**Oireachtas Update**

Dáil Éireann is adjourned until Tuesday 22 September 2015.

Seanad Éireann is adjourned until Wednesday 23 September 2015.

There are no Committee meetings this week.

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**Convention Centre Dublin under new management**

The Irish Infrastructure Fund was launched in 2012, and its assets include a wind farm portfolio and Towercom. It is managed by Irish Life Investment Managers and AMP Capital. Investor commitments amount to over €400m, €250m of which is from the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund.

The IIF has this week announced that it had secured the contract for the operation and maintenance of the Convention Centre Dublin. The deal also includes a license to build and operate a 330-bed hotel adjacent to the CCD, and a lease for the car park below it. The deal is expected to be completed soon, dependent on consent from the Office of Public Works and the Competition Authority.

Simon Ellis, AMP Capital Head of Origination, Europe said that the deal is a way of “further diversifying the [IIF] portfolio and combining robust long-term cash yields and growth potential from an increasingly favourable economic outlook during the next few years.”

The CCD was set up as a public-private partnership with the Government in 2010, and has just celebrated its 1000th event.

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**Eurobarometer shows Ireland has faith in the EU**

The European Commission have just released Standard Eurobarometer 83 (Spring 2015). This is a survey of 31,868 people across the 28 EU members, and the five candidates for membership. The poll measures trust in the EU across the citizens of these countries. The fieldwork was done between the 16th and the 27th of May, following shortly on the heels of the Spring Economic statement, which showed economic recovery across the EU as a whole. 1,018 Irish people were surveyed.

The results show that 41% of EU citizens have a positive image of the EU. In Ireland, 57% of the respondents had a positive view. However, the level of mistrust in National Governments has remained unchanged at 62%.

While immigration was the number one concern across the rest of the EU, Irish citizens’ main concern lay in unemployment and jobs. It was mentioned in 31% of the responses.

When the Irish respondents were asked if they wished to know more about their rights as an EU citizen, 69% said that they would.
Eircode still presents Data Protection issues

Eircode, a postal code system, was launched last month. In the run-up to the official launch, the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner advised the Department of Communications that the system presented significant risks to personal data. An impact assessment on privacy was presented ahead of the roll-out, which advised the Minister for Communications, Alex White TD, to take a “precautionary approach” in order to fully comply with data protection legislation.

While legislation was prepared to protect Eircodes as personal information, this has not necessarily been the case in communications to individuals regarding their Eircode. Eircodes assign an individual seven-digit code to every mailbox, as opposed to a general area. This, therefore, gives a specific address. This information may be discloses to organisation that may previously not had access to such information.

The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner has stated that, while some issues had been resolved, other were still outstanding.

PII Budget Submission calls for greater focus on housing shortage

Property Industry Ireland, an Ibec group that represents businesses in the construction and property sector, presented its Budget 2016 submission this week. The report calls for “decisive action” to deal with the lack of supply of rental and social housing available in October’s forthcoming budget.

Peter Stafford, director of PII, noted that “The Housing Agency suggests we need to build an average of 21,000 units per annum over the next three years to meet demand”, a target that we have consistently fallen short on in previous years. The report featured three key recommendations for the Budget.

Firstly, in order to “Accelerate delivery of high-quality, sustainable private residential property”, they suggest cutting the VAT rate on the construction of residential property from 13% to 9% for the next two years, implementation of the Actions in Construction 2020 in order to support funding of city infrastructure, require planning decision to be returned within six weeks, conversion of unused retail units to residential spaces, review the Central Bank’s mortgage lending regulations.

Secondly, the budget should “prioritise funding of Ireland’s social housing needs”; in order to do this, they suggest “ring-fencing income from selling state property which is not in active use and [further] investing in housing funding schemes”, and mandate professional bodies to “zone land specifically for social housing”.

Finally, to “promote investment in commercial property and speed up delivery of critical public infrastructure”, PII have said the Government should support the IDA in pre-letting commercial premises to FDI tenants, and they should “target Exchequer Capital funding for schemes with a clear implementation plan to create jobs and increase the supply of housing”.

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Public Affairs Ireland

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“Smart” Public Procurement

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