which cuts costs when travelling as well as making it less likely that one might be ripped off while abroad. Perhaps most importantly at the current time, membership of the EU allows us access to the EU's stimulus package as well as full access in which to trade to 26 other economies; and the possibility of European loans for small businesses.

The concerns- real and mythical- which worried voters have been addressed. Those who call for a no vote do so for a variety of reasons - spurious, dishonest, or misguided. There are groups who have been to the forefront of the no campaign whose campaigns are based, whether deliberately or not, on untruths and misrepresentations. During the last referendum, it was established that there were several clear reasons for the no vote- the loss of a commissioner, the threat of conscription, the threat of abortion, and the threat of the setting of Irish tax rates being taken out of our hands. Over the past year, the ration of one commissioner per member state has been retained. In a 27 state European Union, there will be 27 commissioners. As to the other three issues: they were never, at any stage, true.

In ‘Lisbon 2’, however, in a belt and braces approach, it has been underlined, again, by way of special addition to the text of the Treaty, that the passing of Lisbon will not result in conscription to any notional European army; That the issue of abortion in Ireland is a matter for the Irish people only and nobody outside of Ireland has the power to tell us whether or not we should change our laws in this regard; And that Irish tax rates remain our own business too. Voting yes means the following are legally guaranteed:
- Each state retains a commissioner
- It has been confirmed that Ireland, and Ireland alone, sets Irish tax rates
- Irish neutrality will, as has been the case up to now, be respected by the rest of the EU. There have been dishonest attempts to claim that Lisbon introduces conscription. This is not true.
- Ireland's position on abortion remains unchanged, and the EU has no competency to change this.
- The passing of the Declaration on Workers' Rights will ensure the protection of workers' rights as well as public services.

It is regrettable that these untruths have been spread, but it is, sadly, a fact. The current campaign for a yes vote must clear up the confusion which has - quite intentionally- been created by some of those advocating a no vote. The amount of these disingenuous tactics in obfuscation have led to a fear of 'Europe' and a 'them and us' view whereby a nebulous European elite is seeking to impose on the Irish people an inflexible version of the future, one in which Irish power is sidelined and the Irish voice marginalised. Nothing is further from the truth. The EU is an exercise in partnership and cooperation, and the Lisbon Treaty is the result of a consultation, a discussion, and a consensus between people from all across Europe, from those on the left as well as the right, those in government as well as in opposition, dating back more than eight years. Now is not the time to throw all of this away. A 'yes' vote on the 2 October is in Ireland's interests. I will be voting yes, and urge you to do likewise.


Speaking in Wicklow at the launch of the Labour Party campaign for a ‘Yes' vote in the forthcoming Referendum on the Lisbon Treaty in Ireland East, Deputy Joe Costello said that he was "delighted to be attending the launch with Nessa Childers, our new MEP in my capacity as Director of Elections for the Labour Party. » The Labour Party is fully committed to the European Union and to ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. Essentially the Lisbon Treaty is a reform Treaty which seeks to improve the working of the European institutions, make them more transparent, more accountable and more democratic. Membership of the European Union has been beneficial to Ireland to date.

As I drove here this afternoon along a modern highway from Dublin and Waterford, I thought of the approximately 1,000 miles of modern motor way that the EU has funded in Ireland. Those roads would not be there if Ireland was not a member of the European Union. The Institute of Technology and the Institutes of Education that contribute so much to third level education in Carlow and Bray were funded with European Union money, as was the necklace of Regional Colleges and Institutes
of Technology that were built all over the country in the 1970's and 1980's. They, above all, supplied the technology graduates that produced the Celtic Tiger.

The Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Market enabled Irish farmers to access new markets with agricultural goods and obtain better prices. Until 1972 British policy of cheap food from Ireland, New Zealand and Australia, for its industrial workers beggared Irish farming, as there was no alternative market. Now over 75% of Ireland's €8.2 billion agri-food exports are sold within EU countries.

The European Union has part funded afforestation programmes which are eminently suitable for the Wicklow area. It initiated and part funds the REP Programme which provides a valuable source of income to thousands of smaller farmers. But it also ensures that farming is carried out to the highest environmental standards. I would strongly urge the Government to give its full support to the REPS Programme and to make the part funding of the programme which is the Government's responsibility available for future programmes. Above all the EU Single Farm payment contributes almost 60% of net national farm income.

But Europe is not all about roads and agriculture. The European Union has contributed hundreds of millions as part of the Good Friday Agreement that brought peace to this island for the first time in centuries. It was John Hume who used the principle of the EU, the partnership of 27 different countries, to broaden people's thinking on the possibilities of a partnership on the island of Ireland. He famously said that "the European Union was the best peace process the world has ever known ». Until we joined the European Union in 1973, the place for Irish women was quite literally in the home. There existed a marriage ban on women working in the civil and public service. The message was: "get married and give up your job". In 1973 the marriage ban was lifted and in 1974 equal pay for equal work was conceded by the Irish Government. Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome provided for equal pay for equal work for men and women. Other socially desirable legislation followed on from Europe over the intervening years. The Trade Union Group, Charter, which launched its campaign for a ‘Yes' vote has estimated that over 90% of all employment protections in the workplace which are now in Irish domestic law originated in the European Union. The Charter of Fundamental Rights builds on the existing social agenda. It is a legally binding statement of the body of rights to be enjoyed by the citizens of Europe. Those rights cover the gamut of human endeavour – dignity, freedoms, equality, solidarity, citizens' rights and justice.
The founding fathers of the Labour Party James Connolly and James Larkin would be proud to sign up to such a charter and such a partnership of equal, sovereign states. There is nothing in the Lisbon Treaty which diminishes in any way the existing entitlements of the Irish people. Concerns expressed in the first Referendum last year were addressed. There are now legally binding guarantees to ensure that issues like taxation, neutrality, abortion, education and the family remain entirely in our own hands for us to decide on as and when we choose.

As Director of Elections my primary responsibility has been to draw up a plan of campaign for the Labour Party and ensure that it is resourced and implemented. It has long been the view of the Labour Party that the standard, party political, easy-going attitude to the conduct of a Referendum is in urgent need of overhaul and a new template is needed. The best way to conduct an effective Referendum we believe is to treat it as an election. The key to a good election campaign is to mobilise the party members and supporters, and get them knocking on doors, meeting people face to face and asking them directly for their vote. That is what the Labour Party will do for the month of September in every town, city and county in Ireland.

The campaign will be co-ordinated regionally by our three MEPS, Nessa Childers, Alan Kelly and Proinsias De Rossa in Leinster, Munster and Dublin, and our candidate for the North-West, Susan O’Keeffe, in Connaught. Separate launches of the regional campaigns are taking place in Wicklow, Sligo, Limerick, and Dublin. The MEPs are holding a series of town hall meetings with TDs and Senators in their constituencies throughout the month of September and will be contacting local media about these. TDs, Senators and Councillors will distribute leaflets and will canvass door to door with generic and personalised literature. At constituency and local level the Labour Party will co-operate with other parties and organisations campaigning for a ‘Yes’ vote to ensure that maximum canvassing of the electorate takes place. Labour Women, Labour Youth, Labour Lawyers and LGBT sections of the Labour Party will be conducting their own campaigns and targeting the relevant sections of the community. Labour Women in particular are playing a significant role in the campaign. They will be holding their own press launch next week and their first public meeting is with Margot Wallstrom, the Vice-President of the European Commission as their guest today. We are also conducting an online campaign. We have established a stand-alone website entitled: Labour for Europe.ie. An online team of volunteers is in place to maintain the website and to provide accurate information for the public on the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty. They will answer questions, monitor political sites, participate in social networking sites and conduct blogging. There
will be live video streaming of our town hall meetings and other regional events and we will post regular video clips on YouTube. We expect to spend in the region of €100,000 on leaflets, posters and billboards with a similar sum being provided through our three MEPs. This is despite our heavy expenditure on the Local, European and two by-elections in June and a likely general election within the next 12 months. It is an indication of the importance which we attach to having the Lisbon Treaty ratified. In conclusion, we are determined to conduct a vigorous and innovative campaign between now and the 2nd October. We will treat the campaign as an election campaign; we will canvass our constituents for a ‘Yes' vote as though we were seeking their vote for the election of our candidates in a local, Dáil or European election. We are determined to play our part in ensuring that Ireland stays fully engaged with Europe and that we continue to work with our EU colleagues for the benefit of our country and our people.

4 septembre 2009 - Nessa Childers says Irish exporters can only benefit from re-structured EU under Lisbon - Speaking at Irish Exporters’ Association event ‘Export Europe Day’ in Rosslare - (https://www.labour.ie/news/2009/09/04/childers-says-irish-exporters-can-only-benefit-from-rose/)

As this nation forges its way through a time of considerable crisis, we are beset with conflicting advice and apportionments of blame. Not much of this is going to get us anywhere. The simple truth is that it is precisely the subject matter of today's meeting that will haul Ireland back into the black. That is, trade with the external world. Exports. What ever boosts exports enriches Ireland. This small trading country exports over 80% of what it produces. It is very largely that trade which 'pays the light bill' for all the people of this country. Our taxes and consequently our public services are reliant on the success of you here in this room. We exported about €87 billion worth of goods in 2008 and €67 billion worth in services. It is not just the quantity that is impressive, it is the geographic spread. In the 1960s, about half of what we exported was to the UK while it is now at about 18%. Broadly, anything that makes it easier for you to trade successfully is likely to contribute to our prosperity, benefiting us economically and potentially socially. So, looking at public policy through that lens, let us share thoughts on what needs to be done.

Over the last decade, Ireland got onto a vicious circle. We allowed costs to drift upwards. As wages went up, rents went up, as did business costs such as energy, transport, waste and local authority charges. As these went up, then wages rose to compensate for them. The effect was that Ireland
became less and less competitive. Our economic growth became more and more dependent on construction and consumer spending. To anyone with an ounce of sense, this was unsustainable. Only by trading successfully with the wider world can we have sustainable growth. The right thing to do now is to do everything we can to reduce costs. We should do this not because of the sins of the past but because of what it may hold out for us in the future. We did it from 1987 to the mid 1990s. We can do it again. We will begin to correct our finances with more focus and verve when we treat the country as a trading entity and when we behave accordingly. It would of course be easier for a government to mobilise the necessary public support if it could address the past truthfully. At this point, I would like to say that, like any port, Rosslare Europort is only as good as an exporter or tourist's ability to get to it safely and efficiently. It is worth saying at this stage that we must always be on the look out for ways in which we can improve access to this crucial facility to maintain Rosslare's position as a port of choice for business. The enhancement of the rail link for example, constant road improvements in and around the port itself and on the N25 and N11 and the by-passing of New Ross and Enniscorthy are just some of the critical infrastructural improvements we need to see happen in the interests of Rosslare's future as a thriving port and place in which to do business.

Ireland thrives on free trade. The second thought is that Ireland has consistently performed on the world stage. As we pulled out of economic isolation in the late 1950s, we have risen to the challenge as our market place expanded. The last two decades have seen the earth become more and more like a global trading house, with vast populations entering the stage to trade goods with us, populations who had been hidden behind political and trade walls for centuries. So, when we see China and other great nations competing with us, we should not see this as a threat. Free trade is a voluntary exchange of goods in which all can benefit. It is very much easier for us to compete on the world stage if we do so as an integral part of a major trading block. It is even easier to do so if that trading bloc – the European Union – is restructured to allow it to be more competent on the world stage. Of course there is also the matter of exports to our EU partners – at present about 60% of goods and services are to the EU 27 with about 35% to 40% within the eurozone. So, my second thought is that the power house of Irish prosperity – Ireland's exporters – can only benefit if we join the other 26 EU states in saying 'yes' to the Lisbon Reform Treaty.

Solidarity. My third thought is this. Particularly at this time of crisis, we need a stronger degree of solidarity with each other. Like so many of you here, I spent most of my life managing my own
small business with nothing between me and the breadline other than my capacity to sell a service. It was all too tempting to look in a disparaging way at the very many people in our society who appear to have much greater security. We cannot afford this type of division. The public service and those in protected sectors need you as exporters if they are to be funded. On the other hand, you as entrepreneurs - and any other private businesses – if we are to be entirely honest – need the public service. We all just need to be good at what we do.

We may debate about how we might share our resources in more equitable ways. This is a value based discussion. We should at least start from a position that will ensure we have such resources. This is a fact-based discussion. So, again, many thanks for organising this exchange of ideas. In short, I suggest that Ireland will sink or swim to the extent that we are successful international traders. We should therefore
- see the core of economic policy through the lens of what will boost exports;
- continue to do all we can to continue to break down trade barriers, to enter the international fray with Ireland strong in the EU and the EU strong in the world;
- in economic matters return to the hard economic reality of common sense but we should keep some of our energies free to explore how to strengthen the sense of solidarity which would give us the sort of sense of community that makes life more enjoyable and worthwhile.

As I embark on what is a new career for me, I would like each one of you to feel you can contact me if there is any way in which I can assist you or indeed even like today to share ideas.

Thank you.


Speaking at the launch of the Labour Party campaign for a ‘Yes’ vote in the forthcoming Referendum in the North West of Ireland on the Lisbon Treaty, Deputy Joe Costello said that he was delighted as a native of Sligo to be attending the launch in his capacity as Director of Elections for the Labour Party.
The Labour Party is fully committed to the European Union and to ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. Essentially the Lisbon Treaty is a reform Treaty which seeks to improve the working of the European institutions, make them more transparent, more accountable and more democratic. Membership of the European Union has been beneficial to Ireland to date. As I drove here this afternoon along a modern highway from Dublin I remembered the bad road that I had travelled so often in my youth. That road would not be there if Ireland was not a member of the European Union. The Institute of Technology which contributes so much to third level education in Sligo was built with European Union money, as was the necklace of Regional Colleges and Institutes of Technology that were built all over the country in the 1970's and 1980's. They above all supplied the technology graduates that produced the Celtic Tiger. The Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Market enabled Irish farmers to access new markets with agricultural goods and obtain better prices. Until 1972 British policy of cheap food from Ireland, New Zealand and Australia, for its industrial workers beggared Irish farming, as there was no alternative market. The European Union has put extra money into border areas like Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal and has contributed hundreds of millions as part of the Good Friday Agreement that brought peace to this island for the first time in centuries. The European Union has part funded afforestation programmes which are eminently suitable for the West of Ireland. It initiated and part funds the REP Programme which provides a valuable source of income to thousands of smaller farmers. But it also ensures that farming is carried out to the highest environmental standards. I would strongly urge the Government to give its full support to the REPS Programme and to make the funding part of the programme which is the Government's responsibility available for future programmes.

But Europe is not all about roads and agriculture. Until we joined the European Union in 1973, the place for Irish women was quite literally in the home. There existed a marriage ban on women working in the civil and public service. The message was get married and give up your job. In 1973 the marriage ban was lifted and in 1974 equal pay for equal work was conceded by the Irish Government. Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome provided for equal pay for equal work for men and women. Other socially desirable legislation followed on from Europe over the intervening years. The Trade Union Group, Charter, which launched its campaign for a ‘Yes' vote yesterday has estimated that over 90% of all employment protections in the workplace which are now in Irish domestic law originated in the European Union. The Charter of Fundamental Rights builds on the existing social agenda.
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Today I spent a number of hours meeting people on the streets of Nenagh and Roscrea to discuss the importance of voting Yes to the upcoming Lisbon Treaty referendum. As part of the Yes to Lisbon campaign, other well known political figures such as former Taoiseach Garret Fitzgerald and Pat Cox, Director of the Ireland for Europe Campaign and former President of the European Parliament were also in the North Tipperary region. An overall strong cross-party representation went to show just how important a Yes vote really is for Ireland. Personally I found the time spent talking to local people from around North Tipperary to be hugely beneficial. There are a lot of people out there who are angry and hurt by the performance of the current government. Meeting these people on an informal level made this fact even more evident than it already was. Although I can fully identify with how angry people are with current Government, I asked people to distinguish between EU policy and Government policy. After all, Europe is Ireland’s key to securing future prosperity and aiding economic recovery. I can understand that some elements of the Lisbon Treaty may seem confusing and complex and I found that meeting people today on a one-to-one basis helped to clear many of the doubts and fears that some people have been feeling towards voting. The number of
benefits that voting Yes to the treaty can bring to Ireland are simply endless. Areas such as economic recovery, employment, worker’s rights, public services and climate change can all be improved by voting Yes. This is the message I brought to people in Nenagh and Roscrea today and I trust that they will do the right thing on October 2nd and vote Yes for Ireland’s future. As MEP for Munster I will do absolutely everything in my power to improve job creation in Ireland South and people can have no doubt that I will seeking the best possible deal for Munster. If anyone does want to talk to me about their concerns on the Lisbon Treaty, don’t hesitate to give me a shout on 087 6792859 and I’ll do my best to help.


