

## **Opening Statement**

### **Joint Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection**

**Thursday, 22 February 2018**

#### **Introduction**

I would like to thank the Committee for inviting me here today to inform the discussion on the Public Services Card and MyGovID.

I am Barry Lowry, the Government Chief Information Officer and I hope this morning to be able to give the Committee a sense of the strategic need for increasing the adoption and usage of the Card and (particularly) the MyGovID service.

I would like to begin with the European context for the ongoing plans and then focus on the National interest.

So starting with Europe.

I was interested to read a recent comment from Thomas Donohue, Chief Executive and President of the US Chamber of Commerce, when he predicted that Ireland will take on a more significant role in Europe if Brexit proceeds as planned. Given the existing and growing importance of the EU to our economy, I am sure the Committee fully accepts that it is absolutely essential that we are at the forefront of any European initiatives that impact upon our trade and economy.

The European Commission is extremely committed to the concept of digital government driving digital commerce and economic growth. They have

estimated that ICT is currently responsible for half of productivity growth in the EU, and the digital sector is expected to grow seven times faster than the overall EU economy. European commission vice-president Andrus Ansip has therefore set out ambitious plans for cross-border eGovernment and the establishment of a Digital Single Market. Ansip has often quoted figures produced by the European Added Value Unit, which considers that, taking into account various constraints, a fully realised digital single market could increase GDP by €340bn a year and make a very significant contribution to overall GDP growth in Europe in the next decade.

Ansip has repeatedly said the Governments can play a substantial role in progressing the concept of a Digital Single Market by facilitating cross-border access to digital government services, whether that be an Irish citizen accessing our services regardless of their location, or an EU citizen being able to plan to work, live or holiday in Ireland, and putting all their arrangements in place before arriving in the country.

Again, it is imperative that we take all possible steps to make certain that we are not only aware of such developments but are shaping them and are ready to utilise them to ensure that Ireland is not disadvantaged compared to, or left behind the rest of Europe in terms of digital trade and digital government.

Regulation (EU) N°910/2014, often known as the eIDAS (Electronic ID and Trust Services) Regulation, addresses electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market. The Regulation has been established to ultimately enable people and businesses to use their own national electronic identification schemes to access public services in other EU

countries where eIDs are also available. The Regulation also creates legal validity for electronic signatures, electronic seals, time stamps etc have the same legal status as traditional paper based processes.

If Ireland is to be recognised as a progressive digital state within Europe then we need to have a State Electronic ID, which is safe, secure and verifiable. MyGovID gives us a basis for this capability. It provides substantial assurance that the person online is who they claim to be and provides considerable protection against personation and fraud. It can also provide the foundation for the use of electronic signatures in the future.

Just to be absolutely clear, MyGovID is the only viable approach that can underpin future citizen interaction with a digital Europe.

In addition, the EU's eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020 sets out a shared eGovernment vision and a series of principles for Member States to adhere to.

These include:

- That public administrations should deliver services digitally as the preferred option through a single contact point or a one-stop-shop;
- that public administrations should ensure that citizens and businesses only need to supply the same information once to a public administration; and that public administration offices should then take action if permitted to internally re-use this data, in due respect of data protection rules, so that no additional burden falls on citizens and businesses; and that
- public administrations should share information and data between themselves and enable citizens and businesses to access, control and

correct their own data; and also enable users to monitor the administrative processes that involve them.

Again, it is clear that the ability for citizens to carry out more transactions online, to only provide information once and have it stored securely for future needs, and then to be able to see and correct the data held on them and how it is being used, are reasonable expectations of any digital government. And of course, much of this aligns closely to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

But we can only do these things if we are absolutely certain that the person who seeks to carry out these transactions are exactly who they say they are. This is why MyGovID is so important, because it provides a very strong means of online verification. Contrary to what others have written and said, underpinning government services with MyGovID and the SAFE 2 process, will help us provide more secure and transparent government services.

Consequently, the eGovernment Strategy, which was published by eGovernment Minister Patrick O'Donovan in July, set out 10 key actions aimed at enabling citizens to access digital government services of similar levels of quality, transparency and safety as the leading digital countries in Europe. These actions include the development of a Digital Services Gateway; a roadmap for allowing citizens to authenticate themselves for any Government digital service using MyGovID (see Annexe); plans for business and location e-identification; means for governed data-sharing across government; plans to build on our Open Data success and plans to ensure that our people have the requisite digital skills and capabilities.

