



BUNREACT NA ÉIREANN
CONSTITUTION OF IRELAND



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An Roghchoiste um Chomhsaol & Ghníomhú
Breithniú ar Imleabhar Meastachán Athbhreithnithe (ATHBH) 2023

Feabhra 2023

Select Committee on Environment and Climate Action
Consideration of Revised Estimates Volume (REV) 2023

February 2023

Introduction

The Select Committee on Environment and Climate Action met with Ossian Smyth TD, Minister of State at the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, to examine the spending allocations and associated performance metrics for the following Votes:

- **Vote 29, Programme A, B and C**

Standing Order 95(3) of Dáil Éireann states:

“The principal purpose of Committee consideration of matters of policy, governance, expenditure, and administration under paragraph (1) shall be— (a) for the accountability of the relevant Minister or Minister of State, and (b) to assess the performance of the relevant Government Department or of a State body within the responsibility of the relevant Department, in delivering public services while achieving intended outcomes, including value for money.”

Select Committees are tasked with consideration of the annual Revised Estimates for Public Services (or REV)¹ that fall within their remit. While Select Committees have no role in approving the Estimates, it is an ongoing opportunity for the Committee to examine Departmental expenditure, to make the budgetary process more transparent, and to engage in a meaningful way on relevant performance issues.

The Committee subsequently sent a message confirming completion of its consideration to the Clerk of Dáil Éireann on 21 February 2023 in accordance with Standing Order 101 of Dáil Éireann. Under Standing Order 100(2) of Dáil Éireann, this message is deemed to be the report of the Committee.

Reporting on REV consideration

Furthermore, Standing Order 215A of Dáil Éireann states:

Consideration of Estimates by Committees: Report of Committee on Estimate

215A. (1) Subject to Standing Order 215(2) and unless the Dáil shall otherwise order, Committees shall complete their consideration of Estimates referred to them

¹ The Revised Estimates (comprised of Ministerial Votes / Vote Groups) are included in the Revised Estimates Volume (or REV). REV2023 was published on 14 December 2022.

pursuant to that Standing Order not later than 60 days after such Estimates have been so referred.

(2) Any report that a Committee proposes to make arising from its consideration of an Estimate shall be made within a further period of 14 days.

Under SO215A(2), this report summarises issues arising from the Committee's consideration and will be laid before the Dáil and sent to the Minister for consideration. This report will also be provided to the Committee on Budgetary Oversight which will examine all Select Committee reports, collate the information to identify any common issues or concerns, as well as examples of best practice, and make recommendations for the improvement of the consideration process.

Committee commentary on consideration of REV2023

Vote 29 – Environment, Climate and Communications

In a letter sent to the Minister from the Committee Cathaoirleach, a short, non-technical Departmental briefing was requested on 6 December 2022. Briefings were received from the Department on 31 January. The public hearing with the Minister was held on 21 February 2023.

The Committee expressed concern regarding the timeliness of reporting with regard to a number of the key performance indicators. For example, the reporting of GHG emissions figures by the EPA for 2020 is no longer relevant to present time. Members agreed that a 2023 forecast and 2022 estimate would be more meaningful and useful to scrutinising climate impacts and should be provided for all Departments within the REV, not just the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications. More accurate and up-to-date figures such as these would allow for better Committee scrutiny of the REV with the Climate Budget also cross-examined as part of this process.

Members agreed that the appropriateness of the indicators within the REV for current challenges and policies needs to be reviewed. Under Climate, indicators in relation to renewables, in relation to the delivery rate of actions in the Climate Plan etc. would be helpful. Under Circular Economy, a whole new set of indicators need to be developed. Members noted that the Minister would submit a paper on the issue for further consideration.

The Committee also agreed that greater clarity should be provided with regard to the output targets as to why such targets are set.

The Committee agreed that the climate impact of retrofit schemes should be shown within the REV to show what schemes provide the highest return in terms of emissions saved versus cost.

Finally, the Committee agreed that there is a need for a green public procurement framework. Such a framework should be suggested by the EPA and adopted by Government for all Department's to follow and report against. Members agreed that details should be set out in the REV to provide a benchmark for improvement for Departments.