

DÁIL ÉIREANN

AN COMHCHOISTE UM THALMHAÍOCHT, BIA AGUS MUIR

JOINT COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND THE MARINE

Déardaoin, 9 Bealtaine 2019

Thursday, 9 May 2019

The Joint Committee met at 10 a.m.

Comhaltaí a bhí i láthair/Members present:

Jackie Cahill,	Paul Coghlan,
Marcella Corcoran Kennedy,	Máire Devine,
Bernard J. Durkan,	Michelle Mulherin,
Michael Healy-Rae,	Neale Richmond.
Martin Kenny,	
Mattie McGrath,	
Tony McLoughlin,	
Hildegarde Naughton,	
Tom Neville,	
Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin.	

I láthair/In attendance: Senators Aidan Davitt, Paul Gavan and Alice-Mary Higgins.

Teachta/Deputy Pat Deering sa Chathaoir/in the Chair.

The attendance list is a composite list of members of the Joint Committee on European Affairs, Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Defence, Joint Committee on Climate Action and Joint Committee on Justice and Equality. Committee Chairs are styled as Co-Chairman.

Europe Day, 9 May 2019

Joint Meeting of the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs, Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Defence, Joint Committee on Climate Action and Joint Committee on Justice and Equality

Challenges for the European Union: Presentations

Co-Chairman Deputy Michael Healy-Rae: This is a special meeting of the five joint committees. Before we start, I remind members and witnesses to ensure that their mobile phones are switched off. This is important as they cause serious problems for the broadcasting, editorial and sound staff.

I am delighted that today we have engagement on Europe Day. We have a presentation by the students on the challenges facing the European Union and we are all very much looking forward to that.

I welcome all the witnesses to this special meeting of the joint committees on Europe Day. On this day in 1950 Robert Schuman outlined his vision for Europe of peace and co-operation between nations. That was nearly 70 years ago, but it laid the foundations for the European Union we know today. It is a strong partnership of nations that are working together to achieve the common goals of peace and prosperity. Ireland joined the European Economic Community, EEC, now the European Union, in 1973 and has been a proud participant in European institutions for more than 45 years. Citizens of Ireland tend to be very positive about our EU membership. The results of a recent poll carried out by Red C Research and Marketing for the European Movement of Ireland showed that 93% of Irish people supported remaining in the European Union. This shows the success of the European project and the benefits the European Union has brought to the country.

For Ireland, membership of international rules-based organisations is the best way to build relationships and alliances and for countries to support each other. Europe Day is a great opportunity for us all to reflect on where we are and what we have achieved. Importantly, it is also an opportunity to discuss the challenges ahead for all of us and how we can work together to find solutions to them. In the context of Brexit and all of the implications that stem from it, it is more important than ever before for politicians, of all political allegiances and none, to work together and show a united front when it comes to doing our job and ensuring a good team effort across the political divide. I sincerely believe it is terribly important for us to do so.

Elections to the European Parliament will be held across the European Union in a few weeks' time. The results of the same poll to which I referred showed that younger cohorts who were the most positive towards the European Union and many of its policies and who certainly had views on the issues at stake were also the least likely group to vote on 24 May. It is important that we find ways to engage with each other and hear from experts emerging in their fields. It is especially important that we hear the views of young people on the issues that will affect the future of the European Union. I am passionate about this issue. When I look at young people, I see them as the future. In the years to come they will be the politicians and employers.

Every one of us is on a wheel and our time in our different roles comes and then finishes. It will then be the turn of the young people who are before me. When I go into schools, national and secondary, all I think of is that they are the future. They are the ones who will be running the country, the Europe Union and the world in the years ahead. I am very conscious of this, as we all should be.

I do not think we have ever held a meeting of five joint committees before. Today's event shows a new approach and how important it is that we take a cross-sectoral approach to such broad issues. I welcome our guests, the students and young people from Queens University Belfast, QUB; Ulster University, UU; Teagasc; University College Dublin, UCD; Dublin City University, DCU; National University of Ireland, Galway, NUIG; National University of Ireland, Maynooth, NUIM; and our neighbours in University College Cork, UCC.

The meeting will be divided into four sessions and the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the relevant committee will chair its session. Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person or persons outside the Houses or an official, by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

By virtue of section 17(2)(l) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the committee. If they are directed by it to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

I ask the Chairman of the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Deputy Deering, to lead us in the discussion on the reform of the Common Agriculture Policy.

Common Agricultural Policy

Co-Chairman Deputy Pat Deering: I am delighted to chair this important session of the joint sitting.

Agriculture is our largest indigenous industry. In this session we will deal with the Common Agricultural Policy, CAP, which has served the country well in recent years. In our discussion we are going to hear about where it is going to go in the months and years ahead. The discussion will include the environmental and budgetary aspects of the CAP. Budgets are very important, as nothing can be done without them. We will also hear about reform, subsidiarity and flexibility. We would like to hear about all of these elements. Whenever there is a discussion about the CAP, we hear about the need to make it more simplified. "Simplification" is a big word, but the CAP always seems to come out more bureaucratic. We are looking forward to the discussion on the next CAP taking place and being concluded in the next year or so to finally have a more simplified programme. I am delighted that we are joined by Mr. Daniel Bakker from Queens University Belfast, Dr. Sinéad Furey and Dr. Lynsey Hollywood from Ulster University, Dr. Sinéad McCarthy from Teagasc and Ms Siún Máire Riordan from University College Cork. I welcome them and thank them for attending to discuss this very important issue, on which I look forward to a very good discussion. I call Mr. Bakker to make his opening

statement.

Mr. Daniel Bakker: It is a great honour to be in the Seanad Chamber. I will speak about the CAP for a few minutes.

