



Mr Bertie Ahern
Taoiseach
Govt Buildings, Upper Merrion Street
Dublin 2
Republic of Ireland

30th January 2004

Dear Taoiseach,

I am writing on behalf of the European Constitutional Group (ECG), a group of independent academics and Think Tankers, whose proposal for a constitution for Europe was published in 1993. Last year we circulated a simplified proposal to Heads of Government as an alternative to the proposals developed by the Convention (copy attached). In light of the difficulties encountered in the IGC in reaching agreement on the constitutional proposals of the Convention we would like to commend to your attention this alternative approach.

In addition we think the ECG alternative helps to find a solution to the nexus of issues around the composition of the Commission and the weighing of voting rights in the Council for qualified majority decisions. In our view these difficulties could be removed or at least be strongly mitigated by accepting our proposal to introduce a second chamber of parliament with an equal number of representatives from each country elected by national parliaments, whereas the representatives of the first chamber would be elected in proportion to populations (except for at least two members for the smallest states). If additionally the two houses had the right to initiate and to pass legislation the weakness of the Convention proposals would be removed. The composition of the Commission would only be relevant because of efficiency reasons.

In general we think that the alternative offered by the ECG provides for a much more understandable and shorter document. It provides the framework for a more flexible and less intrusive Europe far better suited to a Union of 25 member states. It is therefore also much more likely to appeal to public opinion and be ratified.

The fact of the matter is that the constitutional proposals of the Convention will not serve Europe well and the search must begin for alternatives. This will take time but it is important to get Europe's basic treaties right. The proposals of the ECG provide a starting point for looking at alternatives and I commend them to you again.

Yours sincerely,

Frank Vibert
(on behalf of the European Constitutional Group)

Encs. ECG Basic Treaty (June 2003)
ECG Basic Treaty – with Comments (June 2003)
List of ECG Members