Speaking at the Europe for Ireland Launch in Brussels Alan Kelly MEP said: "Seeing the Lisbon Treaty ratified in Ireland is going to be the mother of all political battles. Given the level of public anger at the government at the moment it is hard to get people to think positive about anything. However with a bit of grit, steel and determination from the 'Yes' Side - this is a battle worth fighting and worth winning. It will be up to every political party, every civic society group and just about any pro-European you can get your hands on to knock on doors, distribute leaflets and get talking to people. The majority of voters make up their minds on issues by talking to their friends and colleagues. Well I would call on every pro-Lisbon person of any affiliation to get campaigning, get talking and get active. The best way to sell the message of Lisbon is to invest time in conversations. Listen to people, address their concerns in a calm, considered way and when that is done effectively, the lies and the myths of those anti-Europeans will disappear and we will get back to talking sense. I am only here a few weeks and already it is clear how the European Institutions need to take a new strategic direction and that is Lisbon. Almost everybody within the walls of the parliament wants to see Lisbon ratified. You hear the words, 'Hopefully if the Lisbon Treaty is passed, we will be able do more’ For most people here, it represents a progressive step forward and that is what I intend telling Irish people. Workers rights was the single biggest issue that caused people to vote no to Lisbon one. So I would ask anybody who is concerned about this to read Articles 27 to 32 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Here it states clearly that the basic rights of workers to fair conditions, collective bargaining, striking if necessary are all copper fastened and made 'Primary' areas of Law by the EU. For the first time ever, workers rights will be a pillar on which European Law is built. The Lisbon Treaty will provide those of us who want to protect
workers rights in the European court with the ammunition to do so. For Ireland specifically it presents us with the chance to send a positive signal about our relationship with Europe. The European Union gives Irish companies access to 500 million people and the spending power in their pockets. What that demonstrates is that when it comes to rebuilding our economy, anyone who thinks that we do not have to manage our relationship with Europe carefully is simply deluding themselves. And whether we like it or not, Ireland's verdict on the Lisbon Treaty will set the tone of our relationship with the European Union for quite some time to come. How this will affect our economy, is unclear but I think we will all agree that a 'Yes' vote sends out the most positive message For our economy to recovery, we must manage this relationship carefully and a Yes vote will help in that regard. The European Union has been good for Ireland, but it will be better for Ireland in the future if Lisbon is passed. We are among the most influential countries in Europe, not because of our size but because of our approach. Let us keep ourselves strong in Europe. »


Yesterday I spent the day at the National Ploughing Championships in Athy, Co. Kildare with my party leader, Eamon Gilmore and fellow labour representatives. It struck me see the huge number of farmers and agri-business sector workers I met and spoke to who are totally disillusioned by the current government and their plans to cut vital agriculture schemes. As a member of the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee in the European Parliament, I especially can identify with the severe degree of suffering endured by those in the Irish farming industry. The anger and frustration that is being caused to these hard-working people is just unacceptable. Thankfully Irish farmers have an option to challenge some of the difficulties facing the farming sector – the Lisbon Treaty. The passing of the Lisbon Treaty would mean that Common Agriculture Policy would come under a process of ‘Co-Decision’ and will allow greater powers for the European Agriculture Committee. Simply this means that the European Parliament will co-decide with the European Commission and Council of Ministers on areas of agricultural policy. The way it is now is that Agriculture Committee can only give opinions. Luckily, if a Yes vote is secured it will mean that Irish MEP’s such as myself will have an equal say with the Council of Ministers on the future of the Irish agriculture sector. As MEP for Munster and coming from a rural farming background myself, I completely understand the anger felt towards current government proposals and will do my very
best to get them the best deal possible in Europe. Farmers need a strong, clear voice in the EU and the Lisbon Treaty can make this happen.

Dail or Seanad can give Yellow Card to EU Proposals under Lisbon Labour MEP Alan Kelly says:

Voting Yes to Lisbon will mean that Dail summer holidays will have to be cut by approximately three weeks and Irish politicians of all parties will be working longer hours. This is a healthy development for parliamentary democracy in Ireland. Under Lisbon, the first place any European legislation will go will be to the National Parliaments and in our case the Dáil. If the Dáil finds that the proposed European legislation doesn't sit right with them or they feel that it needs further scrutiny – they can send the legislation back to Europe. If a third of all countries do the same, then the legislation itself is stopped and must be reviewed as part of a so-called 'Yellow card' procedure. However they will only have six to eight weeks to do so under Lisbon, but in reality the volume of legislation will necessitate the Dail or Seanad sitting a minimum of every six weeks to properly debate all the legislation. Therefore the traditional Dail summer recess, which typically lasts nine weeks, will be cut short if we pass Lisbon. This is an example of the practical value of the Lisbon treaty and how it enhances democracy in Europe. It gives the elected representatives of Dail Eireann a greater say over the European agenda, something almost everyone would approve of. It will become incumbent on the Oireachtas to develop a better system of scrutinising European legislation. Currently our scrutiny of this legislation is poor and leads to over-burdening regulation for many small businesses. Lisbon may well be the instigator of Dail and Seanad reform that is so badly needed. Everybody is in agreement regarding how we should reform these bodies, but nothing ever seems to happen. Lisbon makes Ireland and Europe more democratic which is why I am calling on people to vote Yes on October 2nd. If anyone ever had a reason to vote yes, making politicians work longer hours might be it, he humorously concluded.
EU Commission threatened with injunction proceedings over its propaganda campaign

Solicitors acting on behalf of former MEP Patricia McKenna have written to the European Commission warning of legal action if the Commission continues with its campaign on the Lisbon Treaty.

Following yesterday’s inclusion of a 16-page supplement in all newspapers, supporting the Lisbon Treaty, the former MEP has taken legal advice and has instructed her solicitors, MacGeehin and Toale, to write to the European Commission and inform the Commission that its funding, at considerable expense to the taxpayer, of a propaganda campaign to advocate a ‘Yes’ vote in the upcoming referendum is in breach of Irish law and must stop or she will be forced to take legal action.

McKenna claims that ‘the EU Commission’s involvement is in breach of both Irish and EU law and as such must stop immediately. Yesterday’s inclusion of a 16-page supplement in all newspapers, supporting the Lisbon Treaty, was totally illegal. We need to know did the European Commission’s legal services sanction the expenditure of funding for propaganda purposes on the Lisbon Treaty campaign in Ireland and if so on what grounds as this is an unlawful use of European taxpayer’s money since the European Commission has no competence whatever in the ratification of treaties.’

‘However, regardless of EU law, it is clear that under Irish law the principles of the McKenna judgment are being breached by the EU Commission’ she concluded.

[ENDS]

For further information:
phone – 087 2427049
EUROPEAN COMMISSION MUST STOP TRYING TO INFLUENCE THE IRISH VOTE – McKenna

The People’s Movement is questioning the role of the European Commission in the current Irish referendum on the Lisbon Treaty. Chairperson of the movement, former MEP Patricia McKenna, said today: “Margot Wallstrom, European Commissioner for Institutional Relations and Communication Strategy, which is basically the EU term for PR, has come to Ireland in relation to the referendum. She assures us that she is not here to lecture and that the referendum is our own decision. But what exactly she is doing here then?”

McKenna asked: “Is she simply here to oversee us making the correct decision, for it seems that the question of Lisbon is a question where only one answer will be accepted by the government, both at home and in the Hague, Paris and Brussels?”

She said: “Wallstrom, who is the vice-president of the Commission, claims that the Lisbon Treaty was designed to strengthen the democratic control over the EU’s increasing number of decisions. Such claims of democracy are somewhat ironic considering that this propaganda spin is coming from someone who, without even one single vote from a European citizen, holds the second most senior position in the EU.”

McKenna went on to say: “The real tragedy is that Wallstrom, unlike other commissioners, is actually very popular in her home country, Sweden, and might actually be elected by the people if the commissioner from each member-state was elected democratically. Why does she not then fight for the proper democratic reforms that the EU so desperately needs?”

McKenna said: “It is absolutely not the place of the European Commission to interfere with national referendums, especially not when a ‘Yes’ vote would transfer so much power from the national parliaments to the Commission. It should be clear to any reasonable democrat that the Commissioners, paid from taxpayers’ money from all over Europe, should stay out of our referendum.”

“The Lisbon Treaty is bad for Ireland, bad for Europe and bad for democracy. We must keep rejecting it until the elite in Brussels finally get the message and start work on a treaty that can be passed by voters in every member state. We need a treaty that would finally put an end to the democratic deficit of the EU and ensure efficient solutions to cross-border issues without the heavy influence of trans-national corporations. A treaty that would set up the framework for fair cooperation between states instead of sneaking in an unwanted, increasingly militarized, federal state dominated by a few large countries.”
For further information:
Patricia McKenna (chairperson) – 087 2427049
Free flights to Ireland to push for a ‘Yes’ vote an outrage – McKenna

Former MEP Patricia McKenna, chairperson of the People’s Movement, has called for an investigation into a letter being circulated by EU officials in Brussels which offers free flights to Ireland to canvas for a ‘Yes’ to Lisbon. McKenna said she had received a copy of a letter, from a source in Brussels, which had been circulated by officials in Brussels offering free flights to people so they could come and canvas for a ‘Yes’ vote in the days running up to the referendum: “It is absolutely outrageous that EU officials are offering free flights to people to come to Ireland to canvas for a Yes vote in the forthcoming referendum and it demonstrates the lengths to which EU officials are willing to go to get their own way on this issue.”

McKenna said: “After logging on to a website link in the letter I discovered that one can only avail of these flights if they actually canvas for a ‘Yes’ vote and if they fail to do so they may be left in Ireland without a return ticket”.

The website called ‘Europe for Ireland’ states: “you must agree in writing to canvass for a Yes vote while in Dublin. We will put you in touch with one of the relevant organizations in Dublin (if you do not turn up to canvass, your return flight may be jeopardized).”

“This is absolutely unbelievable and I am calling on those responsible to come out publicly and justify this deliberate interference in a sovereign decision of the Irish people. I would also like them to outline exactly where the funding for these flights is coming from and if the Standards in Public Office Commission and the Referendum Commission have been notified” said McKenna.

[ENDS]

See details of letter below.
For further information:
Patricia McKenna (chairperson) – 087 2427049
Below is a copy of the letter being circulated by EU officials in Brussels.

Subject: Free flights to Ireland to canvas for a YES to Lisbon

A chara

Are you available to fly to Ireland on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday next week (29, 30 Sept, 1 Oct) to campaign alongside Europe for Ireland for a YES vote in the Lisbon Treaty Referendum on Friday 2 October?

Europe for Ireland has arranged free flights with Ryanair from Charleroi to Dublin. You could take either of two daily flights on whichever day suits you and come back whenever you like. Even if you can manage to take just one day off, you could fly over and back on the same day.

All you need to do is send me an email with your name(s) by Monday 28 September and tell me which flights you wish to take. Europe for Ireland will arrange your booking. You don't pay, you just turn up.

Slán
Fearghas

Further details of free flights to Dublin, call:

- Colm: 0476 42 47 43
- Eoghan: 0476 084 160
- Linda: 0467 084 166

Further information about Europe for Ireland on their website:

http://www.europeforireland.eu/
IRELAND HAS MORE THAN PAID ITS WAY IN EUROPE

Since EU membership, “we estimate European vessels have taken up to €200 billion worth of fish out of our waters” (Mr Ebbie Sheehan, Irish Fishermen’s Organisation). Add fish processing and the value of the fish jumps to around €600 Billion - 10 times the €60 Billion Ireland received from Brussels.

IRELAND’S INFLUENCE WOULD BE DECIMATED

Lisbon almost doubles the voting power of the Big EU States (Germany, UK, Poland, France and Italy), while more than halving Ireland’s voting weight. It would decimate our influence in the EU and prove economically disastrous for us.

CONTROL OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES:

• Repatriate our fishing rights with their huge jobs and income potential.
• Exploit our enormous gas and oil reserves in the people’s interests. Make Ireland a wealthy nation like Norway.
• Stop the outlawing of domestic turf cutting - people have conserved Ireland’s bogs for centuries.

LISBON TREATY IN A NUTSHELL - THE TREATY:

• Is a Constitution for an EU Federal State.
• Creates an EU President, an EU Foreign Minister, an EU Foreign Policy and an EU Public Prosecutor.
• Will develop the EU as a military power.
• Requires Ireland to increase military spending.
• Gives the arms industry a formal and major role in the EU
• Enshrines the failed economic policies that caused the global crisis.
• Means EU Laws override the Irish Constitution and Irish Law.
• Copperfastens EU Court of Justice rulings that will lower wages and worsen conditions for working people.
• Hands power to the Big States: doubles the voting strength of Germany, France and Britain.
• Halves Ireland’s voting strength and makes us a small peripheral player.
• Takes away our veto in over 60 policy areas.
• It’s a self-amending treaty – can be changed without our consent.
• Opens the way for new taxes and tax harmonisation throughout the EU.
• Contains economic policies that will hurt the Developing World.
• Would result in the widespread privatisation of essential social services.

VÓTÁIL NÍL

Ní hé Bunreacht na hEorpa atá vainn, ach Bunreacht na hÉireann a chosaint!

WHY ARE WE VOTING AGAIN?

In June 2008, the Lisbon Treaty was rejected by 53% of voters – a bigger majority than elected US President Obama.

Why is the Government squandering millions of Euro to overturn a clear democratic decision?

This waste takes place as unjust cuts in education, health and social welfare are planned.
THE LISBON TREATY IS PAST ITS SELL BY DATE

“The Lisbon Treaty is 9 years old and out of date—it enshrines the failed economic policies that led to the current global recession.” Patricia McKenna former MEP

The cosy circle of politicians, bankers and developers who caused the economic crisis now expect us to pay for their failures. They threaten worse economic times if we reject the Treaty again. But Lisbon would worsen the economic situation, not improve it.

Lisbon means:
• Less regulation of banks. No control over our interest rates. (Articles 63, 120, 127, 206)

Lisbon is against state aid for jobs:
• Much needed state aid to local industry, agriculture and fisheries is illegal under Lisbon. (Articles 126, 127).

Lisbon attacks Public Services:
• Public services (e.g. health and education) would be open to competition from private companies. (Articles 106, 107)

Lisbon’s taxation threats:
• Imposition of VAT on Public Services; Creation of EU tax (Art.311); Outlawing of Irish Tax Rules (Art. 113 and Protocol 27); and Harmonisation of corporation tax is postponed until after the referendum.

EU MILITARISATION

Lisbon bristles with military clauses (Articles 21-55; 326-334 and Protocol 10). But there are only 3 articles on the environment (Articles 191-193).

• Lisbon gives the arms industry a huge say in EU affairs through the European Defence Agency. It commits us to “undertake progressively to improve [our] military capacity” (Art. 42.3). There is no such stipulation in relation to health care or job creation!

• Lisbon ties us to NATO: “a more assertive Union role in security and defence matters will contribute to the vitality of a renewed Atlantic Alliance” (NATO) (Protocol 10).

• Lisbon contains a ‘mutual defence clause’. There is no Irish opt-out. (Article 42.7). And it foresees us “supporting third countries combating terrorism in their territories”(Art.43) - that could lead us to war in Afghanistan for example?!

“GUARANTEES” THAT GUARANTEE NOTHING

“...nothing has changed in the Lisbon treaty and it would be dishonest to suggest otherwise” Lucinda Creighton, Fine Gael’s Spokesperson on European Affairs, Dáil Debate on Lisbon Treaty, 8th July 2009.

The “guarantees” are not legally binding, only promises that they will be included in a treaty at some unknown future date.

ATTACKING WORKERS’ PAY AND CONDITIONS

“It seems reasonably if not absolutely clear to the Court that in the absence of an REA, contractors from other Member States could exercise their freedom to provide services in this jurisdiction under the EC Treaty at the same rates and conditions of employment as apply in their country of origin. Depending on the country of origin, this could seriously undermine the competitive position of Irish contractors” (Labour Court, Dublin 2009)

The Labour Court tells it as it is: EU Court of Justice (ECJ) rulings attack wages and conditions. We could be competing directly against poorer rates and conditions imposed by foreign companies. The Lisbon Treaty copperfastens this trend.

2ND REFERENDUM – AN ATTACK ON DEMOCRACY

“I think all of the politicians of Europe would have known quite well that if a similar question had been put to their electorate in a referendum the answer in 95 percent of countries would have been ‘No’ as well.” EU Commissioner Charlie McCreevy

In 2005 the French & Dutch voted NO to the EU Constitution. Brussels repackaged it as the Lisbon Treaty. Of the 27 EU states only Ireland, thanks to our constitution, got the right to vote on the Lisbon Treaty. However, NO was the wrong answer. So we have to do it again. This is undemocratic.

PEOPLE’S MOVEMENT GUAISEACHT AN PHOBAIL

107 Amiens Street, Dublin 1
www.people.ie
Contact: 087 2308330, post@people.ie
The Lisbon treaty allows the EU to feed of wars not prevent them.

The EU was originally born out of a peace project after World War II, based on the concept that people who trade together economically would be less likely to go to war with each other.

It is obscene for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to describe the Lisbon treaty as "crucial for conflict prevention" when the Lisbon treaty creates an EU weapons agency (EDA) that will feed of wars not prevent them.

However Michael Martin is correct that Lisbon will not create a EU army that is because it already exists.

It is a fact that before the opening of the EU parliament this summer, EU soldiers from eurocorps marched up and down outside the EU parliament building before raising the EU flag while the EU anthem was played.