In June 2018 the European Commission put forward its legislative proposals for the future of the CAP post 2020. Previous reforms of the CAP had been driven by political and economic change. It is important, therefore, for all concerned to look at the political challenges facing the European Union and what the future of the CAP might look like.

The European Union is facing the challenges of UK withdrawal, the rise of a Eurosceptic tide across member states, global market instability, particularly in agricultural prices, and greater pressure to respond and adapt to climate change. The withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union is crucial because it has contributed significantly to a forecasted reduction in the CAP budget for the period 2021 to 2027. The cut proposed is 5%, but it will be around 12% in real terms. As the CAP is one of the cornerstones of European integration, it is important that the Commission's proposals be considered and scrutinised.

The proposed legislation retains the current two pillar structure of direct payments and rural development but allows much greater flexibility for member states to choose where their allocation of funds will go. The Commission's rationale is to streamline the CAP and increase overall efficiency. Member states will be better able to target their interventions to suit their specific contexts. The proposals also have revised greening architecture for pillar 1 payments and put strong emphasis on the CAP's commitment to environmental sustainability.

Member states will be responsible for drawing up strategic plans which will then be approved by the Commission to ensure they stay within the CAP's overall objectives. Some see this as a step in the right direction, but others, including some member states, have raised concerns as strategic plans might place a further administrative burden on national governments. Many agricultural stakeholders have criticised the idea as it could potentially lead to an undermining of the Single Market and compromise a level playing field for farmers. Some fear the proposals amount to a renationalisation of agriculture and will increase bureaucracy and market distortions, resulting from differences in implementation across the European Union. Affording member states too much flexibility has also been criticised by environmentalists. As well as criticising the continuation of "perverse subsidies", environmentalists argue that flexibility with no real incentives to have ambitious targets could lead to declining environmental standards across the European Union. The proposed "enhanced conditionality" clause in the new legislative proposals has been viewed as more greenwashing of the CAP, without sufficient accountability mechanisms to ensure adherence to environmental regulations.

It is important to stress that the proposals are in their very early stages. As we saw with the previous CAP reform in 2013, nothing is likely to be passed until the EU budget is agreed. There will be a new European Parliament and perhaps a new European Commissioner by the time the legislation enters into force, but as the proposal stands, there are several steps that could be taken to ensure a successful CAP.

There could be greater promotion of dialogue between environmentalist organisations and agricultural stakeholders. At least since the 1992 reform of CAP, we have seen the struggle to merge agricultural production with environmental protection, which, unfortunately, sometimes leads to conflicting and contradictory interests. Helping to promote common ground at EU and national levels could result in a more coherent policy. The approval process for strategic plans

needs to be transparent and as strong as possible, as this is essentially the only mechanism for ensuring that national priorities do not conflict with EU-wide objectives. Maintaining the common aspect of the CAP is essential. Furthermore, the proposals allow for only the Commission to approve strategic plans, but to improve accountability, that process could be based formally on widespread consultation and should involve input from the co-legislators and various stakeholders. What happens if there is an impasse between national priorities and CAP objectives should be spelled out by the Commission. As the Commission views the next CAP as a move towards evidence-based policy, which prioritises results over compliance, it is important the quality of data sources are to an appropriate standard and that national Governments have the technical capacity to construct and defend a strategic plan. This might involve greater investment in technical assistance and upgrading of skills, which will be difficult if the current budget predictions are accurate.

The period for the next CAP is one of learning for the European Union as it experiments with this new delivery model. It is important for all concerned that there is an awareness of the challenges facing the upcoming reform, which will be shaped by competing interests among stakeholders within a potentially reduced budget. It is important to stress the crucial role of dialogue and consultation to ensure an efficient and coherent CAP.

Co-Chairman Deputy Pat Deering: I thank Mr. Bakker, who finished well within the allotted time. I neglected to remind speakers that they will be given four minutes each for their presentations.

I invite Dr. Furey to make her opening statement.

Dr. Sinéad Furey: I thank Senators for the opportunity to appear before the House. I will present a joint perspective on behalf of myself and my colleague from Ulster University business school, Dr. Lynsey Hollywood. We very much welcome the opportunity to discuss our perspective on the future and ongoing reform of the CAP. It is entirely appropriate that such a collaborative and open approach is used because it is in this capacity as stakeholders that farmers and wider stakeholders have an important opinion in this area.

Our presentation will focus on four main priorities we believe that any ongoing CAP reform should include. The first is to address the volatility or instability of our agricultural markets because we consider primary food production a special case. The exceptionalism of food means that a political and social importance is attached to it, and it is entirely appropriate to give meaningful support to farmers in recognition of their contribution to this important primary production. It is also important to consider the issue of cross-compliance, but without subsidising or supporting any lack of competitiveness or inefficiencies within agriculture. It is also entirely appropriate that the support is directed towards farmers in less favourable farming areas. Any income support or resilience payment should not be allowed to become a surrogate for income support, nor a means of indefinitely maintaining uneconomical farming units. There should continue to be a focus on the full decoupling of primary production from income support, without any regression to coupling food production with any kind of payment. This will allow any agrifood industry ultimately to become more responsive, which is an important future direction to be consumer orientated and market led.

The lack of collaboration in the farming community and, more widely, agrifood is an issue. Government intervention could usefully foster greater collaboration, although that will need careful consideration through, for example, appropriate incentivisation. A better understanding of market requirements would enable farmers to move from a production mentality to a

more marketing mindset. Any support could usefully be focused on support for know-how of marketing aspects. Identifying that market need or niche in the market and how to differentiate one's product offering would help create diversification, support farmers in that mentality and allow us to look towards a strong, value-added market with strong export potential. In the light of agricultural exceptionalism, some mechanism needs to be in place to ensure a secure, sustainable, healthy environment, and to prevent instability of the agricultural market, erratic food prices and market distortion. It is important that any solution does not serve to increase food prices for the end consumer.

