New FRA Director announced

Last Friday, 25 September, it was announced that Prof Michael O’Flaherty would leave his position as Director of the Irish Centre of Human Rights at NUI Galway to become the Director of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).

This follows the resignation of former Director Morten Kjaerum in March 2015, after seven years with the Agency. Professor Flaherty was appointed after a long process, in which board members voted on candidates, in the proceeding months.

Prof O’Flaherty has previously served as the Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, and a member of the UN’s Human Rights Committee. Speaking of his appointment, he commented that he was looking forward to working with the Board Members “to advance the protection and promotion of fundamental rights throughout the EU”.

The FRA is a decentralised EU agency that “helps to ensure that the fundamental rights of people living in the EU are protected”.

Higgins pushes for more socially-responsible social media companies

Labour senator Lorraine Higgins has written to the government committee on communications, calling for social media giants Facebook and Twitter to appear before them.

This follows the senator’s proposed Bill earlier in the year. The Harmful and Malicious Electronic Communications Bill 2015, which “provides clear sanctions for anyone who, without lawful authority or reasonable excuse, intentionally or recklessly shares a harmful electronic communication designed to incite someone to die by suicide or do serious harm to themselves, or which causes alarm, distress or harm to that person.” Also, a recent Vodafone survey found that one-in-four children in Ireland face cyber-bullying. Higgins believes that this is due to the lack of legislation in this area that social media companies have flown under the radar, and were not being held accountable.

Senator Higgins, herself victim to harassment on social media platforms, condemned the media giants on their inaction. “In my experience, social media companies have shirked their responsibilities completely when it comes to providing a duty of care to their users.” Further, “Social media companies now need to step up to the plate. Given that they enjoy the benefit of a favourable tax rate I think it’s about time they showed some corporate social responsibility”.
Certification Guidelines released for GPs

Late last week, the Department of Social Protection announced that they would be soon rolling out certification guidelines to all General Practitioners. These guidelines aim to make GPs more helpful in their interactions with patients.

These new guidelines specifically deal with certification. Their aim is to prevent those with common health problems from getting to a stage of disability. Under the guidelines, GPs will: provide patients with accurate and clear timelines for recovery; ensure better health outcomes; encourage early return to work; reduce the number of people progressing to a state of chronic disability which could be deemed avoidable; and help patients avoid job loss.

The guidelines are a result of a six month research period, undertaken by the Department’s Medical Review and Assessment Service, led by Dr Leech, Chief Medical Officer. The research found that, generally, there is medical merit in remaining in work, in both mental health, and physical health spheres.

These guidelines, are, ultimately, guidelines; GPs are advised to use their best clinical judgement in certifying patients.

The guidelines won the “Best Education Project—GP/Pharmacy” award in the 2014 Irish Healthcare Awards.

Childcare will be a focus in next month’s Budget

This morning, the Irish Independent revealed that, as part of their dedication to childcare reform, two week’s paternity leave would be paid to new fathers, starting next June.

The Coalition has stated that Childcare would be one of its focuses in the upcoming budget, and this announcement is evidence of that. It is believed that there will be a series of measures enacted to ease the burden on parents, brought in incrementally across the next governmental term.

This will also include reduced costs for pre-schools and crèches, particularly for children with special needs. According to Children’s Minister Dr James Reilly TD, these measures will be introduced in 2016.

He commented that, while it would be unwise to try and bring all of the necessary change about in one fell swoop, “what [they] can do is make a strong start and send a very strong message that in this Budget, … [they] will incrementally address the childcare issues through a very clear plan in relation to the areas that are of concern”.

Annual Public Procurement Conference

“Smart” Public Procurement

Wednesday, September 30th, 2015
9am to 1pm
Westin Hotel, Dublin 2

Sponsored by

PHILIP LEE

@publicaffairsir  #ProcureCon15
This Week at Public Affairs Ireland

Training

**Conducting Effective Interviews (Interview Skills for Interviewers)**
Wednesday Sept 30
9am-3pm
PAI main office

**Manager as Coach**
Thursday Oct 1
9am-4pm
PAI main office

**Smart Public Procurement Conference**
Wednesday Sept 30
9am-1pm
The Westin Hotel, Dublin 2

**Certificate in Policy Development and Legislative Drafting**
Thursday Oct 1
Two days
PAI main office

On the Blog

Department of Finance’s Consultation on Taxing Expenses of Travel and Subsistence
Tom Ferris
Read [here](#)

SIPTU proposal for new Social Solidarity Contribution to replace USC
Ger Gibbons
Read [here](#)

Healthy Workplaces
Kate O’Flaherty
Read [here](#)

Dynamic capability: A basis for sustainable performance
Dr Brian Harney
Read [here](#)
This week in Dáil Éireann

**Tuesday 29 September**

2.00 p.m.  
Questions (Minister for Finance)

3.15 p.m.  
Leaders Questions

3.36 p.m.  
Questions (Taoiseach)

4.36 p.m.  
Order of Business

5.06 p.m.  
Topical Issues

5.54 p.m.  
Motion re Proceeds of Sale of Aer Lingus (Referral to Committee without Debate)  
(Department of Finance)

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill 2015 - Report Stage  
(Resumed)  
(Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government)

7.30 p.m.  
Private Members Business - Motion re Housing (Sinn Féin)

9.00 p.m.  
Dáil Adjourns

**Wednesday 30 September**

9.30 a.m.  
Questions (Minister for Social Protection)

10.45 a.m.  
Climate Action Low Carbon Development Bill 2015 - Report Stage  
(Resumed if not previously concluded)  
(Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government)

