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Lisbon group will focus on 'hope not fear'

2 October likely date for rerun of referendum

Conor McMorrow, Political Correspondent

FORMER president of the European Parliament Pat Cox will today launch a new group that will campaign for a Yes vote in the second Lisbon treaty referendum, which seems likely to be held on Friday 2 October.

Cox, the favourite to replace Charlie McCreevy as Ireland's representative on the EU Commission, is one of a number of well-known personalities putting their names to the new non-party political organisation, Ireland for Europe.

Cox, director of Ireland for Europe, told the Sunday Tribune, "We are going to launch a campaign which is aimed at getting people all over Ireland involved. The campaign is not aimed at political parties or politicians. It's determined to focus on hope and not fear."

The chairperson of the new group will be Brigid Laffan, principal of the College of Human Sciences at UCD, and its founders have called it a new, independent and non-party campaign that is strongly committed to promoting a Yes vote in Lisbon 2.

In a statement, the organisation said: "Ireland for Europe is a civil society movement which is being supported by a wide range of prominent Irish men and women who believe a Yes vote best serves our country's economic, social and political interests in the years ahead."

The organisation was not willing to release the names of any of its 'big hitters' before its 11am launch today in the Button Factory, Temple Bar in Dublin but it is understood supporters of the new group include Brendan Halligan, chairperson of the Institute of International and European Affairs (IEA), Oliver Tattan, founder of Vivas Health, and Olivia Buckley, former Fianna Fáil press director.

It is also understood that members of the Generation Yes campaign will row in behind the new body. Launched in April, Generation Yes is a pro-Lisbon treaty campaign group that will use new media such as social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, blogs and text messages to explain the treaty in the next referendum.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin, has said the legislation to enable the referendum to take place will go before the Dáil before it adjourns for the summer recess early next month. The Sunday Tribune understands this legislation will most likely go through the Dáil and Seanad in the first week of July.

The government is also set to launch a campaign to address the lack of understanding of the Lisbon treaty among the public.

Research carried out in the aftermath of the defeated referendum last year found that over 46% of those who voted No did not know what they had voted for and a sizeable number of voters aged 18 to 24 did not realise Ireland was not always part of the EU.

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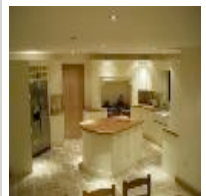
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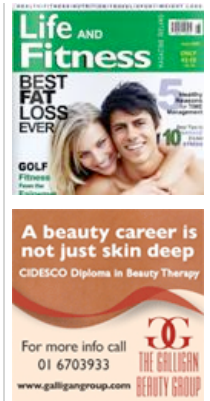
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