That brings me to the second priority, namely, food security, which covers the continuity of supply, health and food poverty. The security of supply is especially important in the context of Europe and globally, given the increasing population and the need to feed more people and produce more food for more people. The world's population is predicted to be 9 billion by 2050. It would be appropriate for any ongoing and future reform of the CAP or agricultural framework to consider health, simply because of the relationship between food choice, nutrition and health. These policies should usefully complement one another. We need our industry to encourage production of food consistent with guidelines for healthy eating and for population nutrition. That leaves us a space in food innovation to ensure we meet that market need, although it cannot be at the expense of the twin objectives of productivity alongside environmental sustainability. As for unnecessary costs being accrued to the consumer, paradoxically, those consumers who stand to benefit most from a healthy diet are those who can least afford it. Consumers, therefore, must not be disadvantaged by a two-tier pricing policy or as a consequence of their reality. They must be able to access, afford and avail of healthy food.

Our third priority is ensuring that food and farming are public goods, which we hinted at earlier in the context of environmental production. We need to consider and continue the emphasis on the active management of land, which should be rewarded in a way that respects cross-compliance. Farming is more than its principal purpose of primary production and, therefore, any payment schedule made to farmers must be conditional upon food safety, food quality, environmental and animal welfare, and occupational health and safety standards. We need to consider the pivotal role that farming can play in preserving and enhancing the rural and natural environments, the importance of which we should not diminish. Our farming counterparts are the custodians of our natural environment and it is important to respect the amenity value of the countryside. Any future agricultural framework and policy should aim to preserve and enhance the amenity and recreational value of our land, and to reward landowners for conducting that public good on society's behalf.

Our final priority is the maintenance of the rural population and rural development. Agriculture requires generational renewal of active farmers. As we hinted at in the context of incentivisation, one might expect us, from a university perspective, to suggest that continuing professional development, short courses and educational attainment in this regard are also important. Universities and the higher education sector have a role to play in providing access to increasing professional educational attainment in this area, and in allowing farmers to have that marketing mindset and the export potential to be exploited. We welcome a multi-actor approach to science and innovation, involving support agencies and research institutions.

In conclusions, further reform of the CAP is to be welcomed. We recommend that policy makers continue to pursue aggressively the decoupling of food production from payments to exploit that truly market-orientated, consumer-led approach and to allow for complementary agrifood and health policies in a way that is mutually supportive of people, the planet and profit.

Co-Chairman Deputy Pat Deering: I thank Dr. Furey. I apologise for having cut across her. I accept she was speaking on behalf of herself and Dr. Hollywood and, therefore, I was somewhat more liberal with the time.

I invite Dr. McCarthy to make her opening statement.

Dr. Sinéad McCarthy: I am based at the Teagasc food research centre, Ashtown, Dublin 15. I will comment on the sustainability of the Irish diet from the point of view of carbon footprint, its implications for policy, including policy from the point of view of the end user and the end of the food supply chain, and accounting for consumer food behaviour. The contribution of food consumption towards climate change has received increasing attention in recent years, especially recently with the launch of the EAT-Lancet report. In its present form, food consumption is responsible for as much as 30% of EU greenhouse gas emissions, GHGs. Therefore, we need to look at food choices and food behaviour and see how we can alter them to influence health and the environment.

Are there any food choice behaviours that are sustainable as a diet and nutritionally acceptable? Can the two areas meet? The UN Food and Agriculture Organization defines sustainable diets as those “with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations. Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy”.

The “economically fair” aspect of this is very important as the agriculture industry is the largest indigenous industry in Ireland. GHGs associated with food production are measured in carbon equivalents to produce a carbon footprint for the food we consume. In general, plant-based foods are low in GHG emissions, whereas foods from animal sources are higher, especially those from ruminant animals. The European Commission has found that Ireland has one of the lowest carbon footprints of animal products in Europe because of the system we use to produce meat. Foods from animal sources provide many essential nutrients necessary for good health and, therefore, are an important part of a healthy diet. Certain nutrients can only be found in meat products and are not available in plant products. Environmental and human health issues should be considered together to ensure socially and nutritionally optimal outcomes for both.

Research is ongoing in Teagasc, in conjunction with University College Cork, to examine the carbon footprint of the Irish diet and food consumption behaviours which result in a more or less sustainable and health diet. The aim is to determine the quantity of GHG emissions associated with food consumption patterns in Irish adults and to determine what patterns of food consumption are associated with sustainability and health. We use the best publicly available data to do the national adult nutrition survey funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine through its fair funding measure. Each food consumed was converted into carbon equivalents and measured the carbon produced by consuming these foods, instead of looking at nutrients as is traditionally done. It is no surprise that meat, in particular ruminant meat, made the highest contribution to carbon in the Irish diet as a result of the high conversion factor associated with meat and dairy, while plant sourced foods had the lowest CO₂ in the diet.

It is important to eat a varied diet and not just one particular food group. Consumers who followed a cultural pattern traditional to the Irish diet, with high meat, fruit and vegetable consumption, had the lowest CO₂ footprint of all consumers, showing that meat plays a very important role in health and a sustainable diet. We also found that food consumption and energy

intake beyond our nutritional requirements contributed to the public health epidemic of obesity, as well as food waste. Promoting a healthier diet and lifestyle, which reduces food consumption, also helps from an environmental perspective. The findings from this research support the notion that any policy measures should be evidence based and should consider the prevailing cultural food consumption patterns of a population. CAP reform, and any associated food policy instruments developed for sustainability reasons, should be holistic in nature and take other parameters such as health and nutrition into consideration, rather than concentrating on one food group. It should reward more sustainable production and meet our consumer demands.

