

Address given by Bertie Ahern at the launch of the Information Guide on the Treaty of Nice (2 September 2002)

Caption: On 2 September 2002, in view of the second Irish referendum on the Treaty of Nice, Bertie Ahern, Irish Prime Minister, launches the Irish Government's information campaign on the Treaty of Nice and the Seville Declarations.

Source: Taoiseach at the Launch of Information Guide on the Treaty of Nice and the Seville Declarations. [ON-LINE]. [s.l.]: European Commission, [26.07.2005]. Available on

http://europa.eu.int/constitution/futurum/documents/offtext/sp020902_en.htm.

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Taoiseach at the Launch of Information Guide on the Treaty of Nice and the Seville Declarations (2 September 2002)

The launch here this morning of this Information Guide on the Treaty of Nice and the Seville Declarations marks another crucial step by the Government in addressing concerns raised by the people of Ireland following the first referendum on the Treaty of Nice.

Last year, the Government was criticised for not providing sufficient readily-accessible information to the public regarding the Treaty. The Government has listened. The *Information Guide on the Treaty of Nice & Seville Declarations 2002* has been designed to actively address the need for clear, factual information. The Guide provides, in simple and clear terms, factual information on what the Treaty of Nice is, what it does and the changes it will introduce.

I am particularly pleased, that within this Guide we have also taken steps to broaden public understanding of how Europe operates.

In addition to explaining in summary form what the Treaty of Nice will do, the margins of each page contain short explanatory paragraphs that outline what terms such as Intergovernmental Conference, Qualified Majority and Enhanced Cooperation actually mean.

The Guide also gives clear explanations on the composition and function of the various European institutions such as the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the European Commission.

Last year, at least some people were persuaded by the slogan: 'if you don't know, vote "no"'. It is central to our democracy and to democratic decision making, that the people should have the information to enable them to vote in an informed way. I hope that this Information Guide, together with the work that the Referendum Commission will be undertaking, will ensure that there is no information deficit, that people will feel informed and will come out and vote in large numbers.

Over the coming week, this Guide will be distributed to every household throughout Ireland. I urge everyone to take the time to read this booklet and to make themselves aware of the facts regarding the Treaty. I particularly ask that people hold onto this booklet and retain it for their own information and reference purposes.

The White Paper on the Treaty of Nice, which has already been published, is available free of charge from the Department of Foreign Affairs. Both of these publications can also be downloaded free of charge from the Department of Foreign Affairs' Web site.

More generally, it has become very clear that we need to do a far better job in communicating Europe to the Irish people. Our membership of the EU is vital to so many aspects of everyday life in this country. We need to ensure for the future that the Irish people appreciate this and appreciate the importance of full and active participation by Ireland in the Union. Europe must not be remote from its people. All states, big and small, have a role to play in bringing it forward and ensuring that, in doing so, the people of Europe are brought with it.

We are looking at ways, therefore, in which we can better communicate Europe to our people. We must remove the confusions and we must deal better with the misapprehensions. This, of course, will be an ongoing task, but it is one to which we are committed. The Union is too important for Ireland and too important to our future not to do so.

Thank you.