For further information or comment contact Frank Keogh 087 2308330
Or Patricia McKenna +353 (0)87 2427049
People’s Movement calls for honest debate on workers’ rights

Responding today to the launch of their campaign by the Charter group of trade union leaders in favour of the Lisbon Treaty, the secretary of the People’s Movement, Frank Keoghan, has said that trade union leaders heading up the group must honestly engage with the issues and not engage in divisive slagging off of other trade unionists.

Keoghan said that he agreed with Blair Horan’s statement at the Charter Group’s press conference yesterday that positive measures flowed from the EU, but that was during the period when there was a compact with workers and their organisations – dubbed ‘Social Europe’. Those days are long gone and now the Court of Justice of the European Communities rules in the ‘interests of the market’ over that of workers.

This has been expressed in many of its rulings – see for example the Kjell Karlsson case where it ruled that ‘it is well established in the case law of the Court that restrictions may be imposed on the exercise of fundamental rights, in particular in the context of a common organisation of the market ...

He said that this ruling will now be written into Union law, if we accept the Lisbon Treaty, through Article 52 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the explanations attached thereto which must be taken into account when both the ECJ and domestic courts deliver rulings. This is secured by the primacy of EU law as outlined at article 6 of the 28th Amendment to the Constitution Bill and in ‘Declaration (17) Concerning Primacy’ where it is noted that ‘in accordance with well settled case law of the EU Court of Justice (ECJ), the Treaties and the law adopted by the Union on the basis of the Treaties have primacy over the law of Member States, under the conditions laid down by the said case law’.

The statement of the Council Legal Service of June 2007 is added: ‘It results from the case-law of the Court of Justice that [the] primacy of EC law is a cornerstone principle of Community law. According to the Court, this principle is inherent to the specific nature of the European Community’. It couldn’t be much clearer than that and we can expect that the present incremental diminution in workers’ rights resulting from ECJ rulings will accelerate if Lisbon is accepted.

Under Lisbon, Keoghan continued, judgements of the European Court of Human Rights will not necessarily be incorporated into EU law as the Treaty records the accession of the Union to the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, but Protocol 5 Article 3 qualifies this accession by stating that ‘the accession of the Union shall not affect the competences of the Union or the powers
of its institutions’. This clearly indicates that ECJ rulings will take precedence over those of the European Court of Human Rights, should their findings diminish the powers or competences of the Union.

Keoghans concluded by calling for a concise and honest debate around the issue of workers’ rights: ‘workers deserve that sort of transparency from their leaders’.

[ENDS]

For further information:
Frank Keoghan (secretary) – 087 2308330
The People’s Movement campaigns against any measures that further develop the EU into a federal state and to defend and enhance popular sovereignty, democracy and social justice in Ireland.

We are being asked to vote on exactly the same text of the Lisbon Treaty

The EU and Referendum Commission admit that nothing has changed

EU leaders have agreed on a “declaration” that seeks to address what they perceive to be Irish concerns while reiterating an agreement reached in December to postpone a reduction in the size of the Commission, as laid down in the Lisbon Treaty. They also agreed to attach the declarations as a protocol to the Treaty after the Irish referendum and once it is already in force; but the text of the summit conclusions states that “the Protocol will clarify but not change either the content or the application of the Treaty of Lisbon”; and the EU Presidency later confirmed that “the text of the guarantees explicitly states that the Lisbon Treaty is not changed thereby.” None of the statements made are therefore binding in EU law.

Protocols and declarations

“Declarations” are not legally binding. They are merely political statements or promises, made by one state unilaterally or by several states collectively. There are several such declarations already appended to the Lisbon Treaty. These are not legally binding on the states that are party to the treaty. There are also several protocols attached to the Lisbon Treaty. These are legally binding, in the same way as the main text of that Treaty.

The EU Court of Justice interprets EU treaties; an EU treaty means what the EU Court of Justice says it means in relation to any issue in dispute. Political declarations cannot override the provisions of a treaty that the ECJ would interpret if called upon. They therefore cannot bind the ECJ. A protocol, on the other hand, would in effect be a new treaty, which would require ratification by all the states signing it before it could come into force.

What has been agreed?

• Irish voters will be voting on exactly the same text a second time. EU leaders have agreed a list of statements that do not change the Lisbon Treaty in any way but reiterate what the treaty already says. They are not legally binding under EU law; and even if they did become legally binding in the form of a protocol in the future, as planned, EU leaders have confirmed

2. news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-06/19/content_11569853.htm.
that these will still not change the substance of the treaty. This means that Irish voters will be asked to vote on exactly the same text of the Lisbon Treaty a second time, despite having already rejected it—\textit{and despite promises from the Government that it would not present the same text again.}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Concerns about neutrality remain unaddressed. The declaration agreed by EU leaders—even if it did become legally binding at some future date—does nothing to address the concerns of Irish voters about the effect of the treaty on the country’s neutrality, because it provides no exemption for Ireland from the “mutual defence” clause in article 42 (7). Experts argue that this is the only way to guarantee that the treaty does not threaten Ireland’s neutrality.
  \item There is no guarantee that Ireland can keep its EU Commissioner indefinitely. The “guarantee” that Ireland will get to keep its Commissioner is no such thing. EU leaders have agreed that, \textit{once the Lisbon Treaty is in force}, they will vote unanimously to change the default Lisbon arrangement, which reduces the size of the Commission by a third. However, there is no legal obligation on member-states to stick to their word, and the present EU governments cannot guarantee that their successors will deliver on the pledge. \textit{A parliament cannot bind its successors; otherwise there would be little point in electing new governments!} Furthermore, there is no guarantee that this arrangement, if agreed, would prevail in the future.
\end{itemize}

The status quo seems far safer for Ireland. Under the current (Nice Treaty) arrangements EU leaders have the option of reducing the size of the Commission by one member, meaning that Ireland would be without a Commissioner for only 5 years in every 135. In contrast, under the Lisbon Treaty member-states could potentially be without a Commissioner for 5 out of every 15 years.

\section*{The declarations do nothing to address concerns about the broader issue of threats to Irish neutrality}

Research published in September 2008 by the Department of Foreign Affairs showed that neutrality was a most divisive issue in the Lisbon Treaty referendum campaign.\textsuperscript{3} 88 per cent of those who voted No said that neutrality was an important issue for Ireland within the European Union.

In the \textit{Irish Times} last year Dr Karen Devine, a researcher at Dublin City University and expert on Irish neutrality, warned that “\textit{a neutral state cannot legally or politically sign up to the Lisbon Treaty mutual assistance clause because it violates neutrality.}”\textsuperscript{4} The declaration from the European Council states: “The Lisbon Treaty does not affect or prejudice Ireland’s traditional policy of military neutrality.” However, before the final conclusions of the summit meeting Dr Devine commented that the proposed declaration on security and defence “\textit{does not exempt Ireland from the mutual defence clause in Article 42 (7) and the obligation contained in the clause to provide assistance to a member-state that is subject to armed aggression on its territory. This obligation means that Ireland has ceded the ability to adhere to the international customary law of neutrality.}” She further argued that “\textit{in order to safeguard neutrality, the only solution is (1) to have a legally binding protocol providing for Ireland’s opt out of Article 42(7), or (2) to have the proposed wording of the declaration amended to specify that Ireland is not under any obligation to provide assistance under Article 42(7).}”

\begin{footnotes}
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Indeed the Irish Government’s own White Paper on Foreign Policy (1996) asserted that “provisions committing the parties to collective action in the event of armed attack against one or more of them . . . would not be compatible with an intention to remain neutral.” Therefore the proposed declaration does not address one of the concerns of the Irish people who voted against the Lisbon Treaty because of the loss of neutrality.

The only conclusion to be drawn is that a protocol excluding Ireland from all military obligations under the Lisbon Treaty is the only means of providing legal certainty in this instance.

Concerns regarding military spending, allied to Ireland’s membership of the European Defence Agency, have been fudged and left in the hands of the Government. “It is also a matter for each Member State to decide, in accordance with the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty and any domestic legal requirements, whether to participate in permanent structured co-operation or the European Defence Agency.”5 States that wish to “do their own thing” in relation to military affairs could do so under the treaty’s provisions for “permanent structured co-operation.” Articles 28A.6 and 28E, as well as a specific protocol on the issue, provide for sub-sets of EU countries (including those that wish to undertake actions consistent with their membership of NATO) to pursue their own agenda for military integration and co-operation within the European Union Military Staff (in which Irish army officers participate), without necessarily involving all other member-states.

Crucially, there is provision to “establish permanent structured cooperation within the Union framework” (article 28A.6), and this can be undertaken on the strength of a qualified majority vote within the EU Council.

As the “assurance” states, Ireland may choose not to participate directly in such initiatives; but by virtue of its participation in the general business of the European Union Military Staff, and in all the other aspects of EU military co-operation (including the financing thereof), the argument can be made that Ireland would help lay the basis for other states to engage in such co-operation, and that such co-operation would be perceived (not without justification) as an EU undertaking, even if not all EU members were directly involved.

The Lisbon Treaty makes no reference to the requirement of a UN mandate for an EU intervention, and the Irish Government continues to insist that its own forces would never be deployed without such a mandate; but there is nothing to prevent forces from other countries (unavoidably backed up by Irish planning and financial resources) drawing on the support of the EU infrastructure to launch such an intervention.

In contrast to the lip service to the United Nations,6 the protocol on “structured co-operation” declares that “a more assertive union [EU] role . . . will contribute to the vitality of a renewed Atlantic Alliance [NATO].” Many commentators have concerns about enhancing the vitality of an alliance that, among other regressive features, retains a commitment to the “first use” of nuclear weapons and that has pursued an aggressive policy in Afghanistan, involving substantial civilian casualties.7 Unfortunately, we depend on the will and independence of present and future Governments to prevent us being mired in or supporting such conflicts; and once again, legal certainty could be provided only through a protocol to the treaty.

6. Save for “a number of more or less vague formulations about acting in accordance with principles of the UN Charter and the important role of the Security Council”—Jonas Sjöstedt, The Lisbon Treaty: Centralization and Neoliberalism (2008), page 13.
There is no guarantee that Ireland would not lose its Commissioner

One of the main aspects of the “deal” being offered to Ireland is a “promise” that it will get to keep its EU Commissioner. The declaration states: “Having carefully noted the concerns of the Irish people as set out by the Taoiseach, the European Council, at its meeting of 11-12 December 2008, agreed that, provided the Treaty of Lisbon enters into force, a decision would be taken, in accordance with the necessary legal procedures, to the effect that the Commission shall continue to include one national of each Member State.”

However, this is not a legally binding guarantee but a political commitment. It is not a guarantee because it does not bind future heads of government, who would be free to go back on it. With no guarantee that Ireland would get to keep its Commissioner indefinitely, this is a worse solution than keeping the status quo.

Under existing arrangements the number of Commissioners is due to be reduced from when the next Commission takes up its duties, which is in November this year. The Nice Treaty states that “when the Union consists of 27 Member States . . . The number of Members of the Commission shall be less than the number of Member States.” However, it does not specify how many Commissioners there must be, beyond stipulating that there must be fewer than twenty-seven. “The Members of the Commission shall be chosen according to a rotation system based on the principle of equality, the implementing arrangements for which shall be adopted by the Council, acting unanimously. The number of Members of the Commission shall be set by the Council, acting unanimously.”

This means that under the present (Nice Treaty) rules, and without the Lisbon Treaty, the Council is free to decide that there should be one fewer Commissioner than there are member-states. With a system of equal rotation, Commission terms of five years, and twenty-seven member-states, this would mean that each state would be without a Commissioner for only 5 out of every 135 years. Importantly, Ireland at present wields a veto over decisions on the number of Commissioners and therefore could insist that the Commission be reduced by only one member. In contrast, under the system proposed by the Lisbon Treaty the size of the Commission would be reduced by a third from 2014, meaning that Ireland (and every other member-state) would be without a Commissioner for 5 out of every 15 years. The Treaty also states that the European Council, acting unanimously, may decide to alter this number.

The political agreement reached at the European Council is nothing more than a loose commitment that in 2014 the EU heads of state and government (who will mostly be different from those in office today) will take a decision to keep one Commissioner per member-state. This is something that could be done anyway if the Lisbon Treaty were in force and in no way binds future governments to deliver on it.

In holding a second referendum on the Lisbon Treaty, Ireland is relying on a political commitment and trusting that all the other member-states, at some unspecified future date, will decide to trump the legal status quo and move back to a system of one Commissioner per country. As noted by the (very pro-Lisbon) Dáil Sub-Committee on European Affairs, “this option is not without its difficulties and may prove to be politically unachievable. It presupposes a willingness on the part of the other Member States to abandon the decision to reduce the size of the Commission in the interests of solving the predicament created by the referendum result.”

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It also does not state for how long this would continue to be the case, opening up the possibility that Ireland would eventually lose its Commissioner in any case. While not perfect, the status quo of the Nice Treaty arrangements is better for Ireland than the Lisbon Treaty. The only way to ensure that Ireland keeps a Commissioner indefinitely would be to change the actual text of the Lisbon Treaty to make this explicit.

What some commentators have said

- “Since the referendum on the treaty in June of last year, the treaty itself has not changed.”—Mr Justice Frank Clarke, chairperson of the Referendum Commission, Irish Times, 30 July 2009.
- Following the December EU summit meeting, at which the “guarantees” were first formulated, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Micheál Martin, promised: “We will not be asking people to vote on the same proposition.”10 In May this year the Minister for European Affairs, Dick Roche, reiterated this, saying: “Our partners understand, I believe, that we cannot and will not put the same package to our people later this year.”11 They both lied.
- The British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, confirmed that Irish voters will be voting on exactly the same text. “The protocol clarifies but does not change the content and application of the Treaty . . . The Treaty assurances have made explicit what was implicit in the Treaty already.”12
- A statement from the EU Presidency confirmed that “the guarantees must be sufficient in the light of the concerns of Irish citizens, yet they must not lead to the reopening of the ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty in other Member States. Thus, the text of the guarantees explicitly states that the Lisbon Treaty is not changed thereby.”13
- This was also confirmed in the Dáil by Lucinda Creighton, Fine Gael’s spokesperson on European affairs, on 8 July 2009: “Nothing has changed in the Lisbon Treaty, and it would be dishonest to suggest otherwise.”
- Paddy Smyth, Brussels correspondent of the Irish Times, told an Open Europe meeting on 18 June: “Nothing in the declarations materially affects the treaty text. If there was a material difference, then the Treaty would have to be re-ratified in all the other member states.” He confirmed that “the difference to the Danish case is that Denmark got an opt-out, which was a material change in effect.”
- The Prime Minister of Sweden, Fredrik Reinfeldt, said at the concluding summit press conference that “the legal guarantees are only valid for Ireland and will not change anything in the treaty itself.”14
- Glenys Kinnock, British Minister of State for Europe and a former MEP, confirmed in the House of Lords that Ireland will be voting on exactly the same text a second time. “Those guarantees do not change the Lisbon treaty; the European Council conclusions are very clear on them . . . Nothing in the treaty will change, and nothing in the

sub cttee eu 01122008-3.pdf.
guarantees will change the treaty as your lordships agreed it.”

• EU leaders have agreed that the declarations will eventually be written into EU law as a protocol attached to the Croatian accession treaty, expected in 2010 or 2011. However, there is no guarantee that the treaty would be ratified, as it needs formal approval in all EU states. Even if it did become law the protocol would do nothing to change the text of the treaty.

• The conclusions of the summit clearly state “the Protocol will clarify but not change either the content or the application of the Treaty of Lisbon.”

• Following the December summit, at which the declarations were first discussed, Mark Malloch Brown, a Minister of State in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, confirmed that “Ireland sought and has received guarantees, but the treaty has not been reopened. In that regard, it is a referendum on the same treaty as before.”

• Later the British Minister of State for Europe, Caroline Flint, stated that “at the European Council on 11-12 December 2008, all countries agreed that there could be no change or amendment to the Lisbon Treaty.”

• Andrew Duff, a British Liberal Democrat MEP who helped draft the Lisbon Treaty, is remarkably candid in expressing doubts about the legal feasibility of attaching protocols to the Croatian accession treaty. He said: “Adding this protocol to the Croatian accession treaty would leave the treaty wide open to attack in the courts.” According to the Irish Times, he added that “rules in the EU treaties governing accession treaties only allow issues pertaining to a state’s accession to be dealt with.”

Several commentators and EU leaders have compared the Irish situation to the situation of Denmark after it voted No to the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. Following the No vote the Danish government negotiated opt-outs from important parts of the treaty, such as the euro. The text was put to the people in a second referendum, and they voted Yes. However, the deal to be offered to Ireland is significantly different: whereas Denmark secured opt-outs from the Maastricht Treaty, the Irish Government is not seeking to opt out of any part of the Lisbon Treaty other than a temporary opt-out in the area of justice and home affairs. Indeed in November 2008 the Dáil Sub-Committee on European Affairs warned against pursuing opt-outs from EU policy along the lines of the Danish arrangements.

