

Minister's appearance before the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence,

Thursday, 22 October 2020

Consideration of the Further Revised Estimate for 2020 for Vote 28

Draft Remarks

Mr Chairman, I am pleased to be here this afternoon to present to you, and to the membership of the Select Committee, the Further Revised Estimate for Vote 28, the Department of Foreign Affairs for 2020. The 2020 Revised Estimates for Vote 28 were approved by the Dáil on 9 July 2020. The purpose of this Further Revised Estimate is, firstly, to change the name of the Department on the Revised Estimates and, secondly, to transfer to the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation the budget associated with the Trade promotion function that has transferred over to them.

The programme for Government has moved Trade Promotion back to the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. In addition, the name of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has been changed to reflect this transfer, and reverts to the “Department of Foreign Affairs”.

This transfer of functions necessitated a transfer of budget from my Department to the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. These budgets fell under **Vote 28; Programme D: To advance our prosperity by promoting our economic interests internationally (*Our Prosperity*)**. Under the 2020 Revised Estimates, €44.7million had been allocated to the Department for this programme.

Programme D will now be reduced by a total value of €416,000 and the funds transferred to the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. The

reduction is split across Admin Pay (€196,000), Admin Non-Pay (€20,000) and Promoting Ireland (€200,000)

The Admin elements relate to the budget costs of three staff members, a Principal Officer, a Higher Executive Officer and a Clerical Officer, and to the costs of managing and chairing the Export Trade Council; convening, chairing and managing joint economic commissions and developing, where appropriate, new joint economic commissions.

These costs match what was transferred to the Department of Foreign Affairs in 2011 when the trade promotion was transferred to us.

The Promoting Ireland funds (€200,000) relate to the holding of Export Trade Council events in overseas missions.

The transfer of functions came into effect on 23 September 2020, pursuant to S.I. No. 381 of 2020. The change of name of my Department came into effect on 24 September 2020, pursuant to S.I. No. 382 of 2020.

Mr. Chairman, my Department remains committed to advancing Ireland's trade and economic interests globally. We will continue to mobilise the capability of our missions overseas, and leverage our network of relationships abroad, to support Ireland's recovery working closely with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. We will remain particularly focused in 2020 on assisting Irish business in the context of the UK's exit from the EU and in the post-Covid world.

We will also continue to strengthen our global presence to ensure Ireland is ready to take advantage of new markets and opportunities, and intensify our collaboration and co-operation with the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and other departments and state agencies to ensure that we are

effective and responsive to the needs and expectations of our citizens and our business sector.

I look forward to working with the Tánaiste and his Department in utilising the mission network to support trade promotion globally. In the context of Covid-19, our mission network, together with Team Ireland partners, are making Ireland's national recovery effort the central focus of our work.

I welcome any comments or questions from Committee members on this transfer of functions and name change.

Thank you.