



TITHE AN OIREACHTAIS

An Comhchoiste um Ghnóthaí an Aontais Eorpaigh

Clár Oibre 2015

Éanair 2015

HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS

Joint Committee on European Union Affairs

Work Programme 2015

January 2015

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Joint Committee on European Union Affairs

Work Programme 2015

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Work Programme 2015

STRATEGIC ISSUES

The UK and the EU -Implications for Ireland

General Affairs Council

European Council

Presidency Priorities - Latvia & Luxembourg

Results of the Europe 2020 mid-term review

Inter-parliamentary relations: Ireland's Strategic Partners in Europe

EU INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

Role of National Parliaments: post Lisbon Treaty

European Central Bank Accountability

Engagement with MEPs

Engagement with Committee of Regions and European and Economic Social Committee

European Court of Auditors/Ombudsman

SPECIAL PROJECTS

The UK and the EU -Implications for Ireland

Negotiations on TTIP

Deepening Economic and Monetary Union Package

CROSS-SECTORAL POLICY MATTERS

European Semester 2015 (focusing on Eurozone Economic Growth)

Negotiations on TTIP

European Agenda on Migration

Deepening Economic and Monetary Union Package

The Investment Plan for Europe

STANDARD/STATUTORY MATTERS

Operation of the EU Scrutiny Act

Oireachtas EU Scrutiny Plan 2015

COSAC

European Parliamentary Week/Article 13 Europe Day -Attitudes toward the EU

Annual Report 2014

1. Background

The Joint Committee on European Union Affairs was established following Orders of Dáil Éireann on 8 June 2011 and of Seanad Éireann on 16 June 2011. Standing Orders [DSO 86(4); SSO 75(4)] require that *"as soon as may be following its appointment and thereafter at annual intervals, each Select Committee shall prepare a work programme and shall lay such programme before [Dáil/Seanad] Éireann"*.

This Work Programme details business that the Committee must transact between now and the end of the year in accordance with its orders of reference, as well as key policy issues from which items may be selected for consideration.

In so far as possible, the Joint Committee will try to maintain a reasonable balance in its work between all of its policy responsibilities.

2. Overview of Work Programme

The duties of the Joint Committee are discharged in two ways, (1) there will be items of business referred to it by one or both Houses and (2) it can select business for consideration itself, from the areas within its terms of reference. In practice, the Joint Committee's work will comprise the examination of EU business and key policy priorities.

The orders of reference of the Joint Committee stipulate that it may consider issues such as:

- *matters arising from Ireland's membership of the European Union, and Ireland's adherence to the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, as it may select and which are not referred to any other Committee,*
- *the EU Commission's strategic planning documents including the Commission Work Programme,*
- *cross-sectoral policy developments at European Union level,*
- *matters listed for consideration on the agenda for meetings of the General Affairs Council of Ministers and the outcome of such meetings,*
- *such regulations under the European Communities Acts 1972 to 2009 and other instruments made under statute and necessitated by the obligations of membership of the European Union as the Committee may select,*
- *notifications referred by the Dáil regarding the use of the general passerelle [SO 106 1(a)],*
- *notifications of proposals for the amendment of the Treaties received from the European Council pursuant to Article 48.2 of the Treaty on European Union,*
- *notifications of applications for membership of the European Union received from the European Council pursuant to Article 49 of the Treaty on European Union,*

- *the operation of the European Union (Scrutiny) Act 2002, reporting to both Houses of the Oireachtas,*
- *Referral of matters by Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann (e.g. Motions re. International Agreements, Conventions, etc.).*

3. Joint Committee – Specific Items for Consideration

The Joint Committee will monitor, review and report on the likely implications of the policies and programmes pursued by the institutions of the European Union for people in their daily lives and for the longer-term future for Ireland and Europe.

As part of this process, the Committee may invite presentations from Government Ministers, European Commissioners, representatives of government departments and the EU institutions and other interested individuals and groups in order to hear their views and perspectives on matters under consideration. The Joint Committee may also, if the need arises, engage persons with specialist or technical knowledge to advise and assist it in its work.