And of course, this is also an area of rapidly growing National interest as increasing numbers of the public want us to proceed down this road. In the 2017 Civil Service Customer Satisfaction Survey, which was conducted by IPSOS MRBI, 61% of those consulted agreed or strongly agreed that they would be more inclined to use online Government services as their preferred way of initial engagement with the Civil Service, provided they were easier to find and easier to use. In the 18-34 age category the total figure was 76%. In addition, 65% felt that a single digital identity would be very convenient or fairly convenient. In the 18-34 age category the total figure was 82%.

We have a real opportunity to provide government services that are more efficient, convenient, transparent and provide a better user experience. We do not believe that all of this can be achieved without a single electronic identification scheme.

The Committee is, of course, very much aware of the existing importance of the Digital industry itself to Ireland. The digital economy has been estimated to represent 6% (€12.3bn) of Ireland's GDP. The Digital and ICT sector is now a very significant employer, offering high quality jobs through the strong presence here of global players, through our world-class SME capability, or through the many organisations who deploy digital and ICT as part of their day to day business. Research completed for the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation's Future Skills needs analysis stated that there had been a growth in ICT jobs provision of around 8-9% from 2016 onwards with the demand being partly met through attracting foreign talent; over 6.5K ICT employment permits have been issued in the last two years. A compound

annual growth rate of 8.5% per annum is expected from 2017-22. While this requirement will again be helped by the recruitment of foreign talent, it also offers tremendous opportunities to our own current and prospective workforce, through graduate recruitment, apprenticeships and retraining schemes.

If we accept the thesis that talented workers are more likely to apply to and stay with companies that deploy digital technology well, then it must follow that countries that provide an optimised citizen experience through the use of digital and ICT, will be more likely to attract and retain the best talent.

So I hope my opening statement has been helpful in briefly giving the Committee an indication of the importance of the role that MyGovID and the underlying SAFE 2 process can and must play in establishing Ireland as a European Digital and eGovernment leader; helping it to attract and retain the highest quality jobs and the best talent; and providing government services to its people that are safer, more efficient and more transparent than ever before.

I am very happy now to listen to the Committee's views and answer any questions that you may have.

Thank you.

**ENDS**

## Annexe A

### January 2018 \_ Public Services Card/ MyGovID Adoption Plan Update

The table below outlines the progress on the adoption of both the PSC and MyGovID within departments as at end January 2018.

Department/Office	Service Name	Status
<b>Office of the Revenue Commissioners</b>	Online PAYE Anytime Service	Currently Live
<b>Road Safety Authority</b>	Drivers Theory Test	Currently Live
<b>Dept. Foreign Affairs and Trade</b>	Passport Application	Dec-18
<b>Road Safety Authority</b>	Drivers Licence Application	April-18
<b>Dept. Justice and Equality</b>	Proof of Age	June-18
<b>Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI)</b>	Student Grant Application	Awaiting confirmation of date
<b>Dept. Education and Skills</b>	School Grant Appeal	Awaiting confirmation of date
<b>Dept. Education and Skills</b>	School Transport Appeal	Awaiting confirmation of date
<b>Health Service Executive</b>	Online Health Portal	Sep-18
<b>Dept. Agriculture, Food and the Marine</b>	Agfood.ie	Sep-18
<b>Dept. Employment Affairs &amp; Social Protection</b>	Apply for Jobseeker's payment	Currently Live
<b>Dept. Employment Affairs &amp; Social Protection</b>	Apply for Maternity Benefit	Currently Live
<b>Dept. Employment Affairs &amp; Social Protection</b>	Apply for Paternity Benefit	Currently Live
<b>Dept. Employment Affairs &amp; Social Protection</b>	Apply for Child Benefit	Currently Live
<b>Dept. Employment Affairs &amp; Social Protection</b>	Submit Jobseeker's Holiday application	Currently Live
<b>Dept. Employment Affairs &amp; Social Protection</b>	PRSI contribution statement	Currently Live
<b>Dept. Employment Affairs &amp; Social Protection</b>	Apply for PRSI refund	Currently Live
<b>Dept. Employment Affairs &amp; Social Protection</b>	Appointments	Currently Live
<b>Dept. Employment Affairs &amp; Social Protection</b>	Submit Works and Skills Information	Currently Live

Department/Office	Service Name	Status
<b>Dept. Employment Affairs &amp; Social Protection</b>	Treatment Benefit Eligibility Assessment	Currently Live
<b>Dept. Employment Affairs &amp; Social Protection</b>	Benefit of Work Estimator – Disability	Q1 2018