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German Chancellor Angela Merkel's credibility questioned by NO grouping.

The credibility attached to German Chancellor Angela Merkel's visit to Dublin today to canvas support for a Yes vote in the forthcoming referendum on the Lisbon Treaty has been challenged by groups campaigning against the Treaty. The Chairperson of the People's Movement, former Green Party MEP Patricia McKenna, has said that: 'Considering that this treaty is facing a legal challenge in Ms. Merkel's own country on the grounds that it undermines German national sovereignty and takes too much power away from the country's national parliament, we would question the wisdom of her urging Irish people to support it.'

'This legal challenge which has been initiated by the third largest party in the country, *Die Linke*, is also being supported by a leading member of the CSU party which is part of Merkel's own government. Clearly the ratification process in Germany is not clear cut and there is the possibility that Germany could hold up ratification of the Treaty even if Ireland had ratified it.'

Ms McKenna criticised the Irish government and the Minister for Europe, Dick Roche, for what she called an 'orchestrated campaign of pressure by powerful political forces from outside Ireland, who have been invited here specifically to put pressure on Irish voters. Today it is the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel', she said, 'and on Thursday it will be the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso'.

'These are extremely powerful EU politicians who have themselves conspired to deny citizens throughout the EU the right to vote on this Treaty. Their reassurances on how this treaty will benefit democracy must be considered in that context.'

Ms McKenna said that 'Dick Roche and those on the Yes side are extremely selective in their support for outside intervention. Only last week 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'.

Following a 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.

The Irish Government has already warned the EU to hold off with anything controversial until after the Irish people have voted and the European Commission is not expected to publish its proposal on the CCCTB until October, which is half way through the French EU presidency.

The Labour leader, Mr Gilmore, also criticized Ms Lagarde’s remarks and described them ‘as arrogant and patronising’, saying that the Government should ‘make a formal protest to the French in blunt rather than diplomatic language.’

The idea of Chancellor Merkel reassuring Ireland on the issue of defence and EU militarism is ludicrous. Ms. Merkel has already stated quite clearly that ‘We have to move towards a common European army. The EU Commission will be more capable of action, namely with clearer, regulated competences’.

And she has also said that ‘a common security and defence policy is imperative for Europe’ while making it clear that EU militarisation is about protecting the vested interests of the EU. ‘I have absolutely no doubts: If we Europeans want to represent our interests in the world, we have to expand our abilities in terms of security and defence policy and also coordinate them better’ she added.

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