It is intended that specific items will be considered by the Joint Committee to the end of the year, categorised as follows:–

- Strategic Issues
- Cross-sectoral policy matters
- Institutional issues
- Standard/Statutory Issues
- Special projects.

3.1. Strategic Issues

(a) Council of the European Union

General Affairs Council (GAC)

The Joint Committee will make arrangements for monthly meetings with the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade or the Minister of State with Special Responsibility for European Affairs in advance of meetings of the General Affairs Council to enable the Joint Committee to continue effective oversight of the Government's policy approach and to have an input into, and an exchange of views on, topics arising on the agendas of those Council meetings.

The Joint Committee will have on-going periodic follow-up with the Minister (or Departmental officials as appropriate) on progress made on implementation of recommendations made in Reports published by the Joint Committee.

Priorities of the Presidencies of the Council

In January the Committee met with the Ambassador of Latvia to Ireland to discuss Latvia's priorities during its Presidency of the Council of the EU from January to June 2015. In July, the Committee will seek a meeting with the Ambassador of Luxembourg to Ireland to discuss Luxembourg's priorities during its EU Presidency from July to December 2015.

(b) European Commission

The Joint Committee will endeavour to influence, as appropriate, the direction of the EU. Following the publication of the European Commission's Work Programme for 2015, the Committee will debate the programme to highlight the key legislative and

non-legislative proposals and may extend an invitation to the European Commission for a Commissioner to address it directly on the Commission's work programme.

(c) The United Kingdom and the EU – Implications for Ireland

The Committee will consider the implications for Ireland of any future change in the UK's relationship with the European Union and the possible consequences for the four freedoms, in line with the agreed scoping document. The Committee will engage with experts, including UK parliamentarians, to tease out the issues involved and explore what an appropriate Irish response might look like should such a change materialise. The Committee will undertake travel to the UK as part of its consideration of this issue.

(d) Results of the Europe 2020 Strategy Review

During 2015, the results of the review of the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in the EU will be considered. The Committee engaged directly with the European Commission on this issue with an evidence based political contribution as part of the review. In 2015, the Committee will consider the results of the review process. Greater emphasis will be placed on ongoing monitoring of progress made on the achievement of targets, in particular where progress has been weak thus far.

(e) Inter-parliamentary Cooperation: Ireland's Strategic Partners in Europe

The Joint Committee will seek to enhance its interaction with other Member States' national parliaments and counterpart committees on a bilateral basis. In this regard, the Committee may prioritise engagement with specific parliaments in 2015. The Committee has acknowledged the importance of such dialogue if national parliaments are to achieve their full potential as regards influencing the EU's strategic goals and policy direction.

President Juncker sees this as a time for consolidation of the EU. In a time of political upheaval globally and with the future of the UK within the EU unclear, the Committee views the consolidation of bilateral relations with particular MSs as strategically important for Ireland. In that regard, the Committee will seek to visit with our counterparts in the parliaments of Member States such as the UK, Germany and other Members States, where feasible. The travel programme will reflect its priorities under this heading.

3.2 Institutional Issues

(a) Lisbon Treaty – Role of National Parliaments

The role of national parliaments in the EU context is a 'standing agenda' item for discuss in the course of inter-parliamentary co-operation. Members States Committees have collectively considered the issue at various fora in the run up to the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty. In 2015 the Committee will take stock of the positions and proposals which have emerged as a result of these discussions and agree a current position.

(b) European Central Bank accountability

Notwithstanding the independence of the European Central Bank, in theory it is accountable to citizens and their elected representatives for the conduct of its policies. In practice, the European Parliament plays a particularly important role in terms of holding the ECB to account.

In the context of public commentary on the adequacy of ECB accountability and given its expanded role to include bank supervision in the euro area, the Committee wishes to examine the accountability arrangements that are in place. This issue is critical in view of the proposal of the EU Commission to 'Deepen the Economic and Monetary Union'.