Co-Chairman Deputy Pat Deering: The final presentation is from Ms Riordan from UCC.

Ms Siún Máire Riordan: It is an honour to address members of the joint committees today. I welcome their engagement with younger citizens. I am a second year European studies student in University College Cork.

As a young person growing up in rural Ireland, I have seen the importance of the agricultural industry and the difference the Common Agricultural Policy, CAP, makes in Ireland. One of the leading incentives behind Ireland's decision to apply for European Union membership was the opportunity of gaining support from the CAP. When the CAP was introduced under the Treaty of Rome in 1957, the objectives were to improve and stabilise the incomes of those engaged in the farm sector, largely through market support mechanisms but with some activities oriented towards improving farming productivity and structural adjustments within the farm sector. As the EU now discusses the future of the CAP post 2020, it is important to recall how beneficial this policy is and has been for Ireland.

One of the aspects of the CAP that has had the greatest impact on the lives of farmers across the EU has been the payment schemes. Farmers are given money for maintaining their land and young farmers are given payments to encourage them to start farming. They are given grants or loans to help start up and farmers can receive the green direct payments for reaching environment objectives. The objective of the CAP is to give farmers and other agricultural workers a decent standard of living. While the CAP is not always fairly divided among all recipients, it has still improved the income for thousands of farmers across Ireland and the EU. The CAP's direct payment schemes help protect farmers from the uncertainty of the market. At the moment, the CAP has a small farmers' scheme which is aimed at supporting smaller farmers in Europe. However, this only operates in 15 EU countries and Ireland is not among them. This is unfortunate because if this policy was introduced in Ireland, it would aid many more in the agricultural industry. Many Irish farmers are small farmers and the CAP currently does not have a big an impact on their lives.

The CAP encourages green, sustainable farming. Part of the direct payment is given to farmers who strive for greener, more environment friendly agricultural production. In theory, this should help Ireland improve its carbon footprint and reach its climate change objectives. Farmers gain more by diversifying their crop and meeting environmental goals. This is important for farmers as it gives them the opportunity to receive more from the CAP schemes while also encouraging them to be more environmentally conscious. The CAP may be more known for its payments to farmers but it is also very focused on rural development and sustainability. The CAP has helped many local, rural regions around Ireland. Between 2007 and 2013, €4.3 billion of funding was given to help agricultural production that would benefit rural areas.

The CAP also helps non-agricultural activities, such as small-scale manufacturing and food processing. Such activities encourage businesses to set up in rural areas, focusing on the de-

velopment of the local food sector. This is important as it brings employment to rural regions and allows small, rural, agricultural communities to prosper and to use their large agricultural sector to develop compatible businesses. When rural areas are developed, this development attracts more people to the area, offers more employment and can increase tourism. The increase in employment is especially important as many farmers who operate small farms must get jobs outside the farm to supplement their household income. This is made easier when the region around them is more developed, giving them a greater opportunity to find employment. The development of these areas is vital to encourage people to stay and continue, or even start, farming in these rural areas. The continuance of CAP ensures the development of Irish rural areas and gives further aid to the agricultural workers here.

The Agriculture and Fisheries Council will meet next week and I will follow its discussions about the future of the CAP post 2020 very closely. At the most recent meeting in April, I was struck by the emphasis by the Romanian Presidency on the environmental ambition of the CAP. I agree that this is a major feature of CAP reform. It will be advantageous not only to EU farmers but to every single EU citizen. As a young citizen, I value sustainable development and want a green future for Ireland. I know that Ministers have been discussing climate, biodiversity and water quality, to name just a few issues. I hope to see a future in which we can enjoy sustainable food security and see an improvement in the environmental issues that exist today.

Co-Chairman Deputy Pat Deering: I thank those who made their presentations, which were very insightful. The CAP and CAP reform are a key part of our body of work at committee level and we have already made a number of submissions to Europe. We attended several Council meetings around Europe, including in Croatia and Romania in recent months. Members of the committee made a presentation at the European Parliament's agriculture committee approximately a year ago. It is a priority matter for the committee and a significant issue for agriculture in Ireland, as all present are aware. It is important that we keep engaging with this process. Agriculture is our largest indigenous industry but it does not get its fair share of media coverage when it needs it. It is great to have this opportunity to discuss the matter. I am joined by some members of the committee and I would like to have engagement with them and the witnesses over the next ten or 15 minutes. We will take a couple of questions together if that is acceptable to the witnesses.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: I thank the witnesses for their presentations. Has research been conducted on what will happen in the advent of Brexit for the farmers in Northern Ireland in terms of their current income? That question is for Mr. Bakker and Dr. Furey. Does Dr. McCarthy know whether Teagasc has conducted research on our capacity to sustainably provide sufficient plant-based food for this country and some for export, in addition to a certain amount of meat production and land being used to plant forestry, in the case of increased demand for a plant-based diet?

Co-Chairman Deputy Pat Deering: There are several vulnerable sectors in the Irish agricultural sector and there has been much discussion of the suckler beef sector which is going through a turbulent time. Dr. Furey mentioned that we should move away from coupling and towards decoupling. How can the vulnerable sectors be supported to ensure a sustainable future for them? On suckler beef farmers, who are a key part of the industry in the west of Ireland, if that industry goes into decline, large parts of that region may be depopulated, which would have a significantly negative effect on rural Ireland. How could the next CAP protect the vulnerable sectors of the agriculture industry?

Senator Aidan Davitt: On behalf of the Seanad, I welcome the witnesses. It is a breath of

fresh air to hear people speak for approximately 40 minutes without anyone interrupting them, which is a rather unusual occurrence in the Seanad Chamber.

