



Tithe an
Oireachtais
Houses of the
Oireachtas

An Comhchoiste um
Ghnóthaí an Aontais
Eorpaigh

Teach Laighean
Baile Átha Cliath 2
D02 XR20

Guthán: [REDACTED]
Guthán P.I.: [REDACTED]
R/phost: [REDACTED]

Joint Committee on
European Union
Affairs

Leinster House
Dublin 2
D02 XR20

Tel: [REDACTED]
I.P. Tel: [REDACTED]
E-mail: [REDACTED]

Minister Helen McEntee,
Minister of State for European Affairs,
Department of the Taoiseach,
Government Buildings,
Upper Merrion Street,
Dublin 2.

3 April 2019

REF: I423

Issued by email

Re:-European Semester 2019- National Reform Programme

Dear Minister McEntee,

On behalf of the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs, I would like to thank you for your letter of 7 March 2019, inviting the views of the Joint Committee in the preparation of Ireland's 2019 National Reform Programme.

The Joint Committee acknowledges the importance of the European Semester process, and welcomes your engagement with the Committee on the issues highlighted in the Country Report Ireland 2019. However the Committee would, for future reference and in the interests of strengthening the engagement process, welcome an earlier notification of the National Reform Programme Process and an indication of the key issues to be addressed.

On this occasion, the Joint Committee also agreed to circulate your correspondence to all sectoral Committees and invite their observations. Please see attached observations received from the Joint Committee on Education and Skills regarding digital skills and literacy, from the Joint Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government on matters relating to housing and from the Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs regarding affordable childcare issues.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Healy-Rae, TD
Chairman of the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs

Cuirfear fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge

**An Comhchoiste um
Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige,**
Tithe an Oireachtas,
Teach Laighean,
Baile Átha Cliath 2



**Joint Committee on Children
and Youth Affairs,**
Houses of the Oireachtas,
Leinster House,
Dublin 2

Tel: [REDACTED]

Tel: [REDACTED]

Ríomhphost: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Our Ref JCCYA-i-431

29 March 2019

Ms Stephanie Bollard
Policy Advisor
Joint Committee on European Union Affairs
Leinster House
Dublin 2

CC: Ms Heidi Lougheed, Clerk to the Committee

Issued by email to: [REDACTED]

Dear Stephanie,

I refer to correspondence, dated 13 March 2019 [our ref JCCYA-r-242], from the Joint Committee's Clerk, Ms Heidi Lougheed, in connection with the European semester process and seeking the input of the Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs.

The Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs met on 27 March 2019 and noted that it has considered the issue of child care in the past and will continue to do so. It also noted that affordable child care is an ongoing issue for families and that it remains a key priority issue for the Committee. Its Work Programme for 2019 includes consideration of the Affordable Childcare Scheme and other issues that impact on children.

The Joint Committee hopes that its intention to continue its consideration of these areas, including engaging with stakeholders in this regard, will contribute to the European semester process.

In the meantime, if I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

Aileen Fallon

Aileen Fallon
Clerk to the Committee

Cuirfear fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge

**An Comhchoiste um
Oideachas agus Scileanna**

Teach Laighean
Baile Átha Cliath 2



**Joint Committee on Education and
Skills**

Leinster House
Dublin 2

Tel: [REDACTED]

R-phost: [REDACTED]

Tel: [REDACTED]

E-mail: [REDACTED]

26th March 2019

Ms. Stephanie Bollard,
Policy Advisor to the Joint Committee on
European Union Affairs,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

E-mail: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Your ref: **1401**

Our Ref: **JCES 5/A/D/B/2/J56[68]**

Dear Stephanie,

I refer to correspondence dated 13th March 2019, from the Committee Clerk, in relation to 2019 Country Report for Ireland and the National Reform Programme, both part of the European Semester process. This was considered by the Committee at its meeting 26th March 2019.

The Committee has agreed to amend its Work Programme for 2019 to include specific topics related to *Promoting Digital Skills* and *Literacy in Adults*.

In addition, it is the Committee's intention that these topics would be the subject of a consultation process with stakeholders engage which may include public hearings.

The Committee hopes that its intention to highlight both of these matters can contribute to the European Semester process.

