

**6 July 2009**

### **Lisbon postcards abuse of taxpayers' money, says McKenna**

The decision by the Department of Foreign Affairs is to send a postcard to every household in the state explaining the so-called 'legal' guarantees secured by the government in relation to the Lisbon Treaty has been condemned by one of the leading groups campaigning against the treaty. People's Movement chairperson and former MEP, Patricia McKenna, said: 'this expensive propaganda stunt, designed to give voters an illusion of legal certainty, is a gross abuse and waste of taxpayers' money'. She said that 'taxpayers' money, from both sides of the Lisbon debate, is being used to peddle government spin that these guarantees will somehow change the treaty's impact on Ireland. But this is legally impossible without changes to the actual text of the treaty or legally binding protocols attached to and ratified by all member states before the treaty comes into force.'

She said: 'it is inherently wrong for the government to use money from both sides to try and hoodwink the people. Those on the No side who can effectively challenge this spin don't have the resources to counter this propaganda campaign.'

'Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin's claim that the postcard is part of the government's "determined effort" to ensure the public is adequately informed ahead of a second referendum on the treaty rings hollow when one considers that the government closed down the National Forum on Europe just months before the second vote. This decision is denying the public any access to balanced debate on the EU. If the money being spent by the government on propaganda had been used to keep the Forum open until after the second referendum then perhaps its claim that it wants the public to be adequately informed might have been a bit more believable' concluded McKenna.

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