



Commission des Episcopats de la Communauté Européenne  
Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community  
Kommission der Bischofskonferenzen der Europäischen Gemeinschaft

Statement of the COMECE Executive Committee  
on the Constitutional Treaty of the European Union

**Rome, 23 June 2004**

We welcome the adoption of the Constitutional Treaty by the Intergovernmental Conference. This treaty marks an important step in the process of European integration. The Irish Presidency deserves credit for enabling the Intergovernmental Conference to find solutions to many of the unresolved issues.

In comparison with the previous treaties, the Constitutional Treaty is clearer and for this reason it will be more understandable to citizens. The new functions of President of the European Council and EU Minister for Foreign Affairs should make it possible in the future to identify more easily the personalities in charge of the European Union. The EU should thus become closer to its citizens. The Constitutional Treaty provides for more balanced modalities in voting procedures. In effect, a compromise has been found that – as a principle – makes it possible to take account of both the equality of States and the numerical difference in their populations.

To our great satisfaction, the Constitutional Treaty – in its Article I-2 – mentions respect for human dignity as the first value of the European Union. The objectives of the Union are based on the search for the European and universal common good. Respect for fundamental rights in Europe is better guaranteed thanks to the incorporation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the Constitutional Treaty, even though this text is not satisfactory in every respect. It can thus be hoped that the Union is becoming more and more a community of values.

We also consider that the recognition of the identity and specific contribution of Churches and other religious communities in Article I-51 constitutes a major advance for the European Union. Open, transparent and regular dialogue with Churches and religious communities is a good point of departure for the development of relations of partnership between the European institutions and the Churches.

With regard to the preamble, we welcome the mention of the religious inheritance of the European Union. We regret that the Intergovernmental Conference, due to the opposition of certain of its participants, could not find a consensus about recognising explicitly that this inheritance is notably Christian, as we along with other Churches had proposed. This fact, which could be interpreted as a form of disdain for the convictions of a significant number of the citizens of all member states, shows that the European Union must reflect much more on its identity and heritage. Europe remains a project under construction at several levels.

We now invite all Christians and all citizens to familiarise themselves with the treaty. With a view to the ratification procedure, we call on political leaders, the media and intellectuals to take up their responsibility to present the treaty to the citizens in order that they can know better the values and objectives of European integration.

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