(c) Engagement with Irish MEPs

Recognising that citizens can feel disconnected from the work of the European Parliament and their MEPs, the Committee will consider ways to further increase the integration of European Parliament business and Oireachtas business through engagement with Irish MEPs. The Joint Committee will endeavour to schedule a number of its meetings to take place on Thursday afternoons, with a view to facilitating attendance by MEPs. The possibility of holding meetings on Friday mornings, to coincide with Dáil sittings will also be examined.

The Joint Committee will endeavour to schedule a special meeting once per quarter with a specialised agenda agreed with the Irish MEPs.

(d) Engagement with the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) represents local and regional government in the EU policy formation and decision-making processes. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is a consultative body that gives representatives of Europe's socio-occupational interest groups and others, a formal platform to express their points of views on EU issues.

The Committee will consider ways to increase the integration of the business of the CoR and the EESC and Oireachtas business through engagement with the Irish delegations.

(e) EU Discussion Forum

Ireland's engagement in the EU takes place across a number of fronts in the various institutions and advisory bodies, yet discussion on issues arising from Ireland's membership of the EU is frequently fragmented and lacking coherence.

The Committee will attempt to bring together on at least one occasion during 2015 some of the key Irish actors on the European stage – the Minister for European Affairs, Irish MEPs, the Irish delegation to the CoR and Irish members of the EESC – to debate the key European issues affecting Ireland.

(f) European Court of Auditors/European Ombudsman

In recent years the Joint Committee has established the practice of engaging with the Irish member of the European Court of Auditors on its Annual Report, which reviews

the use of EU public funds. It is the Committee's intention to continue and build on its engagement with the Court, and to consider its Annual Report for 2014 towards the end of 2015, once available.

The Joint Committee will also engage with the European Ombudsman in 2015.

3.3 Cross-Sectoral Policy Matters

(a) European Semester 2015 (focusing on Eurozone Economic Growth)

The Joint Committee will, in conjunction with the Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and other Joint Committees as appropriate, ensure appropriate Oireachtas oversight at key stages during the European Semester process in 2015.

The Committee will involve itself in the scrutiny of the Government's proposed National Reform Programme 2015, which is due to be submitted to the European Commission by mid-April 2015. The Committee will also consider, together with the other relevant Joint Committees, the Country-Specific Recommendations to be issued to Ireland in June. Committee consideration this year will focus on the slow economic growth of the EU and Eurozone economies, which may impact on Ireland's economic recovery.

(b) Deepening Economic and Monetary Union Package

The EU Commission states that "*The architecture of the Economic Monetary Union needs further strengthening*". It plans to develop proposals on further steps towards pooled sovereignty in economic governance accompanied by actions to reinvigorate social dialogue at all levels.

The Committee will build on previous work done by it on EMU and will engage with the Commission, Irish MEPs and other stakeholders on this broad aspect of this initiative. The relevant sectoral Committee will engage on specific taxation proposals.

(c) European Migration Package

To tackle the growing pressure at the external borders of the EU and to prevent tragic events such as those recurrently happening in the Mediterranean Sea, the Commission is developing a European Agenda on Migration, to encompass and balance legal migration, with firm measures against irregular migration and people trafficking and smuggling. The Committee will engage on the proposals by the Commission, with the assistance of experts and stakeholders on this issue.

(d) The Investment Plan for Europe

Announced in late 2014, the Committee will continue its engagement on this issue with the EU Commission and the relevant Irish Ministers.

(e) Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership Agreement

The Committee welcomes the new transparency measures taken by the EU Commission in response to calls made for this. In view of the potential importance of

any final agreement between the EU and the US, to Ireland this item will remain on the Committee work programme until the issue comes to finality. The Committee will continue to engage on developments on TTIP during 2015.

3.4 Standard/ Statutory Matters

(a) Operation of the EU Scrutiny Act

The Joint Committee (pursuant to the EU Scrutiny Act 2002 and its Orders of Reference) is responsible for reporting on an annual basis on the operation of the Act in the Oireachtas. Typically such a report will contain statistics on the number of proposals considered by Committees in the year under review and the number of proposals which warranted detailed scrutiny. Other possible quantitative measures would include the number of 'Contributions' sent to the EU Institutions and reasoned opinions agreed in plenary. The report will contain statistics for each Sectoral Committee.