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087 2308330 · post@people.ie

17. 14 May 2009, ref. 71998, Letter to Cheryl Gillan MP, who then used it in a reply to a constituent.
The privatisation of health services and cuts that the Lisbon Treaty facilitates will directly affect women. An example of this is what is happening now with cervical smear testing. In 2008, the HSE awarded US company Quest Diagnostics a contract to analyse smear tests – a company that had to pay out $40 million in fraud settlements over the past 10 years and $302 million over faulty test devices.

There are consequences for women from this outsourcing. When smear tests are analysed abroad indigenous laboratory expertise is lost and, worse for the women concerned, their medical records are not readily accessible – or perhaps not accessible at all.

If Lisbon is passed on Friday, we’ll get more of the same because Article 207 of the treaty removes the veto governments now have on the EU’s international proposals to liberalise health, education and social services. Keeping the power to veto proposals could help us that would let even more multinationals make profits from essential services.

In addition, Article 136 strengthens the EU’s powers to set policy for member states who don’t adhere to the Stability and Growth Pact – the reason for the cuts proposed by Colm McCarthy. This means more pressure to cut public spending. This resulting cuts in services will directly affect women who are primarily responsible for childcare and care of the elderly.

Proinsias De Rossa MEP has accused Women Say No to Lisbon of isolationism and a lack of solidarity with the victims of people trafficking. We reject his false and shallow accusations.

While he praises the Lisbon Treaty’s provisions for enhanced cross-border police cooperation, we believe the needs of these women should be put at the heart of our response to tackling trafficking. Policing targets the gangs responsible, but it does not tackle the circumstances that bring women into their orbit.

Extreme poverty is a prime reason for this. And research shows that women from Eastern Europe, where EU competition policies have devastated indigenous industry, are one of the largest groupings to be trafficked into and through Ireland. The Lisbon Treaty, if passed, would not help to alleviate the poverty which has brought them here. Far from it. It reaffirms the primacy of competition: enterprises which can’t compete must be let close, whatever the social cost.
Lisbon is informed by the economic policies that have led to the crash. It would deepen the race to the bottom and push more people into poverty and more women into trafficking and the sex trade. Ireland has opted out of the policing provisions of Lisbon. But opt out or opt in, more policing won’t change the poverty which drives women into prostitution.

This treaty is out of date and out of step. It’s time for a change of direction. It’s time to say No – again.

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Women Saying No To Lisbon – Again

Ailbhe Smyth, People Before Profit
Therese Caherty, People Before Profit, CAEUC – Sayno.ie
Íte Ni Chionnaith, Lecturer, School of Media, DIT, Iar-Uachtarán, Conradh na Gaeilge
Mary Crotty, People’s Movement
Mary Cullen, historian
Margaretta D’Arcy, writer and peace activist
Bernie Dwyer, Radio Cuba presenter and documentary film maker
Rita Fagan, community activist
Carol Fox, Peace and Neutrality Alliance
Maura Harrington, political activist, Shell To Sea
Sinead Kennedy, NUI Maynooth
Patricia McKenna, People’s Movement
Eilish Moore, singer
Cathleen O Neill, educator and community activist
Bronwen Maher, former Dublin City councillor and political activist
Marie O’Connor, author and health policy analyst
Jo Tully, Irish Nurses Organisation, executive member, personal capacity
Bairbre de Brun, Sinn Fein, MEP
Cllr Rosaleen Branley, Sinn Fein, Donegal
Cllr Joan Collins, People Before Profit
Cllr Catherine Connolly, Independent
Cllr Colette Connolly, Labour, Galway
Cllr Rose Conway Walsh, Sinn Fein, Mayo
Cllr Ruth Coppinger, Socialist Party, Mulhuddart
Cllr Edel Corrigan, Sinn Fein, Louth
Cllr Clare Daly, Socialist Party, Swords
Cllr Criona Ni Dhalaigh, Sinn Fein, Dublin
Cllr Jane Dillon Byrne, Labour Dun Laoghaire
Cllr Kathleen Funchion, Sinn Fein, Kilkenny
Cllr Marie Terase Gallagher, Sinn Fein, Donegal
Cllr Graine Mhic Geidigh, Sinn Fein, Donegal
Cllr Cora Harvey, Sinn Fein,
Cllr Fiona Kerins, Sinn Fein, Cork
Cllr Louise Minihan, Independent
Cllr Imelda Munster, Sinn Fein, Louth
Cllr Cathy McCafferty, Sinn Fein, Clare
Cllr Rachel McCarthy, Sinn Fein, Cork
Cllr Sandra McLellan, Sinn Fein, Cork
Cllr Therese Ruane, Sinn Fein, Mayo
Cllr Jane Suffin, Sinn Fein, Roscommon
Cllr Brid Smith, People Before Profit
Cllr Pauline Tully McCauley, Sinn Fein, Cavan
Speaking from the Fianna Fáil Lisbon Treaty campaign launch today Sinn Féin spokesperson on European Affairs Aengus Ó Snodaigh TD said the government is “ignoring the will of the people” and engaging in “the politics of fear”. Deputy Ó Snodaigh said: « Despite the fact that 900,000 people rejected the Lisbon Treaty in June 2008 the government is putting exactly the same Treaty to the electorate this October. Not a single word of the Lisbon Treaty has been changed. If the Treaty hasn’t changed then why should those who voted against the Treaty in 2008 change their minds. As with their mishandling of the economy Brian Cowen's government are refusing to listen to the very real concerns of the electorate on Lisbon. The so called legally binding guarantees do nothing to address issues such as Ireland’s loss of power; the undermining of our neutrality; the ongoing assault on workers rights; and the slow destruction of family farming. The government is also trading in the politics of fear, with slogans that suggest a No vote will result in Ireland being thrown out of the EU. Such claims are not only ridiculous but aimed at scaring people into supporting a Treaty that is clearly not in their political or economic interests.

Ireland’s place is in Europe. Ireland’s place in Europe is secure. The issue facing the electorate on October 2 is the future of the European Union, Ireland’s place in that future and how we as equal members of the EU can shape that future. On June 12th 2008 almost 900,000 people rejected the Lisbon Treaty. They did so because they believed that it was a bad Treaty. They did so because they wanted a better deal for Ireland and for Europe. The result presented the Irish government with a strong mandate to go to the Council of Ministers and negotiate a better Treaty for Ireland and Europe. At the time Sinn Féin presented Brian Cowen with very detailed proposals as to how we believed the legitimate concerns of the electorate in this state could be met. What did the government do? How did they use that mandate? Just like their mismanagement of the economy over the same period, they prevaricated, and then they conspired to pull the wool over the eyes of their own fellow citizens. As a result they have secured not a single change to the text of the Lisbon Treaty. On October 2nd we will be voting on exactly the same treaty, with exactly the same consequences for Ireland and the EU, as we did last year. If it wasn’t good enough for the electorate then why on earth should it be good enough for us now.
At the European Council meeting in June of this year, the government and their 26 EU counterparts agreed so-called legally binding guarantees on neutrality, taxation and ethical issues. They also agreed a “solemn declaration” on workers’ rights and reiterated their promise for every member state to retain a Commissioner. On this basis the Yes side argue, the 53% of the electorate who rejected the Lisbon Treaty should reconsider their position and in turn support the very same Treaty. The simple fact of the matter is that nothing in the so-called guarantees nor in the Solemn Declaration changes either the text of the Treaty or the impact that it will have on Ireland or on the EU. In addition to arguing that the so-called guarantees provide a rationale for supporting what is a bad Treaty, the government and their allies in Labour and Fine Gael are using the economic crisis to scare people into supporting the Treaty. We are told that we will lose investment, jobs, and crucially support from our EU counterparts. The truth is very different. Among the causes of this recession are the failed economic policies of this government and their counterparts across Europe. Policies of deregulation, competition, privatisation, low taxation. Many of these same failed right wing politicians were responsible for negotiating the Treaty and many of their failed right wing policies are contained in the Treaty, most notably in the Protocol on the Internal Market and Competition. The route to economic recovery rests not in Lisbon, but in a change of government and policy at home and within the EU. In 2008 Sinn Féin outlined the key reasons why people should oppose Lisbon. They remain the same.

The Lisbon Treaty reduces Ireland’s power in the EU – we will not, I believe, retain our permanent commissioner post 2014 and our voting strength on the Council will be cut by half while the bigger states double their strength. The Lisbon Treaty will make the economic crisis even worse by forcing through policies that caused the recession, reducing the Irish government’s ability to take essential decisions, driving down pay and conditions and further undermining workers rights and public services. The Lisbon Treaty erodes our neutrality, particularly in the detailed provisions of Article 28, drawing us into a common defence and obliging us to increase military spending. The Lisbon Treaty will further undermine the viability of rural Ireland and family farming through the strengthened powers for the EU Trade Commissioner contained in Article 188C and the effective ending of the Irish government’s veto on mixed international trade deals. Crucially the simplified revision procedure contained in Article 48 removes our automatic right to a referendum on future changes to existing treaties. So what happens if we vote No again? Ireland remains a full and equal member of the EU. We won’t be expelled or marginalised. The Lisbon Treaty falls and the EU carries on as before. Inward investment will not be affected – indeed 2008 saw a 14% increase in
foreign direct investment on the previous year despite the scaremongering claims of the yes side. And crucially a space opens for a debate on the future of the EU. Sinn Féin believes that we need a new treaty for the new times we are living in. A treaty that: guarantees a permanent commissioner for all member states beyond 2014; removes all self-amending articles including the simplified revision procedure in Article 48; provides a comprehensive protocol on our neutrality; promotes vital public services; protects workers rights through the inclusion of the European Trade Union Confederation Social Progress Clause to protect workers’ rights; substantially amends Article 188 dealing with international trade agreements including a cast-iron veto on mixed World Trade Organisation agreements. On October 2nd we have a big decision to take. Do we want to play our part in creating a democratic, equal and just Europe or will we allow the same failed right wing politicians who created the current economic crisis to remain in power, implementing the same failed right wing policies in Dublin and Brussels. Vote for a better deal for Ireland and for Europe. Vote for a new treaty for new times. Vote ‘no’ on October 2nd.

5 septembre 2009 - https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/17287

Speaking at the Sinn Féin Ard Comhairle meeting in Dublin this morning party president Gerry Adams said that “Ireland's interests were best served by voting No to the Lisbon Treaty on October 2nd.” Mr. Adams said, “Sinn Féin believes that Ireland’s place is at the heart of Europe. Our approach to the EU is to support those proposals that are in Ireland’s interests and to oppose and campaign to change those that are not. Our European agenda is positive and progressive. We are active participants in a European wide movement of parties and people whose aim is to create a more democratic and people centered European Union that promotes workers rights and public services, supports rural communities and plays a constructive role on the International stage consistent with this state’s neutral status. In June last year the people rejected the Lisbon Treaty. They did so because they believed that is was a bad Treaty and because they wanted for a better deal for Ireland and Europe. The result presented the Irish government with a strong mandate to negotiate a better Treaty. At the time we presented Brian Cowen with very detailed proposals as to how we felt the electorate’s concerns could be dealt with. What did the government do? Just like their mismanagement of the economy, they prevaricated, sat on their hands and did nothing. As a result they have not secured a single change to the text of the Lisbon Treaty. On October 2nd we will be voting on exactly the same treaty as we did last year. The Governments claims of having addressed the concerns of the electorate are entirely false. We will still lose our Commissioner, only
now in 2014 instead of 2009. Our neutrality will still be undermined. Workers rights and public services will still come under attack. And tax harmonisation will still be made easier. There are four weeks left in the campaign. For our part the fact that exactly the same Treaty is being placed before the people means that we should give the same answer. A better deal is still possible, but only if we reject the Lisbon Treaty on October 2.

9 septembre 2009 - https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/17315

Speaking this afternoon in response to Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin's claim that the Lisbon Treaty was good for workers and the economy Sinn Féin spokesperson on European Affairs Aengus Ó Snodaigh TD said: The two single biggest threats to our economy are Fianna Fail in government and the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. “Fianna Fail's mismanagement of the economy is directly responsible for spiralling unemployment, the banking crisis, the public deficit and the crisis in our public services. Neither Micheál Martin nor any other member of this government are in a position to advise the electorate on what is and is not in our economic interests. Indeed if the Minister was truly interested in getting the Irish economy back on the road to recovery he would advise his Fianna Fáil and Green Party colleagues to resign. Micheal Martin's claims that the Lisbon Treaty would assist economic recovery and protect workers rights are equally spurious. Indeed in his lengthy statement today he did not reference a single article in the Treaty that would help create jobs or promote workers pay and conditions.

In Sinn Fein's view ratifying the Lisbon Treaty will have the opposite effect to that claimed by Micheál Martin. Article 16 gives the European Commission new powers to subject services to the rules of competition which will undermine vital public services such as health and education. Article 188C gives the Commission increased powers for the negotiation and conclusion of international trade agreements which will effectively end the Irish government's veto over mixed international trade deals and undermine the viability of many of the countries family farms. The Protocol on the Internal Market and Competition mandates the EU to remove all so called 'distortions' to competition, which will be used by both the European Commission and European Court of Justice to further undermine workers pay and conditions. These are just three of the sections of the Lisbon Treaty that are bad for the Irish economy and for ordinary working people. The Lisbon Treaty was drafted by the very same right wing politicians who led Ireland and the EU into recession. It contains many of the same right wing policies that have underpinned the recession.
The fact that Fianna Fáil are calling for people to support Lisbon, at the very same time as calling for support for NAMA and savage cutbacks to health and education, should be reason enough to realise that it is a bad deal for Ireland and Europe. On this basis the Lisbon Treaty should be rejected by the electorate on October 2nd.

15 septembre 2009 - https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/17351

Launching Sinn Féin’s Lisbon Treaty referendum poster campaign Sinn Féin Vice President Mary Lou McDonald said that “The Lisbon Treaty was a bad deal for Ireland and the EU in 2008. The government has not secured a single change to the Treaty since then. It remains a bad deal for Ireland and the EU. As it is exactly the same Treaty Sinn Féin is urging people to give it the same answer and vote No on October 2nd.” Ms McDonald said: Sinn Féin’s poster campaign is aimed at highlighting the content of the Lisbon Treaty and its implications for Ireland and the EU. We want to provoke a debate on and public knowledge about what the Treaty says and does. Unlike many on the Yes side our posters reference the articles of the Treaty on which we are basing our claims.

Lisbon equals lower wages: In recent years the European Commission has enacted policies and the European Court of Justice has made judgments that have the effect of driving down the cost of wages in a number of EU countries, including the Laval (2007) judgment in Sweden and the Ruffert (2008) case in Germany. While these judgments took place under the existing EU Treaties the Protocol on the Internal Market and Competition contained in the Lisbon Treaty provides both the Commission and the Court with an even stronger mandate to undermine workers pay and conditions. Lisbon equals less power: Article 6 changes the way in which key decisions at the Council of Ministers are taken. The changes would see Irelands voting strength reduced to 0.8% while German’s would increase to 17% and Britain’s would increase to 12%. The Council is where states are meant to meet as equals. The Lisbon Treaty significantly reduces Ireland’s strength on this important body. Lisbon equals more military spending: Article 25 and 28 contain four separate obligations on military spending. Article 28(c)(3) states ‘Member States shall make civilian and military capabilities available to the Union for the implementation of the common security and defence policy.’ The same article also states ‘member states shall undertake progressively to improve their military capabilities’. In addition Article 25b(d)(3) states ‘The Council shall adopt a decision establishing the specific procedures for guaranteeing rapid access to appropriations in the Union budget for urgent financing of initiatives in the framework of the common foreign and security policy.’ While Article 25(d)(3)(TEU) states Preparatory activities... which are not charged
to the Union budget shall be financed by a start-up fund made up of Member State’s contributions….” While the overall increase in expenditure arising from these new obligations will be a matter for the Government there is no doubt that they will lead to increased military spending in the future. Lisbon equals crushing family farms: The European Commission has for many years been pursuing an agenda of aggressively promoting free trade over fair trade. A series of EU Trade Commissioners from Pascal Lammy, followed by Peter Mandelson and now Catherine Ashton have been promoting an agenda at the WTO that would be devastating for Irish and European family farms and rural communities. Article 188, gives the Commission power to initiate and conduct negotiations including international trade agreements, makes Qualified Majority Voting the general rule in the conclusion of such trade agreement, and effectively end the Irish government’s veto on ‘mixed trade deals’ While Article 2 (b) gives the EU exclusive competence over commercial policy, including the negotiating of international trade agreements. Taken together these articles effectively removes the current Irish government veto on mixed international trade agreements making it easier for the European Commission to impose its free trade over fair trade agenda in future international trade talks. Taken together articles 6, 28, and 188 along with the Protocol on the Internal Market and Competition will equal lower wages, less power, increased military spending and crushing family farms. These are just four of the many articles that make the Lisbon Treaty a bad deal for Ireland and the EU. On October 2 Sinn Féin is urging people to reject this bad deal and vote for a better Europe and a fairer Ireland.