Co-Chairman Deputy Pat Deering: It is the influence of the Co-Chair.

Senator Aidan Davitt: There is no doubt that the Co-Chairman has played his part. We have a very busy schedule today and there is a significant amount of work relating to this meeting. It is a momentous day and it is great to be able to record our participation in the European Union and celebrate Europe Day.

Agriculture accounts for a large part of our portfolio and work. There has been a significant shift in recent years to larger dairy and crop farmers. Similarly, larger dry stock farmers seem to be more prevalent. The days of the part-time farmer who may have a second job and tend 40 acres or 50 acres may be numbered. From the perspective of Dr. McCarthy and Teagasc, in ten or 15 years, will part-time farming be a thing of the past? While canvassing for the local and European elections, as all politicians have been doing, I noted the number of unoccupied smaller farm holdings which are being subsumed by larger farmholders. Does Dr. McCarthy anticipate a massive change in our model of farming? That seems to have happened in recent years.

Senator Michelle Mulherin: To follow on from the question of my colleague, Deputy Corcoran-Kennedy, there is no doubt that there are now far more soya beans, mung beans, pinto beans, lentils and so on for sale in supermarkets. From which countries are these products coming? The products at which I have looked are not produced in Ireland. I am specifically referring to plant-based protein foods for human consumption. Is there a desire or ability to grow them in Ireland? I know there are issues around soya beans in that regard. I understand that many types of beans come from the tropics and are more suited to such climates, which obviously means there is a carbon footprint involved in bringing them here. In many parts of the tropics, people do not have enough food or their diet is not as good as it should be. I direct my questions particularly at Dr. McCarthy.

Co-Chairman Deputy Pat Deering: Before I revert to the witnesses, I apologise for the absence of several committee members. Parliamentary questions to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine are being heard in the Dáil and the spokespersons of the main parties are tied up there. I offer their apologies.

Dr. Sinéad McCarthy: I will roll two responses into one. On the issue of from where plant-based foods are coming and whether there is a way to combine animal and plant-based production in Ireland, certain climates and agricultural environments lend themselves better to certain types of food production. For example, producing meat and dairy in Ireland is very suited to our climate as we get a lot of rain and do not solely rely on the water supply for agriculture. Many of our animals are grass fed for more than 300 days per year and when they are kept in during the winter months they are fed from silage. Very little animal feed is given to them.

On beef production, meat and dairy very efficiently convert food such as grass that humans cannot consume to protein which they can. If we were to change that production type to more plant-based production, it might not be as successful because the land that we currently use for producing meat and dairy is not necessarily suitable for plant production. There is also an issue in terms of the amount of carbon that is kept as a sink in the ground or soil and which would be released if the land was ploughed to plant alternative food sources.

My answer to Deputy Corcoran-Kennedy's question is yes and no. There is a possibility to produce both but we need to be careful regarding the land we choose to use differently. It would not necessarily result in a lower carbon footprint. Some research indicates that as a result of the higher inputs of fertiliser and so on that are required to produce plant-based crops, there may be, at best, a 10% to 12% reduction in carbon footprint. It is not a direct swap of one for the other as there are other challenges in changing farming practices and the resultant dietary CO₂.

Many plant-based proteins such as beans and legumes are imported and have many associated food miles. It is not always possible to recommend a plant-based diet to certain vulnerable groups in the community. For example, older adults naturally consume less food but need a higher protein intake. The best source of protein for older consumers to maintain muscle mass and prevent falls and frailty is animal protein. They would need to eat four to five times the amount of lentils or beans to get the same amount of protein and it would not be possible for them to eat that much food. There is a role for both plant and animal protein in diet and it is about getting the balance right in terms of achieving concordant measures of health and sustainability. One must not focus solely on the carbon footprint of the diet without taking account of the nutrition and health outcomes.

Dr. Sinéad Furey: To respond to Deputy Corcoran Kennedy's question, unfortunately I am not aware of the likely effects of Brexit on farming incomes in Northern Ireland. Ulster University is not actively involved in farming research but we are most certainly involved in more general research on food poverty and food insecurity. If it satisfies members, I will speak more generally on that point. It is anticipated that Brexit will create an additional cost of £25 per week on the average household's food bill. For citizens who are already squeezed, impoverished or vulnerable, this will create an additional burden and we are worried about that. Ulster University is very active in the food poverty research agenda. We are developing an at-risk of food poverty index that will consider low income and rurality in identifying where such consumers are located to enable more targeted interventions.

More specifically, there area also concerns regarding rural dwellers and agricultural smallholders. Given that the average age of smallholders in Northern Ireland and Great Britain is approximately 60 years, we are concerned about generational renewal and the need for young farmers. It was for this reason that we addressed the point of diversification and the need to add value. We will be actively involved in the food innovation effort to try to complement agriculture, food availability and health. We need to be concerned about the departure of farmers from farming because it has become unprofitable.

There is an opportunity to educate and engage with consumers on the more general point of the importance of eating locally and seasonally so that we can celebrate our local and indigenous foods. We must showcase indigenous produce so that we are not reliant on alternative protein sources from other countries.

We are working with policymakers in Northern Ireland in a collaborative effort on agrifood and food policy generally. Brexit has caused concerns about food affordability and availability and the possibility that access to a fresh and varied diet may become more problematic for Northern Ireland consumers.

Mr. Daniel Bakker: On the question of what the consequences of Brexit will be for farmers in the North, Brexit is an all-Ireland problem because many of the agrifood industries operate on an all-island basis. The raw materials may move from the North to the South to be processed, return to the North to be packaged and, finally, be sold in the South. It is great that the common

travel area is secure but much more could be done in terms of regulatory alignment between the market in the North and the South to minimise disruption to goods moving across the Border. If the Assembly in the North gets up and running, the North-South Ministerial Council would be a good forum to promote more alignment on agrifood and minimise disruption.