The report will also include a qualitative assessment of the operation of the Act by the Oireachtas and its committees and will make recommendations for improvements where necessary and will consider the compliance of Government Departments with the Act. The Committee may also consider seeking external views on the effectiveness of the Oireachtas EU scrutiny process, before completing its report.

The report will be laid before both Houses and the Joint Committee may consider calling for a debate on the report.

(b) Oireachtas EU Scrutiny Work Programme 2015

In its Annual Report on the Operation of the European Union (Scrutiny) Act 2002, which was laid before both Houses on 20 July 2012, the Joint Committee recommended that sectoral committees should identify on an annual basis those proposals from the European Commission's Annual Work Programme which they would subject to detailed scrutiny. It recommended that these should be forwarded to the Joint Committee for inclusion in an agreed list of priorities which it would then report to the Houses.

The Committee compiled the first such report in 2013 and will liaise with the sectoral committees with a view to publishing the Oireachtas EU Scrutiny Work Programme for 2014 early in the year.

(c) Transposition of EU Law / Infringements

While the orders of reference of all sectoral committees provide for consideration of statutory instruments (SIs), the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs has a particular role with regard to SIs made under the European Communities Act 1972 as amended (1972 Act), which transpose EU law into Irish law.

Specifically, section 4 of the Act provides that the Joint Committee on European Affairs can recommend to the Houses of the Oireachtas that any Regulations made under the Act be annulled and such Regulations will be annulled where a resolution to this effect is passed by both Houses within 1 year of the Regulations being made.

The Committee will engage in the Government review of the structures for Oireachtas scrutiny of EU affairs in 2014, and is interested in exploring how Oireachtas scrutiny of the transposition of EU legislation, particularly by statutory instrument under the 1972 Act and others, can be improved.

The Committee may also engage with the Minister on the Programme for Government commitment in relation to ceasing the transposition of EU directives into Irish law by the use of statutory instruments, Ireland's transposition record and the number of current unresolved infringement cases against Ireland on foot of inadequate or late transposition.

(d) Communicating Europe – Engaging the Citizen

The Joint Committee sees communicating with the public as a strategic imperative and a key component of its role. The Committee recognises that the need to communicate with citizens on Europe is an on-going and complex task. It believes that the Oireachtas should serve as an intermediary between the EU institutions and citizens, both taking account of the public's views and informing the public on EU activities.

For its part, the Committee will encourage citizens to become aware of and exercise their rights as EU citizens, and to engage in active citizenship in the EU system.

The Committee will consider how it might highlight examples of members of the public exercising their EU citizenship rights, protecting their rights and having their say in the development of EU policy and legislation, through engagement with:

- Irish and European courts
- MEPs and the European Parliament Petitions Committee
- European Ombudsman
- European Citizens Initiative
- European Commission consultations.

(e) COSAC: Conference of Chairpersons of Committees on European Affairs of the member states and the European parliament.

The Joint Committee will continue to represent the Oireachtas at meetings of COSAC and seek to exchange ideas and information on best practice. The meeting of Chairpersons will take place in Riga, Latvia in February and in Luxembourg in June, while the plenary sessions will take place on June in Latvia and later in the autumn in Luxembourg. The Committee will also participate and contribute to the on-going debate on the future of COSAC, in the context of the evolving framework for inter-parliamentary cooperation.

(f) Treaty Amendments / Applications for Membership of the EU

Applications for membership of the EU and proposals for Treaty Amendments stand referred to the Joint Committee and will be considered as appropriate.

(g) European Parliamentary Week/Article 13

The Joint Committee will be represented as appropriate at the various conferences and events in order to influence the outcome.

(h) Europe Day

It will continue to play a central role in the organisation and participation in Europe Day in the Houses of the Oireachtas. This year, the Committee will engage on the topic 'Attitudes to the EU', in the context of growing scepticism towards the European Project.