Should you require any further information in relation to this matter please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Guidon

Alan Guidon
Clerk
Joint Committee on Education and Skills

Tel: [REDACTED]

Cuirfear fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge



Tithe an
Oireachtais
Houses of the
Oireachtas

An Roghchoiste um
Thithíocht, Pleanáil agus
Rialtas Áitiúil

Teach Laighean
Baile Átha Cliath 2
D02 XR20

Guthán: [REDACTED]

Guthán P.I.: [REDACTED]

R/phost: [REDACTED]

Select Committee on
Housing, Planning and Local
Government.

Leinster House
Dublin 2
D02 XR20

Tel: [REDACTED]

I.P. Tel: [REDACTED]

E-mail: [REDACTED]

Ref: - HPLG-i-919

Mr Michael Healy-Rae TD
Chairman
Oireachtas Joint Committee on European Union Affairs
Leinster House
Dublin 2

28th March 2019

E-mail: [REDACTED]

Re: European Semester 2019 – National Reform Programme

Dear Chairman,

I refer to previous correspondence received dated 13th March requesting the views of sectoral Committee's on the European Semester 2019 in the context of the submission of the annual National Reform Programme.

The Joint Committee on Housing Planning and Local Government has reviewed the 2019 In-Depth Review Country Report and forwards the below views relating to the remit of this Committee for consideration in terms of drafting the National Reform Plan.

Yours sincerely,

Ms Maria Bailey, TD
Chair
Joint Committee on Housing, Planning & Local Government

Cuirfear fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge

2019 European Semester: Country Report – Ireland (Views of the Joint Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government)

The Joint Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government welcomes the publication by the Commission of the 2019 Country Report for Ireland on 27 February 2019. The Joint Committee has reviewed the report and specifically matters relating to housing. In that context, the Committee is pleased to forward the following observations/views in the context of the drafting of the 2019 National Reform Programme.

- The Committee considers the Housing and Homelessness issue as the most significant challenge confronting the State. The Committee is of the opinion that this challenge continues to be prioritised in terms of responding to and finding solutions to correct the existing housing shortage.
- The Committee acknowledges the statement in the Country Report relating to the Commission's assessment of the 2018 Country-Specific Recommendations that some progress has been made in ensuring the timely and effective implementation of the National Development Plan – of which housing is a component part.
- The Committee acknowledges the Report's statement that the government has implemented a broad range of measures to tackle the undersupply of housing, but results will take time as housing supply is recovering from very low levels.
- The Committee identifies that the most pressing policy objective is to narrow the gap between housing supply and housing demand. Noting that the Report confirms that construction activity increased by 17.9% year-on-year in 2018, the Committee reaffirms that residential and social housing development will continue to require significant investment over a sustained timeframe in order to meet demand. In that context, the Committee welcomes the capital allocation of €116bn set out in the National Development Plan for the 2018-2027 and that funding for housing provision is prioritised.
- The Committee is of the opinion that prioritising both public and private investment in infrastructure and housing is essential for sustainable and long-term inclusive growth.
- The Committee considers the existing levels of homelessness, particularly in Dublin, as unacceptable. The Committee welcomes the change in focus in the Rebuilding Ireland Plan in 2019 towards the prevention of homelessness in the first instance. The Committee recommends a multi-dimensional response with state agencies co-operating with the NGO sector and homeless charities in providing both short-term and long-term solutions. The Committee notes that the In-Depth report identifies a number of different groups where homelessness is particularly prevalent – single parents, single men, the elderly, people with disabilities and families and youth. The Committee recommends the establishment of a taskforce involving State and NGO bodies that would specifically focus on tackling homelessness and assisting the above cohorts in avoiding homelessness.
- The Committee notes and endorses the Report's assessment that several years of sustained investment to address quantity, quality and variety of housing and associated support services are required to address homelessness. The Committee is of the opinion that a one-size fits all approach is not appropriate and that varied housing developments tailored to the different and specific needs of citizens must be incorporated as part of the overall housing strategy for the country into the future.
- Furthermore, the Committee is of the opinion that housing provision and policy formulation should be aligned with and consideration given to the broader tenets outlined in the European Pillar of Social Rights.

