

**EPP VICE PRESIDENT ENDA KENNY: "VOTE YES FOR THE LISBON TREATY"**

25-09-2009



**In an article published in one of the main newspapers in Ireland, [Fine Gael](#) leader and EPP Vice President Enda Kenny outlines the main arguments on why the Irish people should vote Yes for the Lisbon Treaty:**

*The forthcoming referendum on the Lisbon Treaty on 2nd October gives the Irish people a unique opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to remaining at the heart of a process that has brought peace and stability to the continent of Europe.*

*I strongly believe that Ireland's best interests lie in our country continuing to be an influential and respected member of an efficient, effective and democratic European Union. That is what the Lisbon Treaty will create.*

*Essentially, this 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 to prepare Europe for the many challenges it faces. These include the growing economic power of nations like China, Russia and India.*

*Other global challenges like climate change, hunger and disease epidemics require Europe to speak with a coherent voice if our continent is to be effective in contributing to solutions to these problems. This treaty will equip Europe to meet these challenges.*

*I firmly believe that EU membership have been pivotal to Ireland's success story. It has ended our economic dependence on Britain and opened up new and fruitful markets for Irish products. When we couldn't afford to invest in our infrastructure, it was our European partners who stepped in. If they hadn't, the economic progress of the past 15 years would not have been possible.*

*It is beyond doubt that the significant inward investment the country has enjoyed has been stimulated by our place in Europe, Ireland being the only native English speaking country in the Eurozone.*

*More recently, the support and stability of that Eurozone has been crucial to the survival of the Irish banking system.*

*At this time of economic uncertainty in Ireland, with unemployment rapidly rising, tax revenues much lower than forecast, and a record budget deficit in prospect, it is more important than ever that Ireland strengthens its place in the European Union.*

*As the only country holding a referendum on this Treaty, we have a special responsibility to ensure that the debate over the coming months is an honest and rational one, based on the facts rather than on the many false and spurious arguments that have been promoted by anti-European groups in recent months.*

*For example, I have seen a poster that suggests that the minimum wage could be reduced to just €1.84 if we ratify the Lisbon Treaty. This is an irresponsible and false claim designed to frighten and confuse people. The truth is that Europe has no role whatsoever in setting the minimum wage in Ireland or in any other country.*

*I am particularly concerned at the continuing attempts by some to suggest that the Lisbon Treaty could impinge on Ireland's right to retain control over sensitive and important ethical issues, including the right to life. This is not correct.*

*In fact, a legally binding protocol dating back to the Maastricht Treaty nearly two decades ago guarantees our right to make our own laws in these areas. These guarantees were reaffirmed by our European partners in June confirming that nothing in the Lisbon Treaty can in any way affect the protection of the right to life enshrined in Articles 40.3.1, 40.3.2 and 40.3.3 of our Constitution.*

*Along with my role as Leader of the Fine Gael Party, I am privileged to be an elected Vice President of the European People's Party which brings together the Christian Democratic and like-minded political parties from throughout Europe. The EPP is Europe's largest political family and it holds the presidency of the principal EU institutions – the Parliament, the Council and the Commission.*

*As a founding member of the European People's Party in 1976, Fine Gael is an influential voice in this strong political block. The Fine Gael MEPs Gay Mitchell, Jim Higgins, Sean Kelly and Mairead McGuinness form part of the largest group in the European Parliament making them Ireland's strongest voices in Europe.*

*Earlier this year in Warsaw, Fine Gael ensured that the EPP's manifesto for the European elections contained clear and strong pro-life and pro-family commitments. We will continue to work with our*

*allies within the EPP to oppose any attempts to extend EU powers into these policy areas.*

*I am certain that a Yes vote on 2nd October will strengthen Ireland's position on these issues. If I was not sure, I would not ask people to vote Yes to Lisbon. In fact, Lisbon explicitly recognises Europe's Christian heritage and the important role of religious institutions. The Charter of Fundamental Rights, which will be given treaty status if Lisbon is ratified, specifically includes the right to life. These enhanced provisions can be realised by a Yes vote.*

*In that regard, I welcome the recent comments by a number of Catholic bishops who have made it very clear that there are no religious or moral obstacles to Catholics voting in favour of the Lisbon Treaty.*

*This referendum affords the Irish people an opportunity to reaffirm our support for the European process and to send a clear and positive signal to the people of Europe that this country is committed to playing a central role in shaping the future direction of Europe.*

*That's why I am asking people who are angry at the performance of the Government to put aside their anger and vote for the country and not against the Government. This referendum is about the future of the country, not the future of the Government.*

*I ask people to vote Yes on 2 October to strengthen our place in Europe and help put Ireland on the road to recovery.*

**Enda Kenny TD**

*Leader of Fine Gael*

*Vice President of the EPP*

[For more information:](#)

Kostas Sasmatzoglou, Spokesman, Tel. +32-2-2854147

Javier Jiménez, Press Officer, Tel: +32-475480446

---

 [Print](#)