17 septembre 2009 - https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/17367

Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams is in Cork today to launch the party’s Lisbon Treaty referendum Munster billboard and poster campaign for a NO vote. Mr. Adams said: “Lisbon and NAMA are bad deals for the Irish people and should be rejected. Yesterday the government revealed the detail of its plan to bail out the Banks and the Developers with €54 billion of taxpayers’ money. This is grossly unfair. There is no NAMA for ordinary citizens. The government – whose policies played a significant part in bringing this state to the point of bankruptcy and which failed to renegotiate the Lisbon Treaty – are asking people to trust it. The government clearly got it wrong on the economy and on Lisbon. The only sensible response is to reject this government and reject NAMA. Sinn Féin’s billboard and poster campaign is aimed at highlighting the content of the Lisbon Treaty and its implications for Ireland and the EU. Unlike many on the Yes side our posters reference the articles of the Treaty on which we are basing our claims. Lisbon equals lower wages; Lisbon equals
less power; Lisbon equals more military spending; Lisbon equals crushing family farms; Articles 6, 28, and 188 along with the Protocol on the Internal Market and Competition will equal lower wages, less power, increased military spending and crushing family farms. These are just four of the many articles that make the Lisbon Treaty a bad deal for Ireland and the EU.

Lisbon equals lower wages: In recent years the European Commission has enacted policies and the European Court of Justice has made judgments that have the effect of driving down wages. The Protocol on the Internal Market and Competition contained in the Lisbon Treaty provides both the Commission and the Court with an even stronger mandate to undermine workers pay and conditions. Lisbon equals less power: The Council of Ministers is supposed to be where European countries meet as equals. Not so. Article 6 of the Lisbon Treaty changes the way in which key decisions at the Council of Ministers are taken. Irelands voting strength would be reduced to 0.8% while Germany’s would increase to 17% and Britain’s would increase to 12%. Lisbon equals more military spending: Article 25 and 28 contain four separate obligations on military spending. Article 28(c)(3) states ‘Member States shall make civilian and military capabilities available to the Union for the implementation of the common security and defence policy.’ The same article also states ‘member states shall undertake progressively to improve their military capabilities’. In addition Article 25b(d)(3) states ‘The Council shall adopt a decision establishing the specific procedures for guaranteeing rapid access to appropriations in the Union budget for urgent financing of initiatives in the framework of the common foreign and security policy.’ While Article 25(d)(3)(TEU) states Preparatory activities... which are not charged to the Union budget shall be financed by a start-up fund made up of Member State’s contributions....”

While the overall increase in expenditure arising from these new obligations will be a matter for the Government there is no doubt that they will lead to increased military spending in the future. Lisbon equals crushing family farms: The European Commission has for many years been pursuing an agenda of aggressively promoting free trade over fair trade. A series of EU Trade Commissioners from Pascal Lammy, followed by Peter Mandelson and now Catherine Ashton have been promoting an agenda at the WTO that would be devastating for Irish and European family farms and rural communities. Article 188, gives the Commission power to initiate and conduct negotiations including international trade agreements, makes Qualified Majority Voting the general rule in the conclusion of such trade agreement, and effectively ends the Irish government’s veto on ‘mixed trade deals’.
While Article 2 (b) gives the EU exclusive competence over commercial policy, including the negotiating of international trade agreements. Taken together these articles effectively removes the current Irish government veto on mixed international trade agreements making it easier for the European Commission to impose its free trade over fair trade agenda in future international trade talks.

17 septembre 2009 - https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/17376

Speaking at a Lisbon Treaty debate hosted by the National Women's council Sinn Féin Vice President Mary Lou McDonald said that women would be disproportionately affected by the downward pressure on wages that will result from the ratification of Lisbon. McDonald said: Forty per cent of people who rejected the Lisbon Treaty in 2008 did so because of concerns over workers’ rights. Low paid workers are rightly concerned about the downward pressure on their wages. They are concerned with the anti-worker direction of both the European Commission and the European Court of Justice. The fact is that a large proportion of low paid workers are women and they will, without question, be disproportionately affected by the downward pressure on wages that would result from the ratification of Lisbon Treaty. The Lisbon Treaty, particularly through the Protocol on the Internal Market and Competition gives further strength to the Commission and Court in their drive to force down wages and conditions. Under the guise of making the EU the most competitive economy in the world they are pursuing a race to the bottom agenda in workers terms and conditions that is bad for individual employees and the economy overall. The government failed to act on the mandate which they were given to ensure workers rights were protected in the Lisbon Treaty. They failed to demand the inclusion of a social progress clause as was proposed by the trade unions. Women voters need to look at the implications of the Lisbon Treaty for themselves and their families. No one should feel forced by scare tactics or bribes, such as the claim by Fine Gael that they will legislate for the right to collective bargaining in exchange for a yes vote, to support a Treaty which fails on such a fundamental issue as workers’ rights.

18 septembre 2009 - https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/17395

Speaking at the launch of Sinn Féin’s Alternative Guide to Lisbon 2 the party’s spokesperson on European Affairs Aengus Ó Snodaigh TD said the surest way for the state to lose influence in
Europe is to ratify the Lisbon Treaty. He accused the Government and their supporters in Fine Gael and Labour of trading in the politics of fear and of being uncomfortable discussing the Treaty itself.
Deputy Ó Snodaigh said: Unlike the government and their supporters in Labour and Fine Gael, Sinn Féin is basing our arguments on the text of the Lisbon Treaty itself. Our posters, leaflets and this Guide list the Articles and Protocols of concern to us, and to the majority of the electorate. It seems that the government and their supporters in Fine Gael and Labour are uncomfortable discussing the Treaty itself and instead are trading on a politics of fear threatening loss of jobs, investment and influence if Lisbon is not passed. The surest way for this country to lose jobs and investment is if Fianna Fail remains in government. The surest way for this state to lose influence in Europe is through the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. We need change at home and in the EU, rejecting this government and their failed economic policies like NAMA and their failed European policies contained in Lisbon is the first step on the road to economic and social recovery.

21 septembre 2009 - [https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/17407](https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/17407)

Speaking in the aftermath of Jose Manuel Barroso’s visit to Ireland last weekend, Sinn Féin vice president Mary Lou McDonald accused the Commission President of being “dishonest on the impact of a second No Vote on the economy.” McDonald said: At a meeting in Brussels earlier this month Sinn Féin MEP Bairbre de Brún asked Jose Manuel Barroso whether the Commission will treat Ireland differently to other EU member states if Irish people again reject the Lisbon Treaty on 2 October. In reply President Barroso said: ‘There will be no discrimination against Irish people if there is a No vote. You will not hear from me any threat to Ireland.’ However, the Commission Presidents message in Ireland at the weekend was very different. Commissioner Barroso knows perfectly well that Ireland has no intention of leaving the EU. He also knows that rejecting the Lisbon Treaty will have no negative impact on inward investment or job creation. Despite this fact he repeated many of the scaremongering claims of the Yes side. These same claims were made by Treaty supporters in 2008. They were wrong then and they are wrong now. In July of this year the IDA confirmed that 2008 saw a 14 per cent increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) on the previous year. Indeed speaking to the Oireachtas sub-committee on the Future of Europe on 21 October 2008 Paul Rellis, Managing Director of Microsoft Ireland said, ‘I have not seen any material impact on jobs, market access or sales in recent months attributable to the rejection of the Lisbon Treaty’. The Referendum Commission chairman Mr. Justice Frank Clarke has also confirmed that the Lisbon Treaty ‘contains no provisions’ relating to investment or employment.
The biggest threat to investment and job creation is the current Fianna Fáil government and their failed economic policies. These same failed policies, undermining workers’ rights, family farms and public services are also contained in the Lisbon Treaty.

22 septembre 2009 - https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/17415

Sinn Féin TD for Dublin South Central Aengus Ó Snodaigh has today said that “the Lisbon Treaty, if ratified, will significantly weaken Ireland’s voice in Europe. No amount of scare mongering changes the fact that if Lisbon goes through Ireland will have far less power than we have today. The changes in Lisbon are a big deal. They are not irrelevant as the yes side tries to claim. In effect they amount to a power grab by the bigger countries. They will gain at the expense of smaller member states. That is why they are so determined to try and force it through. Now more than ever it is vital to protect national interests and to maintain our strength at the heart of Europe.” Deputy Ó Snodaigh said, “Ireland’s place is at the heart of Europe. Sinn Féin wants to see Ireland play a strong and positive role in shaping the future of there European Union. Unfortunately the Lisbon Treaty significantly weakens Ireland’s voice within the EU institutions. In effect it will push Ireland to the sidelines of Europe. Now more than ever it is vital to protect national interests and to maintain our position at the heart of Europe. No amount of scare mongering changes the fact that if Lisbon goes through we will have far less power in Europe than we have today. Article 9C proposes to change the way in which Qualified Majority votes are conducted at the Council of Ministers. If ratified Ireland’s voting strength at the Council will reduce from 2% to 0.8% while that of larger states such as Britain and Germany will increase by more than 50% to 12% and 17% respectively. The Council is meant to be where states are represented as equals, yet once again changes to Qualified Majority Voting procedures will disadvantage smaller states and benefit larger states.

Article 9D proposed a reduction in the size of the Commission, which when implemented will see Ireland and all other member states lose their Commissioner for five out of every fifteen years. This means that there would be no Irish voice at the table when laws are being initiated and written. As long as this provision remains in the Treaty no one can guarantee that Ireland will retain our permanent Commissioner. Anyone saying otherwise is telling lies. It is also important to note that claims by supporters of Lisbon that voting No will result in the loss of a Commissioner are entirely false. While the Nice treaty does state that when the EU reaches 27 member states the Commission must be reduced in size, it also states that this can only happen with the unanimous agreement of the
Council. This means that Ireland can only lose our Commissioner under Nice if the Irish government agrees to it. The Lisbon Treaty also removes a significant number of member state vetoes on highly sensitive policy areas such as international trade in Article 188C and on the application of the rules of competition and restrictions on state aid to the provision of services, including public services in Article 16. Most importantly Article 48 introduces what is called the ‘simplified revision procedure’ which would remove our automatic right to a referendum when future changes are being made to Treaties. It would allow the Council of Ministers to make significant changes to the policies and procedures of the European Union. While matters such as defence would still be subject to referenda, changes in areas of internal market rules or to the procedures of the EU would not.

Sinn Féin believes that, as with the Irish Constitution, the only people who should have the right to alter EU Treaty law are the people, no matter what the changes are. As a consequence of all of these changes, the voice of both the Irish state and the people would be significantly weakened if the Lisbon Treaty is ratified. On October 2nd Sinn Féin is urging voters to stand up for Ireland and reject the Lisbon Treaty.

23 septembre 2009 - https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/17427

Sinn Féin Dáil group leader Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin has described as “dangerous and disingenuous” government claims that a second No to Lisbon on October 2 would represent a “withdrawal from Europe” and would damage any prospect of “economic recovery.” The Cavan-Monaghan TD also asked “If the government have it so wrong on NAMA how can they be trusted on Lisbon?” Deputy Ó Caoláin said: In recent days we have seen a significant increase in outlandish claims by the government and their supporters on the yes side regarding the economic consequences of a second No to Lisbon on October 2nd. There seems to be no depths to which the government and their supporters will not go in an attempt to frighten voters into supporting the bad deal that is the Lisbon Treaty. The government’s claims have been described by the influential Wall Street Journal as ‘patent absurdities’. The editorial of September 16th described Brian Lenihan as ‘peddling phantom terrors to scare the Irish people into voting yes.’ And described the government's ‘chief strategy’ in the campaign as consisting of ‘preying on fears.’ Contrary to the government claims on inward investment made during the last referendum campaign the IDA have confirmed ‘that 2008 saw a 14 per cent increase in foreign direct investment.’ Contrary to the governments claims on jobs
Managing Director of Microsoft Ireland Paul Rellis told the Oireachtas sub-committee on the Future of Europe on 21 October 2008 that he had not, ‘seen any material impact on jobs, market access or sales in recent months attributable to the rejection of the Lisbon Treaty’ in 2008. The fact is that the biggest threat to the Irish economy comes from this government. They are out of their depth in dealing with this economic crisis and they are out of their depth on the EU stage. If Lisbon is passed our ability to take decisions to get the economy back on track will be weakened. We will have less political strength at EU meetings where key decisions are taken. Workers’ pay and conditions will come under further attack from the European Commission and European Court of Justice. The rural economy will be in danger as the government would be unable to veto the kind of deal which was promoted by Peter Mandleson at the World Trade Organisation last year. And the Commission would have new powers to subject vital sectors of the economy such as energy and public services to the rules of competition and restrictions on state aid. The government knows that the Lisbon Treaty is a bad deal for Ireland. That is why they want to talk about anything but the Treaty. Indeed you have to ask yourself if the government have got it so wrong on economic policy in general, and with NAMA in particular, how can they be trusted on the Lisbon Treaty?” ENDS

23 septembre 2009 - https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/17432

The question before us tonight is whether or not the Lisbon Treaty is good for the Irish economy. Before I outline why Sinn Féin believes that the Treaty is a bad deal for the Irish economy I want to address some of the arguments presented to us by Fianna Fáil and their supporters on the yes side. To date the yes campaign has been based on two arguments. Firstly we are told that that voting no would lead to loss of investment, jobs and in the words of Ireland for Europe, economic ruin. Secondly we are told of all the positive benefits of existing EU membership and existing EU Treaty provisions. Of course we are not debating our membership of the EU or the impact of previous Treaties on Ireland. We are debating the Lisbon Treaty. To date the yes side has offered no arguments as to how this Treaty if ratified will positively impact on the economy. Indeed it appears as if Fianna Fáil and their supporters in Fine Gael and Labour appear willing to talk about anything other than the Treaty itself. As referendum day approaches the yes side’s claims on investment and jobs become more outlandish. Of course the truth is very different. In July of this year IDA CEO Barry O'Leary said: ‘It should be noted that 2008 saw a 14 per cent increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) on the previous year bringing the total number of FDI investments in 2008 to
Saying no to Lisbon in 2008 had no impact whatsoever on inward investment. The same will be true if we rejected the Treaty on October 2nd.

Speaking to the Oireachtas sub-committee on the Future of Europe on 21 October 2008 Paul Rellis, Managing Director of Microsoft Ireland said, ‘I have not seen any material impact on jobs, market access or sales in recent months attributable to the rejection of the Lisbon Treaty’. Saying no to Lisbon in 2008 had no impact whatsoever on jobs. The same will be true if we rejected the Treaty on October 2nd. But don’t believe me. Listen to one of the most respected US financial newspapers. The Wall Street Journal in an editorial published on September 16th described the Irish government’s claims on jobs and investment as “patent absurdities”. They accused Brian Lenihan of “peddling phantom terrors to scare the Irish people into voting yes” and described the government “chief strategy” in the campaign as consisting of “preying on fears.” The editorial went on to state clearly that US investors were smart enough to know the difference between rejecting an EU Treaty and withdrawing from the EU and that US investors would not interpret a second No vote as any kind of withdrawal from the EU.

Despite all of this Brian Cowen keeps telling us that ‘were stronger in Europe’ and that we will loose jobs and investment if we vote no on October 2nd. Enda Kenny tells us that saying yes to Lisbon means saying ‘Yes to Jobs’. But voters need to ask themselves whether these political leaders are really in a position to offer advice on job creation. Brian Cowen has presided over the loss of 200,000 jobs in the last 12 months. Enda Kenny proposed the sacking of 14,000 public sector workers in Fine Gael’s April pre budget submission. It was Brian Cowen as Finance Minister who initiated the policies that led to the property bubble, the banking crisis, the collapse in tax revenues and the fall in Irish competitiveness. As a consequence thousands of Irish families now live in negative equity, have lost their jobs and are being driven into poverty. Meanwhile banks and developers are bailed out to the tune of over €50 billion, with the taxpayershouldering the risk. So long as Brian Cowen remains in charge jobs will continue to be lost and competitiveness will continue to decline. And if you think he’s bad, just wait till Enda Kenny is Taoiseach. And remember the Lisbon Treaty was negotiated by Fianna Fáil. It is their Treaty just as much as NAMA is their response to the banking crisis and savage cuts to vital public services is their response to the deficit in our public finances. It is these same policies, promoted and implemented by Fianna Fáil over the last two decades, that underlie the current economic crisis at home and across Europe. And these same failed and discredited right wing economic policies are contained in the Lisbon Treaty.
For the past 20 years the EU has been pushing a right wing economic agenda, promoting deregulation and liberalisation irrespective of its social impact. Existing EU rules attempt to limit member states spending and place restrictions on government support for failing companies. The EU aggressively promotes competition, in all areas of the economy, including public services. All of this weakens the ability of the state to manage the economy and leads to privatisation and inequality.

The Lisbon Treaty contains seven important articles and a protocol that together will further accelerate the EU's right wing neo-liberal economic agenda. Article’s 10A, 16, 2B and 188C give the European Commission significant powers over the negotiation and conclusion of international trade agreements. This will have a liberalising impact on agriculture and services, including health & education. In turn this will result in lower incomes for farming communities and increased privatisation of public services. Article 57 limits the ability of the EU to reverse recent liberalising policies of movement of capital to and from non-EU countries. At a time when the public is calling for greater regulation of international banking and finance such a restriction be utter madness. Article 115A strengthens the powers of the Commission to police what they call ‘excessive budget defects’ by member states giving it increased powers to limit government deficits to 3% of GDP. Article 176A sets out the EU’s new energy policy and explicitly places this in the context of the ‘market’ where the rules of competition and restrictions on state apply.