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- The Committee acknowledges references in the report to rapidly rising rents. The Committee notes that such increases are unsustainable and do contribute to increased homelessness – thereby exacerbating an already difficult situation. The Committee is of the view that sustained investment in the development of both social and private housing developments will ultimately lead to reduced reliance on the rental market.
- In the interim, the Committee supports and is due shortly to facilitate the passage of the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) No.2 Bill 2018 through the Oireachtas. The Committee supports the broad objectives of the Bill in the regulation of and provision of greater security of tenure for citizens in the rental sector. The Committee supports measures such as sanctions for non-compliance with rent increase restrictions in rent pressure zones, an increase in the notice periods to be provided in the case of terminations of a tenancy by a landlord, provision for the annual registration by landlords of tenancies and to provide for mandatory publications of determination orders by the Residential Tenancies Board. The Committee is of the opinion that this legislation has the capacity to contribute to safeguarding and protecting tenants' rights and thereby remedying some of the existing negative practices associated with the rental sector.
- The Committee notes references in the Report to House price increases in 2017 of 10.9%. The report acknowledges that prices have moderated somewhat since April 2018. Nevertheless, significant house price increases and affordability issues remain a constant concern. The Committee has recently examined and met with stakeholders to discuss the key issues contributing to price increases. The Committee supports the rollout of new affordable accommodation schemes and recommends that the State engages with both Approved Housing Bodies/Associations and movements such as the Credit Union Sector in exploring options that may lead to the development and construction of affordable homes. The Committee deems the use of public land as essential in developing and constructing houses that are affordable and within reach of citizens.
- The Committee notes the reference in the Report that the number of years of gross disposable income required by an average household in Ireland to buy a 100 square metres dwelling amounted to 16 in 2017 and that this period was above the prudential benchmark equal to 10 and one of the longest in Europe. The Committee notes that this statistic is worrisome in that a significant segment of the population are unable to purchase a home, in that those who do require a disproportionate amount of income to be able to secure a home, that such time involved in securing a deposit has broader socio-economic consequences such as less spending in the economy, delayed family formation etc. The Committee recommends that the Department urgently review this metric with a view to implementing measures that would align Ireland with European norm.
- The Committee notes references to potential skills shortages as regards the construction sector and property professionals. The Committee notes that in 2016, the number of construction firms was just 6.7% higher than in 2010. The Committee recommends that the relevant Departments work together in undertaking an audit of capacity within the sector and what numbers and skillsets are required in order to deliver the housing required. This may also involve consideration of incentive schemes to attract emigrants/migrant labour to Ireland and/or expanding and investing resources in apprenticeship schemes directly related to construction/property activities.
- The Committee notes that the report confirms that annual housing completions are increasing year-on-year (17,161 in Q3 2018), but that demand is also estimated to increase from 23,000 units in 2018 to 32,000 by 2024.
- The Committee supports additional construction on publicly-owned land and welcomes the establishment of the Land Development Agency in that regard. The Committee supports the assembly of strategic land banks to facilitate the construction of a significant number of houses (150,000 estimated over 20 years) that should fall into the affordable home category. The Committee is eager to engage with the Minister in progressing the legislation establishing the

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Land Development Agency (LDA) on a statutory footing once it is formally referred to the Committee.

- Similarly, the Committee supports the activities and objectives of both the Serviced Site Fund and the Regeneration Development Fund. The Committee supports the allocation of €3.3bn over the 2018-2027 period with the potential to have serviced sites with capacity for delivering 6,200 housing units.
- The Committee also notes that the Country Report refers to significant regional disparities in Ireland with approximately 40% of the total population living in the Greater Dublin region. The Committee notes that discussions relating to rural resettlement schemes are on-going in the context of a commitment made under the Programme for Government. The Committee supports continued discussions in terms of formulating a policy that may take the form of a pilot project. Furthermore, the Committee recommends that the Department engage with EU authorities to explore the possibility of devising and/or receiving support towards the establishment of schemes aimed at regenerating rural areas. Such a course of action may involve cooperating with agencies and/or bodies that fall under the Structural/Cohesion Fund umbrella.
- The Committee notes that the Country Report specifically refers to the Structural Reform Support Programme. The Committee notes that the Commission has frequently held up Ireland as an example for implementing structural reforms. The Committee recommends that should a request be made that the Commission provide tailor-made technical support to Ireland in terms of addressing the single most important challenge confronting the country.
- The Committee notes that the Report states that investment in social housing infrastructure and social services are crucial to address the severe social housing shortages. In that context and the categorisation of the challenge as severe, the Committee recommends that the Commission provide for some degree of flexibility with the Stability and Growth Pact to allow additional investment by the Irish Government to respond to the Housing crisis.