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Press statement

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EU Commission accused of improper interference in Irish referendum

Opponents of the Lisbon Treaty have accused the EU Commission of deliberately interfering in the Irish referendum campaign in order to secure a ‘Yes’ vote. The former MEP and chairperson of the People’s Movement, Patricia McKenna, said: ‘the European Commission placed a 16-page propaganda supplement in all Irish newspapers today as a paid insert. This is an unlawful use of European taxpayers’ money since the European Commission has no competence whatever in the ratification of treaties’. It is also in breach of Irish law and the principles of the McKenna judgment as established by the Supreme Court in 1995 whereby taxpayers’ money cannot be used to promote one side in a referendum.

McKenna has called on Martin Territt, head of the EU Commission office in Dublin to make a statement on the matter: ‘The voters need to know how much money the EU Commission has spent on this 16-page supplement and its distribution’.

She said: ‘This interference by the EU Commission flies in the face of public assurances given last year by the head of their Dublin office, Martin Territt, who said that they were not taking part in the campaign and he publicly rejected claims by opponents of the Lisbon Treaty that either he or the EU Commission as a whole would be interfering in the Irish debate. It is now incumbent on the EU Commission to justify the placing of these pro-Lisbon supplements in all today’s Sunday newspapers’. She went on to say: ‘the public deserve a full breakdown on all monies spent by the EU Commission since last year’s referendum on pushing directly or indirectly the Lisbon Treaty in Ireland. This is public money and its expenditure should be open and transparent to the public’.

‘Today’s newspaper supplements also raises many legitimate concerns about the conduct of this referendum campaign and to what extent newspapers and other media outlets have been influenced by advertisement revenue. There should be full detailed declarations by all media outlets in this state on exactly what revenue they have or will receive on foot of advertisements related to the Lisbon debate.’

‘The EU Commission, with the massive funds and resources available to it courtesy of the taxpayer, can influence Irish opinion prior to the vote if they get away with it and I believe that the minister in charge of this referendum, Minister for the Environment John Gormley, should investigate the matter without delay.’

During last year’s referendum campaign McKenna threatened legal action to prevent the Commission interfering in the campaign. Today she said that she had been caught unawares and had no prior knowledge of these supplements. ‘I will be seeking legal

advice on this in the morning but unfortunately the damage has already been done. The EU Commission has no competence in this matter and their expenditure of this money is illegal – so at the very least I hope we can force the individual Commissioners to reimburse the taxpayer from their own well filled wallets' concluded McKenna.

[ENDS]

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