Co-Chairman (Deputy Pat Deering): In our discussions on the CAP in recent months, we discovered that in Europe 1,000 farmers a month are leaving agriculture. That is a substantial number. The position here is no different from that in other countries. What would the witnesses like to see included in the next CAP to reverse that trend?

Mr. Daniel Bakker: The Co-Chairman has asked a good question. I will leave it to my colleague to reply.

Dr. Sinéad Furey: To try to stem the tide of farmers leaving agriculture, I would like to see an incentivisation effort around food and farming which would give farmers reasons to choose to remain and encourage a new generation of farmers. As members will probably expect me to say, I believe a joint collaborative effort by university and other research and educational institutions could be useful in providing such an incentivisation. This would not necessarily have to be economic. One way forward could be to subsidise educational attainment efforts or repurpose farmers, as it were, to enable them to move into more diverse food processing areas.

Dr. Lynsey Hollywood: I agree with Dr. Furey. It is important that we build entrepreneurial skills among farmers and education is a primary tool to do so. We also need farmers to adopt a diversification mindset.

Dr. Sinéad McCarthy: I will combine my responses because I did not answer the Co-Chairman's question on the future of smaller farmers in Ireland.

Senator Aidan Davitt: He is a very good Chairman as I am sure the witnesses appreciate.

Dr. Sinéad McCarthy: I will make my way forward.

Senator Aidan Davitt: It is the Carlow way.

Dr. Sinéad McCarthy: I see a role for small farmers as well as large-scale intensive farming. When one considers the food supply chain from a carbon footprint perspective, between 80% and 85% of the carbon footprint is generated before the food leaves the farmyard. It is very important that we put measures in place from a sustainability perspective to reduce the carbon footprint of food as it is being produced and support smaller farmers to produce food more sustainably. Farming should not be only large-scale and intensive. CAP could address this by implementing more sustainable practices at farm level. A great deal of research has been done in Europe. I am involved in a circular agricultural economics research project in the European Union, which has 20 partners across Europe. We are looking at more sustainable farming practices and how acceptable they would be to consumers at the end of the food chain. We need to develop a more circular economy and maintain better sustainability at farm level. This would help to maintain smaller farms and keep European farmers in the farming industry.

Senator Aidan Davitt: I fully agree with Dr. McCarthy, whose response fed into the contributions of the other witnesses. As the Co-Chairman said, many farmers, including many small-scale farmers, have left the industry.

Dr. Sinéad McCarthy: The reason may be that there are no incentives for them to stay. The

potential to reward sustainability is one issue that could be considered.

Ms Siún Máire Riordan: Education is important for small farmers. Farming is not a nine-to-five job but a 24-7 job. Small farmers need more supports and further education would help them to diversify and grow their businesses.

Co-Chairman (Deputy Pat Deering): That concludes this very important session on the CAP. I thank the contributors for their important presentations. We will hear a great deal about this issue in the next year or two before a final deal is completed. I also thank members for their questions. I will hand over to my colleague, Deputy Michael Healy-Rae, who will chair the next session.

Common Security and Defence Policy

Co-Chairman (Deputy Michael Healy-Rae): I thank my Co-Chairman, Deputy Pat Deering. We shall proceed with the next part of today's meeting. Before we begin, I convey the apologies of the Chairman of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Defence, Deputy Brendan Smith, who, unfortunately, is unable to attend today. For the second time today, this time on behalf of the joint committee, I welcome everyone present. I welcome Mr. Christian Zörner, University College Dublin, Ms Cornelia-Adriana Baciu, Dublin City University, and Ms Michaela Reilly, University College Cork, all of whom have kindly agreed to make presentations on the challenges facing Europe in respect of common security and defence policy. The format of the meeting is that we will hear the witnesses' opening statements, after which we will have questions and answers with members. Mr. Zörner will be followed by Ms Baciu and, last but not least, Ms Reilly.

Mr. Christian Zörner: I thank the Co-Chairman for the opportunity to speak. When I was asked to speak about the European common security and defence policy on the occasion of Europe Day the first topic to come to mind was the role of Irish neutrality. The debate is probably as old as the country itself but has surely not lost its intensity since then. I finally decided to address the issue because recent developments in the area of European common and security policy make neutrality very topical again. I draw attention to a couple of developments that place neutrality back on the agenda and demand urgent discussion of its meaning and implications.

The first of these is Brexit. The loss of the major Atlanticist power within the European Union has serious consequences for the further development of the European Common Security and Defence Policy, CSDP. Having always tried to prevent or at least slow down integration in this policy field, the United Kingdom has been a kind of natural ally to Ireland in trying to keep security issues out of European integration. The consequences of this development are already visible. Not long after the Brexit vote, the President of the EU Commission, the French President and later the German Chancellor were calling for the creation of an EU army. Although for the time being this is not much more than a blurry vision, it became obvious where integration in the European Common Security and Defence Policy field is heading.

Already in 2018 permanent structured co-operation, PESCO, was launched, marking a huge step in integrating security and defence co-operation towards a military alliance. Causing a lively discussion in Ireland, its participation was finally backed by Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil, denying a conflict between Irish neutrality and participation in PESCO. Of all the other neutral

member states of the EU only Malta opted out, choosing to first observe if PESCO and neutrality are compatible. Especially in Finland and Sweden, former neutral states, a consensus has been reached to the effect that EU membership in general is not logically compatible with the traditional notion of neutrality. In practice these EU member states have thus given up their neutrality to a large extent. In Ireland, Sinn Féin proposed a Bill to enshrine Irish neutrality in the Constitution. After a lively debate, in which European politicians were even called warmongers, the Bill was eventually rejected in the Dáil.

