



Press Statement

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**EU COMMISSION DELAY CONTROVERSIAL LEGISLATION UNTIL
AFTER IRISH VOTE**

The People's Movement, which is campaigning for a 'No' vote in the forthcoming Lisbon Treaty referendum, has accused the European Commission of conspiring to keep citizens in the dark about controversial new legislation on health. The Movement reacted angrily to news that the European Commission has temporarily shelved, until after the Irish vote, a controversial legislative proposal tackling patients' rights to receive medical treatment in another EU member state.

The People's Movement chairperson **Patricia McKenna** said today, 'this is a clear sign that the Commission is conspiring to keep citizens in the dark about contentious EU legislation on health which will have serious implications for the Irish taxpayer and have a damaging impact on our already beleaguered health system'.

The official reason for withdrawing the bill has been the Commission's heavy agenda, with the Commission's spokesperson saying on Wednesday (7 February) that the document is currently 'under further analysis [and] it will be scheduled at the appropriate time this year'.

'The fact that the EU Commission had put this legislation on temporary hold until after the Irish referendum would indicate that they want to avoid opening up an extremely controversial debate that could affect ratification of the Lisbon Treaty' said McKenna.

‘There is no doubt that if these proposals were to become part of the debate on the Lisbon Treaty it would point to the consequences of what we are voting for in Lisbon and the implications of giving over even more power to the EU to make laws on our behalf. The debate would also put in focus the cost to the taxpayer of having to implement laws decreed by Brussels.’

According to some commission officials the legislative proposals have been causing problems and do not have the support of all 27 commissioners. It appears that some member states have intervened against the bill on the grounds that it would result in high costs and have a negative impact on national health systems.

Other member states wanted to avoid opening a highly sensitive issue during ratification of the EU’s Lisbon Treaty.

In terms of content, the legislation is expected to set out clear rules on who is responsible for covering the costs and the quality of medical treatment provided for Europeans in a member states other than their own.

EU health commissioner Markos Kyprianu, in charge of the dossier, said last week (30 February): ‘the commitment is there for the European Commission to present its proposal’.

‘I don’t think [we] have a choice’, Mr Kyprianu stressed, referring to a ruling by the European Court of Justice that prompted the commission to draw up the draft legislation.

The EU’s top court ruled that basic internal market rules also apply to healthcare and that patients may seek health treatment in another EU country and subsequently its reimbursement.

McKenna has claimed that unofficial reports suggest Ireland and Britain are the two member states most anxious to have this legislation put on hold, as they fear a backlash from the public, putting in jeopardy ratification of the Lisbon Treaty.

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