

# “Lisbon dilutes our Christian heritage...”



## The Claim

The EU doesn't take into account the Christian heritage of Europe while creating legislation.

“The European Values Study urges a certain caution in presuming that we have gone “all secularist”. The Values Atlas sums it up: one thing is certain, the old continent is not as secularised as it seems.”<sup>1</sup>

Speaking on RTÉ radio, Cardinal Brady said policy decisions seem to be “frequently made without reference to religious values and convictions despite the fact that so many Europeans have religious faith and convictions.”<sup>2</sup>

## The Short Answer

The Treaty respects all traditions. The EU doesn't *do* favouritism.

## The Long Answer

The Treaties do not make reference to any particular religion because **it would be against the Union's principles to favour one religion over another**, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights supports this notion. However, they enshrine the very important principles of respect for all religions and the right to choose one's own religion.

The preamble of the Lisbon Treaty and the Charter of Fundamental Rights both explicitly recognise the religious heritage of the EU and its influence on European values.

Furthermore, the Lisbon Treaty legally recognises for the first time the importance of maintaining an open dialogue between churches and religious associations and the EU institutions.



This European Movement Ireland fact sheet is part of a series of research conducted to clarify the issues in the Lisbon Treaty debate. European Movement Ireland is a pro-European non-profit organisation which does not advocate either side of the Lisbon Treaty Referendum, we advocate the facts.



## Current legal situation

In the current European Treaties there are no references to the religious heritage of Europe as they are regular international treaties which contain mainly the procedures of co-operation between independent, sovereign states.

Of the Union's 27 states, only five have an official state religion, these being Cyprus (Cypriot Orthodox Church), Denmark (Danish National Church), Greece (Church of Greece), Malta (Roman Catholic Church) and England in the UK (Church of England).

In the Irish Constitution there are a couple of explicit religious references. Article 44 states the position of religion in Ireland, with paragraph 1 reading as follows: "The State acknowledges

that the homage of public worship is due to Almighty God. It shall hold His Name in reverence, and shall respect and honour religion."

The special position of The Roman Catholic Church was recognised in the Constitution of Ireland from 1937 until 1973 in Article 44.1.2, but was removed by the Fifth Amendment of the Constitution of Ireland following a referendum supported by the Roman Catholic Church itself. Article 44.1.3, which explicitly recognised the other religious denominations existing in Ireland was also deleted (though a reference is retained in Art. 44.5).

The table overleaf shows figures for religious belief in Europe.

## What Lisbon Introduces

Taking account of the variety of religious associations in the EU, as well as the number of atheists and agnostics, no explicit reference to religion is made in the preamble of the Treaty on European Union (TEU):

*"DRAWING INSPIRATION from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law."*

A similar reference to the "spiritual and moral heritage" is made in the Charter of Fundamental Rights:

*"Conscious of its spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It places the individual at the heart of its activities, by establishing*

*the citizenship of the Union and by creating an area of freedom, security and justice."*<sup>3</sup>

Article 10 of the Charter also confirms the freedom of religion.

**However, the idea of a dialogue between European institutions and religions, churches and communities of conviction is given express treaty recognition by Lisbon.**<sup>4</sup>

Article 17 reads:

*"The Union respects and does not prejudice the status under national law of churches and religious associations or communities in the Member States. The Union equally respects the status under national law of philosophical and non-confessional organisations. Recognising the identity and their specific contribution, the Union shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with these churches and organisations."*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Christian Values and Irish Membership of the European Union", 3 Mar 2009, Personal views of Diarmuid Martin, Archbishop of Dublin.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/breaking/2008/0824/breaking36.html?via=mr>

<sup>3</sup> Preamble of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

<sup>4</sup> Issue briefing on the Treaty of Lisbon. [http://www.vote2009.eu/content/CARE\\_Briefing\\_Lisbon.pdf](http://www.vote2009.eu/content/CARE_Briefing_Lisbon.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Article 17 TFEU, as amended by the Lisbon Treaty.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Special EUROBAROMETER 225 "Social values, Science & Technology" Report 2005, [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_225\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_225_report_en.pdf)

Country	Belief in a God
Estonia	16%
Czech Republic	19%
Sweden	23%
Denmark	31%
Norway	32%
Netherlands	34%
France	34%
Slovenia	37%
Latvia	37%
United Kingdom	38%
Iceland	38%
Bulgaria	40%
Finland	41%
Belgium	43%
Hungary	44%
Luxembourg	44%
Germany	47%
Switzerland	48%
Lithuania	49%
Austria	54%
Spain	59%
Slovakia	61%
Croatia	67%
Ireland	73%
Italy	74%
Poland	80%
Portugal	81%
Greece	81%
Cyprus	90%
Romania	90%
Malta	95%