Finally, I draw members' attention to a poll by Red C for the European Movement Ireland, published just last week. Apart from an overwhelming support for EU membership in general, the poll revealed that a majority of 58% of the Irish people think that Ireland should be part of intensified EU security and defence co-operation and that PESCO does not pose a threat to Irish neutrality. Approval is even stronger amongst young Irish people.

For me as a German citizen, the whole discussion about neutrality is new. Despite the *tabula rasa* after the Second World War, Germany did not have the chance to have its own discussion about this, having to align itself to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, NATO, in the face of an expansionist Soviet Union. While living in Ireland for one year and studying at University College Dublin it is very interesting to follow the public debate about neutrality and discuss it with my Irish and non-Irish fellow students. This brings insights into this very politicised topic and the fact that Irish neutrality is loaded with different meanings and historical resonances. Various narratives are contesting the nature of Irish foreign and security policy and its expression in Europe's contemporary security architecture. While there seems to be a broad consensus that Ireland can and should make a contribution to global peace and security, this is not the case for the question as to which institutional framework should be used to achieve this.

Due to the aforementioned recent developments, however, Ireland seems to be forced to take a decision. The departure of the major damper of integration in the area of foreign and security policy and the concomitant developments, such as PESCO and discussions of an EU army, make it an urgent topic. For Ireland's European partners, and therefore also for me in this case, it is essential to know where Ireland is coming from in order to fully understand the significance and the implications of neutrality for Ireland.

Ms Cornelia-Adriana Baciú: My name is Ms Cornelia-Adriana Baciú. I am studying at the School of Law and Government at Dublin City University. Today I will address four key challenges facing the Common Security and Defence Policy. The first is related to strategic coherence and internal cohesion. In the counterfactual scenario in which the EU is not able to manage internal cracks such as the rise of nationalism, so-called *souvereignism* or major differences in member states' strategic cultures, future risks and challenges to CSDP might be endogenous. A failure to co-ordinate efforts on the CSDP might draw Europe back to the US. Some researchers argue it might return the European security landscape to the 1950s. The EU will thus need to find innovative ways to solve the crises of sovereignty of borders and of defence. What Europe wants is not easy to operationalise because of increasing polarisation or even fragmentation of European integration.

The CSDP is a domain in which some argue differentiated integration might work better. This is because states' national strategies are driven by different threat perceptions, strategic environments, capabilities and strategic interests. My research suggests that differentiated integration in the form of a role-player model in the CSDP could enhance strategic knowledge production and capability development. Security and defence collaborative regimes such as the CSDP can have an empowering effect on member states. However, an unintended consequence

of the role-player model could be a “Europe *à la carte*” in which members would only support the policies in which they see a benefit for their own national interests.

I will now refer to Brexit. The anticipated withdrawal of the UK from the European Union is forecasted to strain the CSDP budget. In 2018 the UK accounted for approximately 16% of the CSDP budget. To compensate for this an increase in member states’ investments in security and defence can be expected. A series of peace and defence co-operation mechanisms were adopted after Brexit. The major examples are PESCO, the European Defence Fund, EDF, the co-ordinated annual review on defence, CARD, the European peace facility and the European intervention initiative. For the new instruments to be effective it is important for the EU to manage member states’ expectations and ensure they will enable the achievement of strategic objectives.

I will now address the external strategic environment and external sources of instability. A particular tendency in US leadership and what some have termed a US strategy underpinned by a logic of “retreat” and “systemic competition” with China have pushed the EU to think more seriously about the scenario of US abandonment. Some researchers argue that strategic autonomy would allow the EU to gain an element of independence from US decision-making and pursue an agenda of international peace and security based on its own normative vision with mediation, diplomacy, trade co-operation, peace missions and global justice at its core. Some argue that the road to strategic autonomy might lie in a merger between the CSDP and NATO, that is, the Europeanisation of NATO. Multipolarity and great power competition represent another challenge with implications for the CSDP. In the future, the EU is expected to aim at having good relationships with all countries and avoid a return to bipolarity. This is because a bipolar logic might push countries to choose and some of them might choose China for economic reasons.

My last point is related to new security technologies. Future and emerging technologies such as autonomous robotics and artificial intelligence can have a disruptive and transformative impact in the security and defence domain. If the EU invests sufficiently in research and development, it might be in a position to harness the benefits of new security technologies. New funding of transnational and interdisciplinary research, under the European Defence Fund *inter alia*, will have the potential to address capability shortcomings and technological and industrial weaknesses to a certain extent. The EU could establish a new area of competence in dual-use technology, that is, technologies which can be attributed to both civilian and military purposes.

Ms Michaela Reilly: I would like to extend my gratitude for the invitation to discuss some of the challenges the European Union is currently facing with regard to security and defence. On this day it is particularly important to recall why the EU was initially established; to end frequent and bloody wars between neighbours and to unite European countries both economically and politically to secure lasting peace across the Continent. We can largely say that this has been successful. At the moment, however, huge challenges are ahead for the EU in the area of common security and defence. As is true for most of the challenges the EU faces, Brexit crops up in this area. The greatest challenge is the development of a common policy on security and defence that includes a cohesive development of policies with third countries in future missions, especially the UK once it leaves. This policy must simultaneously protect the integrity of the European Union and the sovereignty of member states. It is very important that there is a balance between these three concerns. The greatest challenge lies in finding this balance.

