

19 September 2009

Proposed €15m EU aid package a cleverly timed stunt – McKenna

The chairperson of the People's Movement, former MEP Patricia McKenna, has accused the EU Commission of gross and unlawful interference in the Irish referendum debate. In a statement issued today she said: "The European Commission is clearly trying to thwart the democratic process of this State and it's conveniently opportune that less than two weeks before Irish people vote on the Lisbon treaty the Commission announces that it proposes to give €15 million in aid to help former Dell computer workers find new jobs. The Commission President José Manuel Barroso's announcement, coinciding with our vote on the Lisbon Treaty, gives the impression that Ireland is receiving special favours. But this is not the case as the EU Globalization Fund has been in operation since 2007 and will not be affected by our vote on Lisbon."

She said: "The EU Globalization fund makes up to €500 million available each year for situations where globalization results in significant job losses. The Dell closure is well above the threshold required, which has recently been reduced from 1,000 to 500 workers and allows job losses in suppliers to be included."

"What President Barroso has not addressed is the story behind Dell's move to Poland and the legality of Poland's €52 million of state aid to Dell. This situation whereby Poland as a new EU country was allowed fund – in a way that Ireland is not permitted to – such a move poses serious problems for the repetition of such moves."

McKenna went on to say: "It is unacceptable is that Barroso has come to Ireland to campaign for a 'Yes' vote. This is an appalling abuse of power and Barroso has no right to come to Ireland to advocate a 'Yes' vote. He is not an impartial person and has a vested interest in getting this treaty passed. As head of the European Commission, the institution that will gain most power if the treaty is ratified, he should stay out of the debate and respect the existing EU treaties until such time as they are changed. He is abusing his position and this it quite unacceptable in a supposedly free and democratic society."

[ENDS]

For further information:
Patricia McKenna (chairperson) – 087 2427049