Preface

Will the European Union forever be in flux? I often asked myself that question as I prepared this new edition of *Ever Closer Union*.

Even as this book goes to press, member states are grappling with the process of ratifying the constitutional treaty, a major step forward politically for the EU. The French and Dutch rejections of the treaty, in referendums in spring 2005, as well as the UK decision to postpone a vote, make it unlikely that the treaty will be accepted in its present form. Certainly the EU will continue to muddle through on the basis of existing treaties; nevertheless, the failure of two of its founding member states to ratify the new treaty raises serious questions about public alienation from the EU and prospects for further political integration.

Despite the ratification setbacks, the Convention on the Future of Europe and the intergovernmental conference that paved the way for the constitutional treaty were important undertakings in the history of the EU. Accordingly, they are covered in Part 1 of this book. Moreover, the treaty portends institutional and policy changes that will probably come to pass in the not-too-distant future, even though the current round of ratification has not been successful. Regardless of the outcome of the entire ratification process, it seemed reasonable to incorporate the treaty’s provisions into Parts 2 (institutions) and 3 (policies).

Although this is a big book, it does not include every policy area or noteworthy EU event. Nevertheless, it seeks to provide comprehensive coverage of the EU for students and others interested in learning about the process of European integration, one of the most interesting and important developments—not only regionally but also globally—since the end of World War II. Readers wanting to supplement or update their knowledge of the EU might like to use *Europa*, the EU’s official website (www.europa.eu.int), from which I drew heavily while writing this new edition. *Europa* contains a wealth of summaries, speeches, and other documents on every aspect of the EU. Although difficult to navigate, it is well worth a visit.

—Desmond Dinan