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Irish government attempting to keep public in the dark until we vote

Campaigners against the Lisbon Treaty have accused the Irish government of conspiring to keep controversial proposals off the agenda until after the Irish referendum.

Speaking at the National Forum on Europe today, People's Movement chairperson and former MEP Patricia McKenna said: 'The Irish government in co-operation with the French government have succeeded in getting a controversial white paper on security and defence put on hold until after the referendum'.

Ms McKenna said that according to the French daily *Le Figaro* 'The White Paper on security and defence, which defined the overall strategic vision for France for the next 15 years, will not be made public before June 12th. It will be ready before that date, but the Irish government, which has organized a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty on that day, has demanded that Paris remains discreet. Dublin is worried that the parts of the White Paper devoted to the re-enforcement of a defence-oriented Europe would encourage an anti-European vote which would ruin the referendum.'

Ms McKenna said this is not the first attempt by our government to hide the ramifications of accepting the Lisbon Treaty. Just last month the French government was told to '*keep out of Irish politics and to stop interfering with the Lisbon referendum*' by Europe Minister Dick Roche and Labour leader Eamon Gilmore when the French said things that we were not supposed to hear. Following a recent statement from the French Economics Minister, Christine Lagarde, that '*France would push for a common system of assessing company tax (common consolidated corporate tax base or CCCTB) across the EU*' during their EU presidency which begins in July, Minister Roche said: '*They threw their own referendum, but we do not want any further inappropriate interference in our referendum*'. He said her

intervention was inappropriate, especially coming just 10 days after the French defence minister's statements on military policy, saying *'France would use its EU presidency to move on common defence policies and institutions'*.

Today's news confirms that controversial provisions to speed up an EU common defence, 'Structured Cooperation', will be used to progress the military agenda. To quote the Lisbon Guide from the National Forum on Europe. *'The Treaty will allow for those Member States with bigger military capabilities to commit to taking part together in the most demanding missions within the [EU's military tasks]. This will be called 'Structured Cooperation'. Only Ministers of those Member States taking part in this arrangement would be allowed to debate and vote in the Council on any action proposed under this pact'*.

McKenna said, 'This is a case where the unanimity rule on defence matters does not apply, in that all 27 EU states are not consulted. Only the ones participating in Structured Cooperation vote. Ireland will not be able to veto the actions of this group unless, of course, we join. French president Nicolas Sarkozy has already indicated plans to bring together the UK Poland, Germany, Italy and Spain to participate in this defence cooperation. That is why the government want to hide this provision. According to the *Economist* and *European Voice*, 'once Lisbon is ratified, France will be joining with the UK, Germany, Spain, Italy and Poland to provide 10,000 troops towards a 60,000 strong EU intervention force, Europeanise, their foreign military bases, and launch major common defence projects, including missile defence.'

'It is unacceptable that this issue is being deliberately pushed under the carpet until after we vote' McKenna concluded.

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