And finally the Protocol on the Internal Market provides a general rule on 'distortions to competition'. This is important in cases where say the rights of workers clash with the ‘rights’ of business. The Protocol will allow the Commission and Court of Justice to side with companies over workers every time pushing down wages and undermining collectively agreed terms and conditions. So to return to our central question, is the Lisbon Treaty good for the Irish economy. The answer is a resounding no. It is an out of date Treaty, containing discredited economic policies none of which allow Ireland or the EU to face the very serious economic challenges of our times. When listening to the Government on Lisbon voters need to constantly ask themselves, if they got it so wrong on NAMA, if they got it so wrong on employment, how can they be trusted on Lisbon. On October 2nd vote for a better deal for the Irish and European economy by voting No to Lisbon
Speaking today from the Ploughing Championships in Athy, Co Kildare where Sinn Féin is holding an information day on the Lisbon Treaty, Director of Sinn Féin’s referendum campaign Cllr Pádraig Mac Lochlainn described the Lisbon Treaty as ‘the single biggest threat to the future of family farming in a decade.’ Cllr. Mac Lochlainn said: The Lisbon Treaty and the significant new powers it gives to the European Commission is the single biggest threat to the future of family farming in Ireland in a decade. Article 2b of the Lisbon Treaty gives the EU exclusive rights over Common Commercial Policy. Article 188C makes qualified majority voting the general rule for international trade agreements, effectively ending the Irish governments veto in this area. Article 10 mandates the EU to end all ‘restrictions to international trade. What these articles do is transfer the power for the negotiation and conclusion of international agreements into the hands of the European Commission. This is a major departure and could have a detrimental effect on Irish farming and weakens the stance of all future Irish governments. The fact is that if Lisbon is passed the Irish government will immediately lose the ability to block the kind of trade deal that Peter Mandelson was seeking to agree at the World Trade Organisation talks in Geneva in 2008. That deal would have seen a massive drop in the income of family farms in Ireland and across Europe, forcing more families off the land. When you combine this with the fact that Ireland could lose it’s permanent Commissioner from 2014 and that our voting strength on the Council of Ministers will be cut by half it is clear that the Lisbon Treaty is a bad deal for Irish farming. Sinn Féin believes that both the government and the EU must promote family farming and the rural economy. The best way to do this is to vote no to Lisbon on October 2nd.

Speaking outside the Department of Foreign Affairs this morning Sinn Féin spokesperson on European Affairs Aengus Ó Snodaigh TD said “The Lisbon Treaty is crystal clear – Article 28 directly states that the Treaty ‘will lead to a common defence’ and no amount of guff from government spokespersons changes that fact one iota. The government’s guarantee on neutrality is meaningless. It won’t stop a common defence. It won’t stop the creation of mini-military alliances acting in the name of the EU and with EU resources. It won’t stop the government using even more tax payers’ money to support the EU Defence Agency. I would call on anyone who supports neutrality to reject this treaty out of hand. Deputy Ó Snodaigh said: Contrary to the claims of Fianna
Fáil and their supporters on the yes side, the Lisbon Treaty is crystal clear on the issue of a common defence policy. Article 28, which is one of the most readable articles in the Treaty states that Lisbon, ‘will lead to a common defence’. This is the first time that an EU Treaty will definitively state that there will be a common defence. The article then goes on to outline what that means in practice. The Treaty states that the common defence must be NATO compatible. The Treaty places new financial obligations on member states to contribute to a new start up fund; to progressively improve military capabilities; to provide rapid access to funds; and to support the European Defence Agency. In Sinn Féin’s view these obligations will lead to an increase in military spending by this state. The Treaty also includes a new provision for the creation of mini-military alliances, which may embark on military missions. While an Irish government may choose not to send Irish troops on such missions, they will happen in the name of the EU and use the resources of the EU. The Treaty also significantly expands the list of permissible military missions beyond the traditional mandate of peacekeeping and humanitarian aid. These include joint disarmament missions; assistance to non-EU countries in combating terrorism; and military advice and assistance. The first two additions were the justifications used for the US led invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, while the third can mean anything to anyone at any time. All of these provisions significantly undermine the positive neutrality of this state and draw us into a common defence. While Irish troops can only be deployed abroad with the consent of the Irish government, neutrality is about much more than what a state does with its defence forces. It is about the alliances a state is part of and the obligations that those alliances place on you. If you are opposed to an EU common defence, or if you are uncomfortable with the common defence framework that the Lisbon treaty outlines the on October 2nd your only choice is to Vote No.’

25 septembre 2009 - https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/17449

Speaking today at a press conference with Irish Regional Secretary of the Unite Trade Union Jimmy Kelly, Sinn Féin Vice President Mary Lou McDonald said that the “Lisbon Treaty was a bad deal for workers and would drive down wages across the EU.” She said that the government’s non-legally binding declaration on workers’ rights was worse than useless and had as much credibility as an election promise the week before polling. Ms. McDonald said: “Over the last few years there has been a deeply worrying trend within European Commission proposals to hollow out hard won gains on workers wages and conditions. A series of highly controversial rulings by the European Court of Justice known as the Viking, Laval, Ruffert and Luxembourg judgements have made the situation
even worse. Concerns about the driving down of pay and conditions were central to the no vote in the first Lisbon referendum but the government has completely failed to address them. Their non-legally binding declaration is worse than useless. It has as much credibility as an election promise the week before polling, laced with false sincerity and destined to be forgotten the moment the ballot boxes are closed. Neither the government nor EU leaders have any intention of altering the current direction of EU policy and the European Court of Justice both of which fundamentally undermine the pay and conditions of workers. The Lisbon Treaty is clear – it contains specific provisions that will strengthen the hand of the European Commission in its anti-worker drive and compel the European Court of Justice to make more anti-worker judgements in the future.

The Lisbon treaty is a bad deal for workers and will result in further and stronger downward pressure on wages across the EU if ratified and implemented. On October 2 stand up for workers rights, and for decent pay, by voting No to the Lisbon Treaty.’

Commenting on today’s opinion poll in the Irish Times Ms. McDonald said: With a week to go people are starting to look at the facts and the real implications of this Treaty. It is telling that the yes side have failed to put forward even one reason to support the treaty and instead are trying to frighten people. It is no surprise that those who are suffering most as a result of government and EU policy are those who are most strongly against this Treaty. The fact is that this is a bad deal for Ireland and it should be rejected.

26 septembre 2009 - https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/17454

Speaking today from a canvass in Tallaght, Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams has said that “a better deal is still possible despite the claims to the contrary from the government and their supporters on the yes side.” Mr Adams said: The government and their supporters on the ‘Yes’ side are telling you that a better deal is not possible. I don’t agree. There would not be a Good Friday Agreement if that approach had been adopted. During the early days of the Peace Process the Irish people were told that the Downing Street declaration was the only deal possible. But Sinn Féin kept negotiating. The Irish people were then told that the Framework Document was the best deal possible. We didn’t agree. In the end and as a result of political will and hard work we collectively negotiated the Good Friday Agreement. Just as a better deal was possible in the Peace Process, a better deal is possible in Europe. A deal based on democracy, equality and prosperity. A deal that replaces the outdated and
discredited Lisbon Treaty with a new deal for the new and challenging times in which we find ourselves. The first step in securing that better deal is voting ‘No’ to the Lisbon Treaty on 2nd October.

28 septembre 2009 - https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/17474

Reacting to news that the American Chamber of Commerce is calling for a 'Yes' vote in the second Lisbon Treaty referendum campaign, Sinn Féin Deputy leader Mary Lou McDonald said today: "It comes as no surprise that the American Chamber of Commerce supports the Lisbon Treaty. They have taken that position because Lisbon will lead to greater liberalization of public services, international trade and energy provision and downward pressure on wages. The kitchen sink is being thrown at this campaign by the yes side - from free flights in and out of the country to free ice-creams outside of Croke Park. "The position of the American Chamber of Commerce does not change the facts that this treaty has nothing to with the economy or job creation. This is more to do with certain multinationals seeking to retain the favour of the government and of the EU commission than it has to do with the impact of a 'No' vote. The only thing the EU has done in relation to multinationals locating here is to give approval to the Polish Government's €54.5 million aid package to Dell to relocate 1,900 jobs from Limerick to Poland. The announcement by the American Chamber of Commerce stands in stark contrast to comments by Paul Rellis, Managing Director of Microsoft Ireland who, speaking to the Oireachtas sub-committee on the Future of Europe on 21st October, 2008 said, 'I have not seen any material impact on jobs, market access or sales in recent months attributable to the rejection of the Lisbon Treaty.' Saying 'No' to Lisbon in 2008 had no impact whatsoever on jobs. The same will be true if we rejected the Treaty on 2nd October. The reality is that companies will continue to invest in Ireland on the basis of economic potential. Voting 'No' to the Lisbon Treaty poses no threat to that potential.

30 septembre 2009 - https://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/17488

Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams speaking in Dublin today as the Lisbon referendum campaign enters it’s final stages said, “This is a bad treaty negotiated by an incompetent government and I am calling on people to come out and reject it again on Friday. Mr. Adams said: This is a bad treaty negotiated by an incompetent government and I am calling on people to come out and reject it on Friday. The yes campaign have had to resort to negative campaigning and scaremongering because
they know this is a bad deal for Ireland. And those leading the yes side are the same politicians and business people who have led this country and the European Union into the worst economic crisis in 60 years. If Lisbon goes through the Irish electorate will be handing decisions about Ireland’s future over to an EU elite and once you hand that power away it is next to impossible to get it back. Fianna Fáil Minister Mary Hanafin admitted this morning that the Lisbon Treaty was unchanged when she acknowledged that it was the same treaty. If you want change, at home and across Europe then vote no. If you want a fairer, more democratic, more social, more peaceful Ireland and Europe then vote no. If you want an end to this political establishment and their developer, banker and big business friends then vote no.
THE LISBON TREATY
YOUR EXTENDED GUIDE
The Lisbon Treaty: your extended guide

The Referendum Commission

The Referendum Commission is an independent body set up by the Referendum Act 1998. The Chairman of the Commission is Mr Justice Frank Clarke. The other members are: Mr Kieran Coughlan, Clerk of Dáil Éireann; Ms Deirdre Lane, Clerk of Seanad Éireann; Ms Emily O’Reilly, Ombudsman and Mr John Buckley, Comptroller and Auditor General.

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This publication is also available in Irish, Braille, in an audio format through the National Council for the Blind of Ireland and in a sign language video.

Introduction

This handbook has one simple purpose: to help you, the voter, understand the Lisbon Treaty before you vote in the referendum on October 2nd.

Political parties and campaigning groups are putting forward various arguments about the likely consequences of the referendum decision, and they are using those arguments to encourage you to vote yes or to vote no.

The role of the Referendum Commission is to encourage you to vote and to explain, as factually and clearly as possible, what you are voting on.

This is a challenge, not only because the Treaty itself is a quite complex legal document but also because, in the heat of the debate, the no and yes campaigns will also be making statements and claims about what is and is not in the Lisbon Treaty itself.

We would urge you to see this document as an independent and unbiased account of the Treaty content. It is required by law to be impartial and factual, and that is what it is. Our role is to explain what is in the referendum proposal. The role of the political campaigners is to seek to convince you to vote for it or against it.

Read our account of the Lisbon Treaty, listen to their arguments, and then decide for yourself which way to vote.

Frank Clarke
Chairman
Referendum Commission

What you are being asked on October 2nd

When you go to vote, you will be asked to vote Yes or No to a proposal to amend the Constitution to allow Ireland to ratify the Lisbon Treaty and implement the provisions of that Treaty.

This booklet was printed using paper sourced from a sustainably managed forest.
What you are being asked to decide in the referendum

On referendum day October 2nd, you are being asked to decide whether or not to change the Constitution of Ireland. This proposed change would allow:

- Ireland to ratify the Lisbon Treaty
- Ireland to agree to certain decisions in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice in future with the approval of the Dáil and Seanad
- Ireland to agree at the European Council to certain changes to the EU treaties in the future without a referendum but only with the approval of the Dáil and Seanad

If all EU member states, including Ireland, ratify the Treaty, then it can come into effect. If Ireland or any other member state does not ratify the Treaty it cannot come into effect and the EU will continue to operate under its present rules.

See note 1 on page 17 for more information on the referendum proposal.

Developments since the 2008 Lisbon Treaty referendum

In the referendum on October 2nd, you are being asked a similar question to that which you were asked in June 2008: Do you want Ireland to ratify the Lisbon Treaty? The Lisbon Treaty itself has not been changed.

However, some decisions have been made since the June 2008 referendum which change the legal and political context in which this referendum is being held.

- The European Council has made a decision that, if the Lisbon Treaty comes into effect, the European Commission will continue to include a Commissioner nominated by each member state including Ireland.
- The European Council has also made a decision which sets out the effects of the Lisbon Treaty on Irish policy and law in a number of areas: the right to life, family and education; taxation; and security and defence. This decision is not part of the Lisbon Treaty, but is contained in a new international treaty which will be legally binding on all 27 member states of the EU. This new international treaty will come into force on the same day as the Lisbon Treaty, if the Lisbon Treaty is ratified by all the member states. The European Council has agreed that protocols will be added to a later EU treaty to give full effect in EU law to this decision (this is likely to be a Treaty of Accession for a new member state – such as Croatia or Iceland). This is because provisions in a EU treaty and any protocol to it become part of EU law and can then be enforced by the European Court of Justice and other courts in the same way as other EU laws.
- The European Council has also issued a solemn declaration on social issues including workers’ rights. This is a political statement and is not legally binding.

See note 2 on page 21 for more information on this decision and declarations.
The Lisbon Treaty explained

The Lisbon Treaty deals with a number of different issues. In the following pages we explain the main issues.

Changes to how the EU makes decisions

The Lisbon Treaty proposes to make changes to some of the EU’s institutions and bodies. The European Commission, the Council (of Ministers), the European Council (Heads of Government) and the European Parliament are the main institutions affected by these proposed changes. The other EU institutions are the Court of Justice of the European Communities, the European Central Bank and the European Court of Auditors.

In order to understand the proposed changes, it is necessary to know how the rules operate at present.

The European Commission

**PRESENT SITUATION:** The Commission is composed of one member (a European Commissioner) nominated by each member state but is independent of the member states. At present, there are 27 member states and therefore 27 Commissioners. The Commission’s role is to propose policies and laws, implement EU decisions and ensure that EU law is respected by member states.

**PROPOSED CHANGE:** A new Commission is due to be appointed towards the end of 2009. If the Lisbon Treaty is not in force when this happens, then the number of Commissioners must be reduced by virtue of the current laws. If the Lisbon Treaty is in force, then the European Commission will include a Commissioner nominated by each member state including Ireland.

SEE NOTE 3 ON PAGE 24 FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CHANGES IN THE COMMISSION

The Council (of Ministers)

The Council (of Ministers) is composed of one government minister from each member state. Each member state is usually represented by the minister responsible for the
subject that is being discussed. For example, the Agriculture Council is composed of the 27 Ministers for Agriculture, the Transport Council is composed of the 27 Ministers for Transport and so on. The Council (of Ministers) makes the final decisions on legislation either alone or in co-operation with the European Parliament.

**QUALIFIED MAJORITY VOTING**

At present, some decisions by the Council (of Ministers) must be made unanimously while others are made by Qualified Majority Voting (QMV). Under the QMV system, each member state’s vote is given a weighting. This is not directly proportional to the population, but gives smaller countries a greater share than their populations would warrant under a directly proportional arrangement.

If ratified, the Treaty would increase the number of areas where QMV will apply. It would change the QMV voting system within the Council from 2014.

**MEETINGS**

At present, the Council (of Ministers) takes decisions in private and holds some policy debates in public. If the Lisbon Treaty is ratified, the Council will meet in public when a law is being debated and voted on.

**PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL**

At present, the Council (of Ministers) is chaired by the representative of the member state holding the six-month rotating Presidency. If the Lisbon Treaty is ratified, this will continue for all Councils except the Foreign Affairs Council which will be chaired by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

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**The European Council**

The European Council is composed of the heads of government or state of each member state together with the President of the Commission. The European Council gives overall political direction to the EU.

The European Council is chaired at present on a rotating basis by the head of state or government of the member state holding the six-month EU Presidency. The Lisbon Treaty provides for a new full-time post of President of the European Council. The President would be elected (by qualified majority) by the European Council for two and a half years and could be re-elected once for a similar term thus serving a potential total of five years. The President would chair and co-ordinate the European Council’s work.

**The European Parliament**

The members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are directly elected by the people eligible to vote in the member states.

**PRESENT SITUATION:** The Parliament adopts legislation jointly with the Council (of Ministers) in a number of areas, for example, in relation to consumer protection and environmental issues. [It is consulted by the Council (of Ministers) in some other areas.] This decision-making process is called co-decision. At present, the European Parliament and the Council have joint decision-making powers over most of the EU’s budget but the Council has the final say over certain spending items. The Parliament also has certain supervisory functions over the European Commission.

