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New report claims RTÉ favoured Yes side in referendum coverage of Lisbon Treaty

RTÉ has been accused of favouring the Yes side in its coverage of the Lisbon Treaty referendum campaign. In a new report published today by CAEUC (Campaign Against the EU Constitution) RTÉ has been accused of favouring the Yes side in its coverage of the Lisbon Treaty debate. The report focuses on six of RTÉ's most prominent and popular news and current affairs programmes from radio and television and covers the 23-week period prior to the actual vote.

Speaking at the launch of the report in Dublin today, Former Green Party MEP Patricia McKenna, a prominent campaigner on the No side of the Lisbon Treaty debate, said: "This report clearly highlights the fact that RTÉ, as a national public-service broadcaster, is failing in its statutory duty to comply with the Broadcasting Act which requires RTÉ to be impartial and objective". McKenna, who successfully challenged government use of public money in referenda in the 1995 Supreme Court case, went on to say: "I believe that RTÉ's failure to ensure equal treatment of the Yes and No side of the Lisbon Treaty referendum is not only unfair but also unconstitutional and flies in the face of the principles established in the Supreme Court in RTÉ v Coughlan. In that case RTÉ, BCC and the attorney general unsuccessfully challenged a High Court judgement establishing that the unequal allocation of uncontested broadcasting time to each of the arguments was unconstitutional and unfair. The Supreme Court subsequently ruled that partisan broadcasts by the national broadcasting service 'weighted on one side of the argument is an interference with the referendum process' of a kind that is 'undemocratic and is a constitutionally unfair procedure'."

McKenna said: "RTÉ as the national broadcasting service is subject to the constitution and it would be ludicrous to argue that RTÉ should have the right to promote a particular outcome in a referendum to change that very document".

"RTÉ has already been found guilty by the highest court in the land of acting unconstitutionally in its coverage of referenda and if RTÉ does not address this issue then it could face further legal challenges" McKenna said.

“It would be most regrettable if the hard-pressed tax-payer who funds RTÉ is left to pay for yet another case against RTÉ because RTÉ refuses to respect the principle of equality” she concluded.

[ENDS]

For further information:

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