(i) Annual Report

The Joint Committee will endeavour to agree its Annual Report 2013 early in 2014.

3.5 Special Projects

(a) The United Kingdom and the EU – Implications for Ireland

The Committee will consider the implications for Ireland of any future change in the UK's relationship with the European Union and the possible consequences for the four freedoms, in line with the agreed scoping document. The Committee will engage with experts, including UK parliamentarians, to tease out the issues involved and explore what an appropriate Irish response might look like should such a change materialise. The Committee will undertake travel to the UK as part of its consideration of this issue.

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The Committee welcomes the new transparency measures taken by the EU Commission in response to calls made for this. In view of the potential importance of any final agreement between the EU and the US, to Ireland this item will remain on the Committee work programme until the issue comes to finality. The Committee will continue to engage on the developments on TTIP during 2015.

(c) Deepening Economic and Monetary Union Package

The EU Commission states that "*The architecture of the Economic Monetary Union needs further strengthening*". It plans to develop proposals on further steps towards pooled sovereignty in economic governance accompanied by actions to reinvigorate social dialogue at all levels.

The Committee will build on previous work done by it on EMU and will engage with the Commission, Irish MEPs and other stakeholders on this broad aspect of this initiative. The relevant sectoral Committee will engage on specific taxation proposals.

4. Travel

Subject to Standing Order 83(9) [Dáil Éireann] and Standing Order 71(9) [Seanad Éireann], the Joint Committee may decide, subject to financial, administrative and procedural constraints, to undertake travel as it considers necessary to further progress the Work Programme. Such travel may include study visits, attendance at conferences or meetings, etc. on European-related issues within its remit under its Orders of Reference. Reports will be completed for all travel undertaken.

(i) Cooperation between national parliaments and the European Parliament under the aegis of COSAC

The Joint Committee will continue to represent the Oireachtas at meetings of COSAC (*Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the EU*) and seek to exchange ideas and information on best practice. The Joint Committee expects to travel to Latvia for the meeting of Chairpersons in January and the plenary session in June and to Luxembourg during its Presidency in the latter half of 2015.

(ii) *Bilateral Relations: Ireland's Strategic Partners in Europe*

President Juncker sees this a time for consolidation of the EU. In a time of political upheaval globally and with the future of the UK within the EU unclear, the Committee views the consolidation of bilateral relations with particular MSs as strategically important for Ireland. In that regard, the Committee will seek to visit with our counterparts in the parliaments of Member States such as the UK, Germany and other Members States, where feasible.

(iii) *Cooperation with the European Parliament*

When practical, the Joint Committee will participate in inter-parliamentary committee meetings organised by the European Parliament, such as its European Parliamentary Week meetings on the European Semester.

5. Incoming Parliamentary Delegations

The Joint Committee will receive visits from members of parliaments, including European Affairs Committees of other EU member states, for discussion and exchange of information and ideas on matters of mutual interest, on an on-going basis, and as demand dictates.

6. Number and Frequency of Meetings

Taking account of the resources and facilities available and the commitments of members, it is anticipated that the Committee will meet on a weekly basis in 2015.

The Joint Committee will invite the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade or the Minister of State with Special Responsibility for European Affairs to meet with it in advance of meetings of the General Affairs Council, in the course of 2015, and to discuss other matters relevant to the Committee's remit, as required.

The Joint Committee will also continue its schedule of informal meetings with incoming delegations and the diplomatic corps.

7. Select Committee

In view of the specific functions of the Select Committee, it is not possible to anticipate the number of meetings required during 2015. However, the Select Committee will convene as necessary to consider such matters as are referred to it within the prescribed timeframe.

8. Agreement of Work Programme

This Work Programme for 2015 of the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs was agreed by the Committee at its meeting on XXXX 2015. In accordance with Standing Orders of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann, it was agreed that the Work Programme be laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas.

It was also agreed that the Work Programme would be published on the Committee's page of the Oireachtas website.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dom Hannigan', with a horizontal line underneath.

Dominic Hannigan TD
Chairman

29 January 2015