Finance (Tax Appeals) Bill 2015 - Order for Second Stage and Second Stage  
(Department of Finance)

Criminal Justice (Burglary of Dwellings) Bill 2015 - Order for Second Stage and Second Stage  
(Department of Justice and Equality)

12.00 noon  
Leaders Questions

12.21 p.m.  
Order of Business

12.51 p.m.  
SOS

1.51 p.m.  
Topical Issues

2.39 p.m.  
Morning Business Continued

7.30 p.m.  
Private Members Business - Motion re Housing (Sinn Féin)

9.00 p.m.  
Dáil Adjourns

**Thursday 01 October**

9.30 a.m.  
Questions (Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform)

10.45 a.m.  
Finance (Tax Appeals) Bill 2015 - Second Stage (Resumed if not previously concluded)  
(Department of Finance)

Criminal Justice (Burglary of Dwellings) Bill 2015 - Second Stage  
(Resumed)  
(Department of Justice and Equality)

12.00 noon  
Leaders Questions

12.21 p.m.  
Order of Business

Motion re Double Taxation Agreements (Back from Committee) (without Debate)  
(Department of Finance)

12.41 p.m.  
Morning Business Continued

4.42 p.m.  
Topical Issues

5.30 p.m.  
Dáil Adjourns
**Tuesday 29 September**

2.30 p.m.
Commencement Matters

3.30 p.m.
Order of Business

5.00 p.m.
Statements on the Ireland 2016 Schools Programme (Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht)

7.00 p.m.
Seanad Adjourns

**Wednesday 30 October**

10.30 a.m.
Commencement Matters

11.30 a.m.
Order of Business

1.00 p.m.
Pre Budget Statements (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform)

3.00 p.m.
Minerals Development Bill 2015 – Committee Stage (Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources)

5.00 p.m.
Private Members Business - Longer Healthy Living Bill 2015 – Order for Second Stage and Second Stage (Department of Health)

7.00 p.m.
Seanad Adjourns

**Thursday 01 October**

10.30 a.m.
Commencement Matters

11.30 a.m.
Order of Business

1.00 p.m.
Motion regarding the Migration Crisis (Department of Justice and Equality)

3.00 p.m.
Seanad Adjourns
This week’s Committee Meetings

**Tuesday 29 September**

Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Joint)
CR2, LH 2000 1.30 p.m. (T)
AGENDA: Mid-Year Review of the 2015 Estimates for Public Services - Vote 32 (Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation) [Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation; Minister of State for Skills, Research and Innovation]

Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Joint)
CR3, LH 2000 2 p.m.
AGENDA: Private Meeting

Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht (Joint)
CR4, LH 2000 2.15 p.m.
AGENDA: Private Meeting

**Wednesday 30 September**

Foreign Affairs and Trade (Joint)
CR3, LH 2000 10 a.m. (T)
AGENDA: The current situation in Gaza [Mr. Raji Sourani, Director, The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights]

Justice, Defence and Equality (Joint)
CR2, LH 2000 10 a.m. (T)
AGENDA: Session A: 10 a.m. - 12 noon
Migrant crisis [Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service]
Session B: 2.30 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Mid-Year Review of the 2015 Estimates for Public Services - Vote 35 (Army Pensions); and Vote 36 (Defence) [Minister for Defence]

Transport and Communications (Joint)
CR4, LH 2000 10.45 a.m. (T)
AGENDA: Mid-Year Review of the 2015 Estimates for Public Services - Vote 31 (Transport, Tourism and Sport) [Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport]

Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Joint)
CR1, LH 2000 11 a.m. (T)
AGENDA: Mid-Year Review of the 2015 Estimates for Public Services - Vote 30 (Agriculture, Food and The Marine) [Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine]

Education and Social Protection (Joint)
CR3, LH 2000 1 p.m. (T)
AGENDA: Mid-Year Review of 2015 Revised Estimate for Public Services - Vote 26 (Education and Skills) [Minister for Education and Skills]

Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform (Joint)
CR4, LH 2000 2 p.m. (T)
AGENDA: Mid-Year Review of the 2015 Estimates for Public Services - Vote 13 (OPW) [Ms. Clare McGrath, Chairman, OPW]

Justice, Defence and Equality (Joint)
CR2, LH 2000 3.45 p.m. (T)
AGENDA: Session A: 3.45 p.m. - 5 p.m.
Motion re Memorandum of Understanding on establishment of Battlegroups [Minister for Defence]
Session B: 5 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Marriage Bill 2015 [Minister for Justice and Equality]

Public Service Oversight and Petitions (Joint)
CR3, LH 2000 4 p.m. (T)
AGENDA: Two reports by the Office of the Ombudsman – Annual Report 2014 and Learning to Get Better [Mr. Peter Tyndall, Ombudsman]

**Thursday 01 October**

Health and Children (Joint) CR2,
LH 2000 9.30 a.m. (T)
AGENDA: National maternity services in Ireland
Session A: 9.30 a.m.
[Representatives from HSE and Hospitals Groups]; and
Session B: 11.30 a.m.
[Dr. Chris Fitzpatrick, Consultant, Coombe Women and Infants Maternity Hospital]

Public Accounts CR3,
LH 2000 10 a.m. (T)
AGENDA: (i) Business of the Committee; and
(ii) National Asset Management Agency Financial Statements 2014 (resumed) [Officials from the National Asset Management Agency]

European Union Affairs (Joint)
CR2, LH 2000 2 p.m. (T)
AGENDA: The Five Presidents’ report on Completing Europe’s Economic and Monetary Union (resumed) [Professor Gavin Barrett, UCD; and Mr. Seamus Coffey, Lecturer, UCC]