**PROPOSED CHANGES:** The Lisbon Treaty proposes to increase the decision-making powers of the European Parliament. If the Treaty comes into force, co-decision would apply to a number of new areas. These include agriculture, asylum and immigration from non-EU countries.

If the Lisbon Treaty comes into force then the European Parliament and the Council (of Ministers) will have joint decision-making powers over the entire EU budget.
The decision-making process

The usual way in which EU laws are made is called ‘co-decision’. This is what happens: the Commission makes a proposal; the Council (of Ministers) and the European Parliament discuss it and may each make changes; and the final decision is then made by the Council and the Parliament jointly.

There are specific decision-making procedures in relation to Common Foreign and Security Policy where decisions are made by the Council alone.

The Lisbon Treaty proposes to rename the co-decision procedure as the ‘Ordinary Legislative Procedure’. It also proposes to rename the decision-making procedures whereby the Council makes decisions alone. These would be called ‘Special Legislative Procedures’.

Other proposed changes

Role of National Parliaments

At present, national parliaments are not directly involved in EU decision-making. If the Treaty enters into force then national parliaments – in Ireland’s case, the Dáil and Seanad - will have time to vet proposals and offer an opinion.

If a number of national parliaments object to a proposal it must be reviewed. Each national parliament has two votes, one for each house of parliament; the Dáil and Seanad have one vote each. In certain circumstances, the review must take place if one third of the national parliaments request this. In the case of judicial co-operation in criminal matters and police co-operation, fewer national parliaments – a quarter - would be able to require a review. The Treaty would also give national parliaments a specific role in relation to proposed changes to the Treaties.

Power to change the Treaties

At present the Treaties governing the EU can be amended only by the member states first unanimously agreeing to an amending treaty, which must then be approved by each member state in accordance with its own constitutional requirements. In almost all cases this involves parliamentary approval. In some cases, for example in Ireland, a referendum may be required.

The Lisbon Treaty now proposes to give the European Council (Heads of Government) the power to propose changes to certain parts of the governing Treaties, although this proposed power is quite limited. Any such change cannot increase the competence of the EU – the scope of its powers (see page 27). In addition, any such proposals must be agreed unanimously by the European Council, meaning that any one member state may veto such a proposal. If the European Council does agree a proposed change, then in order for it to come into effect, it must be ratified by the member states in accordance with their own constitutional requirements. This may require a referendum in Ireland as happens at present.

The Lisbon Treaty also proposes to give the European Council the power to amend the Treaties so as to allow Qualified Majority Voting (see pages 6 & 25) to operate in certain areas where unanimity is now required. It will also give it the power to apply the Ordinary Legislative Procedure (see page 8) in certain areas where a Special Legislative Procedure applies at present. Any such proposal must be agreed unanimously by the European Council.
This means that any member state may veto such a proposal. If the European Council does agree a proposed change, any national parliament may prevent these changes coming into effect. Under the proposed amendment to the Constitution of Ireland, the approval of the Dáil and Seanad will be required for Ireland to agree to such proposed changes. Such changes would not require a referendum in Ireland.

The power to change from unanimity to Qualified Majority Voting, or from a Special Legislative Procedure to the Ordinary Legislative Procedure, does not extend to military and defence issues.

It could apply, for example, to taxation where unanimity is required at present. However, in this case, any such proposed change could be vetoed by Ireland.

Citizens’ initiative

The Lisbon Treaty proposes that a citizens’ initiative would allow for at least one million citizens of a significant number of member states to ask the Commission to bring forward proposals on a particular issue to implement the Treaties. The Commission would be obliged to consider the proposal. The details of how this would operate have yet to be decided.

Enhanced co-operation

Enhanced co-operation (sometimes called flexibility) is the term used for the procedure which allows a number of member states to use the institutions of the EU to promote closer co-operation among those member states.

At present there are various conditions to be met before these provisions are used. Among these conditions are:

- They do not apply to security and defence issues
- A minimum of eight member states must be involved
- The aim must be to further the objectives of the EU
- The principles of the Treaties must be respected
- It should not affect the body of decisions taken to date by the EU (known as the acquis communautaire) or the rights and interests of other member states
- It must be used only as a last resort (it must be clear that the aim cannot be achieved within a reasonable time by using normal EU procedures)

If the Lisbon Treaty is ratified, the number of member states required to be involved will be nine rather than eight and the exclusion of security and defence issues will be removed.

The Lisbon Treaty also provides that the procedure cannot be used in areas where the EU has exclusive competence (see pages 13 & 27). If it is being used in relation to Common Foreign and Security Policy it must be unanimously approved by the Council. In any other areas, it must be backed by the Commission, approved by the Council (by QMV) and approved by the European Parliament.
Joining the EU
The Lisbon Treaty proposes to put the present rules for joining the EU into the governing Treaties.
At present, certain conditions must be met before a new country can join the EU. It is now proposed by the Lisbon Treaty that these conditions are referred to in the governing Treaties. This means that they cannot be changed by the European Council and can be changed only by another change to the Treaties.
The conditions are:
- The country must have stable political institutions which guarantee the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities
- The country must have a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU
- The country must have the ability to take on the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union
- The EU itself must be able to assimilate the new country and, at the same time, maintain the impetus of European integration

Leaving the EU
At present, there are no specific arrangements for withdrawing from membership of the EU. The Lisbon Treaty provides a process for withdrawal.

Areas of competence
The EU has the competence or power to decide policies and make laws only in those areas which are set out in the Treaties. This has always been the case.
The Lisbon Treaty would specify who has the power to do what by listing the areas in which:
- The EU has exclusive competence – this means that the decisions must be made at EU level and not at member state level
- The EU and member states have joint competence
- The member states have exclusive competence but the EU may support and help to co-ordinate

The Treaty does not propose to give the EU any new exclusive competence but does propose some changes to the other areas.

Areas where Ireland may opt in or opt out
Ireland is not obliged to take part in, or be bound by, decisions in what is known as the ‘Area of Freedom, Security and Justice’. This covers issues such as asylum, immigration, border controls, judicial co-operation and police co-operation.
Ireland and the UK may each decide to be involved in particular issues – they may opt in or opt out of particular decisions. This special arrangement for Ireland and the UK has been in existence since these areas came within the remit of the EU in 1999. In practice, Ireland has opted in to a number of decisions, for example, in relation to asylum and judicial co-operation and has not exercised its right to opt in to others, for example, border controls.
The Treaty does not change the opt-out for Ireland and the UK. Ireland has issued a non-legally binding declaration that it proposes to opt in to decisions in this area to the maximum extent possible and to review the entire opt-out clause within three years.
The wording of the proposed amendment to the Constitution proposes to allow Ireland to opt in to particular decisions only with the approval of the Dáil and Seanad. This would continue the present constitutional requirement. It also allows for Ireland to withdraw totally from the opt-out, again only if there is prior Dáil and Seanad approval.
Common Foreign and Security Policy

Common Foreign and Security Policy covers foreign policy and defence policy. The main decisions in this area must be made unanimously. The proposed change to the Constitution would continue the present arrangements for Ireland’s military neutrality. This area is also covered by the European Council decision on the effects of the Lisbon Treaty on Irish laws and policies (see pages 3 & 21).

Mutual Assistance

The Lisbon Treaty provides that member states have an obligation to aid and assist another member state which is the victim of armed aggression. This assistance is to be in accordance with the UN Charter. The type of aid and assistance that is required is not specified. Mutual assistance is expressly stated not to compromise the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain member states which includes Ireland’s policy on neutrality.

Solidarity Clause

This is a clause in the Lisbon Treaty which states that the EU and the member states are obliged to assist each other if one is the victim of a terrorist attack or a natural or man-made disaster. The precise details of this co-operation would have to be agreed unanimously by the Council.

Charter of Fundamental Rights

The Treaty proposes to give the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union the same legal value as the main treaties.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights lists the civil, political, social and economic rights recognised by the EU. These are listed under the headings of Dignity, Freedoms, Equality, Solidarity, Citizens’ Rights, and Justice. Specific principles apply to groups such as older people, children and people with disabilities.

It is proposed that the Charter will apply to the EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and to the member states when they are implementing EU law. The Treaty states that the Charter does not extend the field of application of EU law or give the EU any new area of competence.

The rights set out in the Charter are not absolute. Some are already provided for in the Constitution of Ireland, and/or in EU law and/or in the European Convention on Human Rights. Some are statements of principle rather than specific rights. Some are stated to be subject to, regulated by, or in accordance with national laws. The precise effect of the Charter is dependent on the right invoked, the limitations on it, the manner in which it is protected by the Charter and the competence of the EU in the area in question.

European Convention on Human Rights

All the member states have ratified the European Convention on Human Rights. The Treaty proposes that the EU itself (that is, not just the member states individually) accede to that Convention. If this accession occurs then the EU would be required, in all of its activities, to respect the European Convention on Human Rights. Individuals who believe that their rights under the Convention have been breached by the EU could then bring a case against the EU before the European Court of Human Rights.
The proposal to change the Constitution is contained in the Twenty-Eighth Amendment of the Constitution (Treaty of Lisbon) Bill 2009. It proposes to amend Article 29.4 of the Constitution. Article 29.4 deals with international relations.

The current wording of Article 29.4 of the Constitution of Ireland is as follows:

1° The executive power of the State in or in connection with its external relations shall in accordance with Article 28 of this Constitution be exercised by or on the authority of the Government.

2° For the purpose of the exercise of any executive function of the State in or in connection with its external relations, the Government may to such extent and subject to such conditions, if any, as may be determined by law, avail of or adopt any organ, instrument, or method of procedure used or adopted for the like purpose by the members of any group or league of nations with which the State is or becomes associated for the purpose of international co-operation in matters of common concern.

3° The State may become a member of the European Coal and Steel Community (established by Treaty signed at Paris on the 18th day of April, 1951), the European Economic Community (established by Treaty signed at Rome on the 25th day of March, 1957) and the European Atomic Energy Community (established by Treaty signed at Rome on the 25th day of March, 1957). The State may ratify the Single European Act (signed on behalf of the Member States of the Communities at Luxembourg on the 17th day of February, 1986, and at the Hague on the 28th day of February, 1986).

4° The State may ratify the Treaty on European Union signed at Maastricht on the 7th day of February, 1992, and may become a member of that Union.

5° The State may ratify the Treaty of Amsterdam amending the Treaty on European Union, the Treaties establishing the European Communities and certain related Acts signed at Amsterdam on the 2nd day of October, 1997.

6° The State may exercise the options or discretions provided by or under Articles 1.11, 2.5 and 2.15 of the Treaty referred to in subsection 5° of this section and the second and fourth Protocols set out in the said Treaty but any such exercise shall be subject to the prior approval of both Houses of the Oireachtas.

7° The State may ratify the Treaty of Nice amending the Treaty on European Union, the Treaties establishing the European Communities and certain related Acts signed at Nice on the 26th day of February, 2001.

8° The State may exercise the options or discretions provided by or under Articles 1.6, 1.9, 1.11, 1.12, 1.13 and 2.1 of the Treaty referred to in subsection 7° of this section.
but any such exercise shall be subject to the prior approval of both Houses of the Oireachtas.

9° The State shall not adopt a decision taken by the European Council to establish a common defence pursuant to Article 1.2 of the Treaty referred to in subsection 7° of this section where that common defence would include the State.

10° No provision of this Constitution invalidates laws enacted, acts done or measures adopted by the State which are necessitated by the obligations of membership of the European Union or of the Communities, or prevents laws enacted, acts done or measures adopted by the European Union or by the Communities or by institutions thereof, or by bodies competent under the Treaties establishing the Communities, from having the force of law in the State.

11° The State may ratify the Agreement relating to Community Patents drawn up between the Member States of the Communities and done at Luxembourg on the 15th day of December, 1989.

PROPOSED CHANGE

It is proposed to amend Article 29.4 by changing subsection 3° and replacing subsections 4° – 11° by six new subsections. (Script in bold italics is an explanation of the changes.)

The amended subsection 3° would read as follows:

“3° The State may become a member of the European Atomic Energy Community (established by Treaty signed at Rome on the 25th day of March, 1957).”

(This involves deleting the references to the European Coal and Steel Community and to the European Economic Community. The European Coal and Steel Community no longer exists. The ratification of the Lisbon Treaty would make the reference to the European Economic Community redundant.)

It is proposed to repeal the existing subsections 4° – 11° and replace them by six new subsections:

“4° Ireland affirms its commitment to the European Union within which the Member States of that Union work together to promote peace, shared values and the well-being of their peoples.”

(This is a new provision with no corresponding provision in the existing Constitution. It reflects the wording in the Lisbon Treaty and is intended to express the commitment of Ireland to the EU and its values.)

“5° The State may ratify the Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, signed at Lisbon on the 13th day of December 2007 ("Treaty of Lisbon"), and may be a member of the European Union established by virtue of that Treaty.”

(This allows for the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. The existing provisions ratifying earlier treaties are no longer necessary as the Lisbon Treaty incorporates those treaties.)

“6° No provision of this Constitution invalidates laws enacted, acts done or measures adopted by the State, before, on or after the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, that are necessitated by the obligations of membership of the European Union referred to in subsection 5° of this section or of the European Atomic Energy Community, or prevents laws enacted, acts done or measures adopted by—

i the said European Union or the European Atomic Energy Community, or by institutions thereof,

ii the European Communities or European Union existing immediately before the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, or by institutions thereof, or

iii bodies competent under the treaties referred to in this section, from having the force of law in the State.”

(This is similar to the existing subsection 10° and allows for the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty to be put into effect in Ireland.)
"7° The State may exercise the options or discretions—

i to which Article 20 of the Treaty on European Union relating to enhanced cooperation applies,

ii under Protocol No. 19 on the Schengen acquis integrated into the framework of the European Union annexed to that treaty and to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union [formerly known as the Treaty establishing the European Community], and

iii under Protocol No. 21 on the position of the United Kingdom and Ireland in respect of the area of freedom, security and justice, so annexed, including the option that the said Protocol No. 21 shall, in whole or in part, cease to apply to the State,

but any such exercise shall be subject to the prior approval of both Houses of the Oireachtas.”

(This is similar to the existing subsections 6° and 8°. It allows Ireland to opt in or opt out of provisions in relation to enhanced co-operation and certain aspects of the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice subject to the prior approval of the Houses of the Oireachtas – that is the Dáil and Seanad.

The Schengen acquis is the body of law dealing with the Schengen area which is an area of free movement involving many member states of the EU other than Ireland and the UK. Ireland is entitled to take part in certain aspects of Schengen, notably police co-operation. The Protocol mentioned in iii is the one which allows Ireland to opt out of the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice. This clause would allow Ireland to withdraw from the opt-out. Ireland has made a declaration which is attached to the Lisbon Treaty that it will examine this opt-out within 3 years - declarations are not legally binding.)

"8° The State may agree to the decisions, regulations or other acts—

i under the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union authorising the Council of the European Union to act other than by unanimity,

ii under those treaties authorising the adoption of the ordinary legislative procedure, and

iii under subparagraph [d] of Article 82.2, the third subparagraph of Article 83.1 and paragraphs 1 and 4 of Article 86 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, relating to the area of freedom, security and justice, but the agreement to any such decision, regulation or act shall be subject to the prior approval of both Houses of the Oireachtas.”

(This deals with the provisions in the Lisbon Treaty which allow the European Council to agree certain changes to the governing Treaties. Some of these changes could come into effect only when ratified by the member states in accordance with their own requirements – this could mean that a referendum would be required in Ireland. This amendment to the Constitution would allow Ireland to agree at the European Council to allow certain decisions which currently require unanimity to be made by QMV and certain decisions currently made by the Council to be made by joint decision of the Council and the European Parliament but this could be done only with the prior approval of the Oireachtas – the Dáil and Seanad.)

"9° The State shall not adopt a decision taken by the European Council to establish a common defence pursuant to Article 42 of the Treaty on European Union where that common defence would include the State.”

(This is similar to the existing subsection 9°, recast to take account of the Lisbon Treaty.)

The existing subsection 11° is effectively redundant as the Luxembourg Patents Convention never came into force.

Note 2: More information on the European Council decision on the effects of the Treaty of Lisbon on Irish laws and policies

In June 2009, the European Council made a decision setting out the effects of the Treaty of Lisbon on certain Irish laws and policies. These relate to the:

- Right to life, family and education
- Taxation
- Security and defence

RIGHT TO LIFE, FAMILY AND EDUCATION

The European Council decision states that nothing in the Lisbon Treaty attributing legal status to the Charter of Fundamental Rights or in its provisions on the Area of Freedom,
Security and Justice affects the scope and application of the articles of the Constitution of Ireland which deal with the right to life (Article 40.3.1°); the protection of the family (Article 41) and the protection of rights in respect of education (Articles 42 and 44.2.4° and 44.2.5°).

**TAXATION**

The European Council decision states that nothing in the Lisbon Treaty makes any change of any kind for any member state in relation to the powers of the EU in respect of taxation. (Decisions by the EU on direct taxation must be made unanimously).

