## THE ECR GROUP ON THE ONGOING EU NEGOTIATION WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE DRAFT 'EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT SHERPA SPEAKING POINTS'

- 1. The ECR Group welcomes the fact that an agreement appears within reach which can soon be put to the British people in a referendum following adoption by the United Kingdom government and the other twenty-seven members of the European Union. The ECR Group reaffirms that questions of membership of the European Union are a matter of national sovereignty for the citizens of each member state to resolve according its laws and constitution.
- 2. Equal treatment for all Members States of the European Union is a fundamental principle of the ECR Group. The Group therefore emphasises the importance of ensuring in the concluding negotiations that all Member States have the same access to all the new measures envisaged in the final agreement without discrimination. This particularly applies to provisions relating to current non-members of the eurozone, the red-card procedure, and to the general references to an "ever closer union". The ECR Group notes that the reference to a future occasion for incorporating relevant parts of the agreement into the Treaties should also be an opportunity for other Member States with specific agreed needs that have already been recognised to do the same.
- 3. The ECR notes that the final agreement will be struck in the European Council which, according to the Treaty, "shall define the general political directions and priorities of the Union". The European Parliament should vote to endorse the agreement as a whole before the referendum vote and commit itself unambiguously to implement it in full without qualification. Some of the proposals contain references to the need to use the ordinary legislative procedure and that the European Parliament's sherpas' briefing remarks that the "outcome cannot be prejudged" of any OLP process (page 1, point 4; page 5, point 3). The ECR firmly insists that any subsequent related use of the OLP must uphold the agreement reached at the level of Member States and not be used as a device to unpick any deal. The ECR believes that the European Parliament should respect any accord amongst our Member States and leave to the British people the decision of whether to remain a Member State of the European Union based on its terms as understood on the day of the ballot without any subsequent revision or alteration.
- 4. The ECR deplores the attempt in the sherpas' briefing to use this agreement as an opportunity to advance their own agenda (page 1, point 5). Any change would need to be agreed by the Member States, who remain responsible for the treaties, on the basis of the standard principle of conferral in accordance with treaty provisions and respecting the constitutional procedures of each Member State.
- The ECR believes the qualification of the wording "ever closer union" in the draft agreement must not be undone, as proposed in the European Parliament sherpas' briefing (page 1, point 6; page 4, point 2). The draft agreement (section c, paragraph 1) simply re-establishes the original meaning of phrase as referring to creating a sense of community amongst Europeans. It is regrettable that for thirty years, Euro-nationalists have abused the term to imply it should mean a commitment to build an ever more centralised Europe with the hidden agenda of creating a nation-state called Europe at the expense of sovereignty of Member States.
- 6. The ECR note that the treaties give no deadlines for non-euro members to join the euro and believe in these changed circumstances since the start of the euro crisis that all non-eurozone countries should have the opportunity to decide whether eurozone membership is appropriate. The ECR welcomes the implicit recognition that all non-eurozone members have certain rights and opposes the position in the sherpas' briefing regarding the member states who have not joined the euro (page 1, point 7).
- 7. The ECR welcomes the fact that the draft agreement implicitly makes modest improvements to the draft IIA on better law-making and so the text should not be regarded as undermining it (sherpas' briefing, page 3,point 2) but strengthening it.
- 8. The ECR deplores the position of the sherpas to oppose improved involvement by democratically elected national Parliaments in EU lawmaking (sherpas' briefing, page 4, point 3)