**SECURITY AND DEFENCE**

The European Council (Heads of Government) decision sets out the guiding principles of the EU’s international actions. These are democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law. The EU’s common security and defence policy is an integral part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. It provides the EU with the operational capacity to undertake missions for peace-keeping, conflict prevention and strengthening international security in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

The European Council (Heads of Government) decision goes on to state that the EU’s common security and defence policy does not prejudice the security and defence policy of each member state, including Ireland, or the obligations of any member state. It further states that the Treaty of Lisbon does not affect or prejudice Ireland’s traditional policy of military neutrality. It will be for each member state to determine the nature of aid or assistance to be provided to another member state which is the object of a terrorist attack or the victim of armed aggression on its territory.

Any decision to move to a common defence requires a unanimous decision of the European Council. It would be a matter for each member state, including Ireland, to decide whether or not to adopt a common defence. It is also a matter for each member state to decide whether to participate in permanent structured cooperation or the European Defence Agency. The Treaty of Lisbon does not provide for the creation of a European army or for any form of conscription. It does not affect the right of Ireland or any other member state to determine the nature and volume of its defence and security expenditure and the nature of its defence capabilities. It will be a matter for Ireland or any other member state, to decide whether or not to participate in any military operation.

**LEGAL STATUS OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL DECISION**

This decision is contained in a new international treaty which will be legally binding on all 27 member states of the EU. It is not part of the Lisbon Treaty. The European Council has agreed that protocols will be added to a later EU Treaty to give full effect in EU law to these decisions (this is likely to be a Treaty of Accession for a new member state – such as Croatia or Iceland). The main difference between this international treaty and a protocol to a EU Treaty is that an international treaty, while binding on the parties who have signed it, does not have an enforcement mechanism. A EU Treaty and any protocol to it becomes part of EU law and is enforceable by the European Court of Justice in the same way as other EU laws.

The new international treaty will come into force on the same day as the Lisbon Treaty, if the Lisbon Treaty is ratified by all the member states.

**IRISH GOVERNMENT DECLARATION**

At the meeting of the European Council at which this decision was made, Ireland made a declaration in relation to military neutrality. This sets out Ireland’s policies and practices. It reiterates that, in order for members of the Irish Defence Forces to take part in overseas operations including those carried out under the European common security and defence policy, the following requirements must be met:

- Authorisation of the operation by the Security Council or the General Assembly of the United Nations
- The agreement of the Irish Government and
- The approval of Dáil Éireann

This declaration will be associated with the instrument of ratification if Ireland does ratify the Lisbon Treaty.
SOLEMN DECLARATION ON WORKERS’ RIGHTS
This is a declaration by the European Council that it confirms the high importance which
the EU attaches to:

- Social progress and the protection of workers’ rights
- Public services
- The responsibility of member states for the delivery of
education and health services
- The essential role and wide discretion of national,
  regional and local authorities in providing, commissioning
  and organising services of general economic interest

The solemn declaration is a political statement. It is not legally binding.

NOTE 3: More information about proposed changes to the
European Commission

IF THE LISBON TREATY DOES NOT COME INTO FORCE
The present rules provide that the number of Commissioners must be less than the
number of member states once the number of member states reaches 27. There
are currently 27 member states so, if the Lisbon Treaty is not ratified, then the next
Commission must have less than 27 members. The current rules provide that the Council
must decide, unanimously, how many Commission members there will be. The members
must be chosen according to a rotation system based on the principle of equality and the
Council must decide, unanimously, how exactly this is to be implemented.

IF THE LISBON TREATY DOES COME INTO FORCE
If the Treaty comes into force then all member states will nominate a Commissioner
for the period 2009 – 2014. The Lisbon Treaty provides a mechanism for the possible
reduction of the size of the Commission from 27. There are currently 27 member states at present. So, if the number of member states
remains the same, there would be 18 Commissioners in the period 2014 – 2019.

Under this mechanism the right to nominate a Commissioner would rotate among the
member states on an equal basis. This means that each member state would nominate a
member of the Commission for two out of every three Commissions (that is, for 10 years
out of every 15 year cycle).

However, the European Council has decided that, if the Lisbon Treaty is ratified, it will not
implement this mechanism in 2014 and will instead continue the present arrangement
whereby each member state nominates a Commissioner.

NOTE 4: More information about voting in the Council

CHANGES WITHIN QUALIFIED MAJORITY VOTING
At present, each member state has a weighted vote as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France, Germany, Italy, the UK</td>
<td>29 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain, Poland</td>
<td>27 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Portugal</td>
<td>12 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria, Bulgaria, Sweden</td>
<td>10 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Lithuania, Slovakia</td>
<td>7 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Slovenia</td>
<td>4 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Qualified Majority Vote (QMV) at present requires 255 weighted votes – that is almost
74% of the total. This system would remain in place until 2014. If the Treaty is ratified,
from 2014, a qualified majority (also to be known as a double majority) will require that
decisions must meet two conditions:

a) 55% of the member states must agree: (for example, while
there are 27 member states, 15 member states must agree);

b) those member states supporting the decision must
represent 65% of the EU population.

In addition, at least four member states must be opposed to a decision in order for it
to be blocked. This ensures that decisions cannot be blocked by just three of the larger
member states acting together.

If there are fewer than four member states opposed to a decision then the qualified majority
will be deemed to have been reached even if the population criterion is not met.

AREAS TO WHICH QUALIFIED MAJORITY VOTING APPLIES
At present, QMV applies to decisions on a wide range of issues including agriculture,
competition rules, consumer protection and the environment. It is proposed to apply QMV
to a number of new areas – these include energy, asylum and immigration from non-EU
countries. Certain decisions will continue to be made unanimously – they include decisions
on defence and taxation. This means that any member state may veto a proposed change
in these areas.
NOTE 5: More information on the role of National Parliaments

The process would operate as follows:

- The national parliaments must be provided with all relevant policy and legislative documents (for example, green papers, white papers, proposals for directives and regulations).
- The parliaments would ordinarily have eight weeks to consider the proposals.
- The parliaments may send a ‘reasoned opinion’ to the EU institutions on whether draft legislation complies with the principle of subsidiarity – which is that decisions should be taken at local or national level, rather than at EU level, if possible.
- If enough national parliaments vote to send a reasoned opinion, the draft legislation must be reviewed.
- Each national parliament has two votes. The Dáil and Seanad have one vote each. In general, one third of the available votes (18 at present) are required to ensure a review; one quarter of the votes (14 at present) is enough in the case of draft legislation in the areas of judicial co-operation in criminal matters and police co-operation.
- The review does not mean that the proposal must be withdrawn. If the proposer (usually, the Commission) wishes to continue with the proposal, it must set out a reasoned opinion on why it considers that the principle of subsidiarity has not been breached.

NOTE 6: More information on the competence of the EU

The Treaties governing the EU give the EU power to make laws and policies in certain areas and they allow for co-operation with or support for national governments in other areas. The EU has no competence in any area that is not mentioned in the Treaties. The Lisbon Treaty proposes to list the areas in which:

- The EU has exclusive competence – this means that the decisions must be made at EU level and not at national government level.
- The EU and national governments have joint competence.
- The national governments have exclusive competence but the EU may support and help to co-ordinate.

This list reflects the existing areas over which the EU has competence. The Lisbon Treaty provides for no new exclusive competences. It would add areas of joint EU competence with the member states. These include energy and aspects of the environment and public health.

Under the third heading where member states have exclusive competence but the EU may provide support and co-ordination, it would add tourism, sport, civil protection and administrative co-operation.

The following are the areas as listed in the Lisbon Treaty.

EU EXCLUSIVE COMPETENCE

The EU is exclusively responsible for:

- Customs Union
- Establishment of competition rules necessary for the functioning of the internal market
- Monetary policy for member states which use the euro
- Conservation of the biological resources of the sea as part of the common fisheries policy
- Common commercial policy
- The conclusion of an international agreement when this is within the framework of EU legislation or when it is necessary to help the EU exercise an internal competence or if there is a possibility of the common rules being affected or of their range being changed.
JOINT COMPETENCE OF EU AND MEMBER STATES
The EU and the member states are jointly responsible for:

- Internal market
- Social policy with regard to specific aspects defined in the Treaty
- Economic, social and territorial cohesion
- Agriculture and fisheries except for the conservation of the biological resources of the sea
- Environment (the Treaty includes specific reference to climate change)
- Consumer protection
- Transport
- Trans-European Networks
- Energy
- Area of Freedom, Security and Justice
- Common safety concerns with regard to aspects of public health
- Research, technological development
- Space
- Development co-operation and humanitarian aid

MEMBER STATES EXCLUSIVE COMPETENCE BUT EU MAY PROVIDE SUPPORT AND CO-ORDINATION
Member states are exclusively responsible for the rules in these areas but the EU may provide support and co-ordination – this cannot include harmonisation:

- Protection and improvement of human healthcare
- Industry
- Culture
- Tourism
- Education, professional training, youth
- Sport
- Civil protection
- Administrative co-operation

SPECIFIC ARRANGEMENTS
There are specific arrangements in the Treaties for the co-ordination of economic and employment policies. Common Foreign and Security Policy is also governed by a special system.
The Referendum Commission
18 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2.
Tel: (01) 6395695
Fax: (01) 6395684
LoCall: 1890 270 970
E-mail: refcom@ombudsman.gov.ie
Web: www.lisbontreaty2009.ie
(a) Fianna Fáil

"The Lisbon Reform Treaty will improve how the EU operates and it will help small business. This is why I am voting YES."  
Patricia Callan, Director,  
Small Firms Association (SFA).

"An Ireland at the heart of the EU with reformed, strengthened, and more accountable institutions, is infinitely preferable to becoming a semi-detached obstacle to common progress across a continent."  
Paul Reilly, General Manager,  
Microsoft Ireland.

"More jobs are likely to be created in US companies here if Ireland is at the heart of Europe and influencing decisions at EU level. Adopting an isolationist policy may cause future investment and future jobs to be lost to Ireland."  
Paul Duffy, President of the American Chamber of Commerce in Ireland.

"A vote for Lisbon is a vote for jobs, a vote for investment, a vote for growth and a vote for economic security."

www.strongerwiththeurope.ie

KEEP OUR COMMISSIONER
VOTE YES

A YES VOTE IS THE BEST VOTE FOR JOBS AND WORKERS’ RIGHTS

WE’RE STRONGER TOGETHER

FIANNA FÁIL
THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

[Image of posters]
None of those who are calling for a NO vote, Sinn Fein, The United Kingdom Independence Party, Libertas or Col/Youth Defence have EVER created jobs in Ireland.

People who know about creating jobs in Ireland in big and in small firms are calling for a YES vote. And it’s not just business leaders who are asking for a YES vote. Key Irish Trade Union leaders, SIPTU, ICTU have joined the call, as have farming leaders.

All have one thing in common – they see a YES vote as the Best Vote for jobs, prosperity and for future progress.

*THE LISBON TREATY IS VITAL FOR WORKERS AND CITIZENS FOR TWO REASONS*

- It will make the European Union fit for purpose in the 21st century, and help to deliver jobs, investment, and improvements to living standards that this country so badly needs.
- The Charters of Fundamental Rights will become EU law, and will further enhance workers’ rights.

Brid Hehir, General Secretary, CIEU

- The Irish minimum wage of €8.65 is set by Irish law and applies to all workers in Ireland. The suggestion that it can be changed by the EU is not true.

FARMING LEADERS HAVE EMPHASISED THE IMPORTANCE OF A YES VOTE TO FARMING AND FOR JOBS IN THE IRISH FOOD INDUSTRY.

- The IFA is one of the first National organisations to give a unanimous recommendation for a YES vote.
- “The overriding reason for voting YES struck a chord with farmers.”

Paddy Wood, President, IFA Farmers’ Association.

- The National Council of the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers’ Association has unanimously endorsed the Lisbon Treaty.

- Virtually no element of the NO camp is dependent upon, or even interested in, international trade… Farmers should not leave their future to these people. The simple way to ensure that the NO camp do not lead the Irish nation into a dead end is to vote YES.

Jackie Callot, President, Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers’ Association.

*YES ON 2ND OCTOBER*

“Ireland’s future economic success depends on our full commitment to a strong and confident Europe. We must reinforce our position at the heart of the world’s largest single market and avoid any marginalisation of Ireland or the loss of our strong voice by giving a resounding YES to this referendum.”

Barry O’Leary, CEO, IDA Ireland.

“My final advice to those minded to vote No is to look at some of those praying for the same result – the British Conservatives, the narrow, blinkered nationalists, the racists, and the fascists. Do you want to be in bed with them? Europe is...a far far better deal for the working people of Ireland and Europe than any of that lot ever offered.”

John Monks, General Secretary, European Trade Union Confederation

IT’S WORTH REMINDING OURSELVES THAT:

- 86% of our top 500 Chief Executive Officers consider ratification to be either extremely important or very important for Ireland.

- Business & Finance CEO Survey

- 90.8% of the leading independent economists in Ireland agree Ireland’s overall economic interests are best served by a YES vote.


*The Lisbon Treaty streamlines decision-making, gives Europe a stronger voice on the world stage, and gives European citizens a greater say, it is a good deal for Ireland, and a good deal for Europe.*

Brendan Butler, Director of European Affairs, Ibec.

“Europe is Ireland’s biggest customer and the source of much of our nation’s growth over the past 30 years. I believe our vote on Lisbon is about saying YES to the future and YES to what is possible for Ireland and its people.”

Jim Shanahan, President of the Irish Exporters’ Association.

*And the message is that being centre-stage as part of Europe has benefited this country hugely in the past and will continue to benefit us in the future.*

Jim O’Hara, INE Ireland.

“Every trade union official dealing with an employer knows the enormous benefit that Europe has brought in the fight to protect workers’ interests.”


“The European Union is like a European trade union: whenever we do things together, we are more effective, more powerful and more impressive than if we act separately. The European Trade Union Confederation supports ratification of the Lisbon Treaty and I hope the Irish people approve it.”

John Monks, General Secretary, European Trade Union Confederation.
Reasons to Vote Yes to Lisbon:

**Economic Recovery**
I believe that the key to economic recovery lies with developing a new green economy. By strengthening our position in Europe we can attract more investment in innovative clean energy and digital technologies, which will be the best way of creating new jobs. We can build a smart economy with European support.

**Energy Security, Safer Climate**
The Lisbon Treaty sets out new energy objectives and environmental values for the EU. We can reduce our fossil fuel bill by turning on wind and wave power from Ireland, hydro power from Scandinavia and solar power from the Mediterranean. The European Union has led the world in tackling climate change. A ‘yes’ vote will strengthen our voice in the crucial climate change talks due to take place in Copenhagen this December.

**Enhanced Democracy, Better Rights**
Lisbon establishes a “citizens initiative”, which will allow millions of Europeans a say in which laws are passed. It also gives legal effect to the ‘Charter on Fundamental Rights’, which improves our social, employment and women’s rights. The Treaty also gives increased powers to the European Parliament which I believe is an enhancement of its democratic role.

Dear Resident,

I am advocating a ‘yes’ vote for the Lisbon Treaty. I believe that supporting the Treaty is the best way for Ireland to provide for a more sustainable economic recovery, greater energy security and to help us tackle climate change.

The Green Party has been working hard in Government to address some of the concerns that people have had about the Lisbon Treaty. There are new guarantees on issues such as the appointment of the EU Commission, the independence of our taxation and foreign policies and the protection of certain human and social rights.

I am holding two public talks about The Lisbon Treaty in the constituency in advance of the referendum on October 2nd:

- **Monday 28th September, 8pm, The Goat, Goatstown Crossroads, Dublin 14.**
- **Tuesday 29th September, 8pm, Ballyroan Boys School, Ballyroan Road, Dublin 16**

You are more than welcome to come along to ask questions or to give your own views.

I look forward to seeing you there and if you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Eamon Ryan TD,
Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources

Contact Details:
- **Baili Griamh**, Eilisane Street, Dublin 2, Tel 233 5977
- **Constituency Office**, Deansboro Castle, Deansboro Main Street, Drogheda, Tel 229 2319

email: eamon@greenparty.ie
THE LISBON TREATY

GOOD FOR GAYS
VOTE YES
ON OCTOBER 2ND

IS SUPPORTING THE LISBON TREATY BECAUSE

IRELAND’S INVOLVEMENT IN EUROPE LEAD TO THE DECRIMINALISATION OF HOMOSEXUALITY. LISBON WILL MAKE IT ILLEGAL TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST SOMEONE BECAUSE OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION ACROSS EUROPE.

EQUAL PAY FOR WOMEN WAS INTRODUCED BECAUSE OF IRELAND’S INVOLVEMENT WITH EUROPE. THIS TREATY WILL MAKE IT ILLEGAL TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST SOMEONE BECAUSE OF THEIR GENDER IDENTITY ACROSS EUROPE.

THIS TREATY GUARANTEES THE RIGHT TO ASSEMBLE, HELPING TO SUPPORT PRIDE ORGANISATIONS AND MARCHES ACROSS EUROPE.
(d) People’s Movement

Don't be intimidated:

vote 'No' -

again!

(e) Sinn Féin
LISBON = CRUSHING FAMILY FARMS

LISBON = LOWER WAGES

VÓTÁIL NO

Sinn Féin

VÓTÁIL NO

Sinn Féin