Different visions of the CSDP proposed by the initial “big three” member states, Germany, the UK and France, have long created space for smaller member states like Ireland to avoid

hard choices concerning issues of security and defence. A more cohesive EU in the post-Brexit future presents significant challenges for all states that have long thrived in the murky waters of strategic ambiguity. Indeed, it could be argued that the United Kingdom leaving removes a significant stumbling block for European defence co-operation. British scepticism has previously allowed others such as Denmark and central European states to avoid hard questions on tensions between formal military non-alignment and the realities of being part of a deeply integrated organisation because NATO has long provided what they have seen to be the primary security provider in the European theatre.

The UK's absence from future Common Security and Defence Policy debates after Brexit will likely push these states into the limelight in terms of blocking or opting out from security co-operation. Our greatest challenge is how we deal with this. While the EU must grapple with the loss of its transatlantic alliance partner, it is imperative that it now attempts to balance a bilateral agreement on Common Security and Defence Policy with the UK that also complements a type of unified EU approach to issues of security and defence, encompassing the considerations of small states, such as Ireland, and big states such as France and Germany.

That is not to say that the EU has not taken any steps thus far. If we look at the decision taken by the High Representative, Ms Mogherini, to forge ahead with the publication of the EU's new global strategy in the immediate aftermath of the Brexit referendum in June 2016, it is apparent that some attempts have been made by the EU to push ahead with CSDP. Although faced with something of an existential crisis, the EU found a response in building a security architecture to reinvigorate EU institutions and to reunite the remaining 27 member states. This provided a common ground for co-operation without reopening a Pandora's box of institutional reform that would be required to deal with more traditional areas of European co-operation such as market regulation.

The Common Security and Defence Policy may not have always been high on Ireland's agenda but the aftermath of the Brexit vote has been particularly challenging for us all. We now must strongly reconsider our own security and defence policy, in addition to that of our position in the wider EU CSDP. Brexit has uncovered a number of political and constitutional fault lines, none more serious than its potential impacts on the Good Friday Agreement. The Government deserves credit for the way in which it has managed the Brexit negotiations to date, particularly in securing support from our European partners concerning Ireland's position on the Border. However, what price will we pay for this in future negotiations on matters such as common security and defence?

The reduced room for manoeuvre on common security and defence for small states, such as ourselves, in an EU that will be more dominated by France and Germany than before, must be taken into account. In a Franco-German EU, the space for constructive ambiguity is likely to be greatly reduced. Ireland's hesitancy and ambivalence on this matter may no longer be sustainable. Irish attitudes to European security and defence might best be characterised by paraphrasing Winston Churchill, in that Ireland is with common security and defence policy, but not of it. We are linked, but not compromised. We are interested and associated, but not absorbed. It is perhaps time that we do become absorbed in greater co-operation with the EU on issues of common security and defence that extend beyond PESCO, as others here have noted, as we lose the shelter of the UK in future debates.

The threats of a no-deal Brexit and the medium to longer-term security threats posed by any kind of withdrawal have yet to be provided for. Both the Irish State and the EU as a whole faces profound challenges in this regard and are there, as of yet, no signs that neither it nor the EU is

prepared to address them.

Co-Chairman Deputy Michael Healy-Rae: I thank Ms Reilly and all the contributors and call on Deputy Durkan.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: I apologise that I had to absent myself earlier due to questions in the Dáil. I compliment all the witnesses who I have heard so far this morning on the quality and depth of their submissions and the knowledge and research that went into them. They are all to be complimented on the even-handed and balanced way in which they went about their business.

I raise a question about the Common Security and Defence Policy. It is an issue which has been with us for a very long time. Over time, different emphases occur. It is important to note that we are a neutral country. There is nothing incompatible between our neutrality and our membership of the European Union or certain associations in the peacekeeping and defence areas. In the past, we have excelled in peacekeeping and have shown ourselves to be international leaders in that area. We have a useful influence and role to play in the European context. I note modern terrorism has no boundaries and can reach far into neutral countries, peacekeeping countries and so on. Do the witnesses see a space in which Ireland might be expected to defend itself in such a situation?

I refer to the question of whether something in this area will be attached to the discussion on Brexit and if a *quid pro quo* be sought. I do not think that will be the case. We are very strong members of the European Union with a strong commitment to its ideals which have existed from the beginning and get stronger over time. It is not likely that we would be expected to concede one for another in this context. I think that because the European Union must prevail. If it does not and it fragments, going in different directions, and if demands are made within itself, of itself, by itself or by single member states, then there is a grave danger that the European Union will cease to be. If that happens there will be great political, military and economic implications for the entire Continent of Europe and outside. I do not need to tell our witnesses this; they are experts on this area, but the question arises as to whether we want to go back to where we were. Some member states refer to the good old days, which presumably was the first half of the 20th century. My question to young people is whether they want to go back to those much referred to good old days, when almost 70 million people died in the conflict which followed when Europe turned upon itself. All these things relate to military matters and peace. We should remember that the EU was the single most important peace agreement that the world has ever known. For all those years we have been peaceful. There can come times of turbulence occasionally and in times of economic difficulty, someone is always sought to blame. I encourage our guests to focus on the alternatives, because they are not good, and they can proceed to work in an equitable manner, to be fair to all people including refugees from outside. As we know, some of the people of Europe were themselves refugees in the not too-distant past.

Senator Paul Gavan: I begin by congratulating all the contributors for their very well researched and thoughtful pieces. This is very timely. There are debates at the moment relating to plans for an EU army. It is clear from this morning's contributions that despite the denials from some on the political right that an advanced conversation on this is taking place. The contributions here have been challenging. While I acknowledge the poll undertaken by the European Movement, which would be very much in favour of changing our policy, we should recall that a Red C poll last year also showed tremendous support in Ireland for Irish neutrality. I ask if Irish people would really support what PESCO is doing off the coast of Libya, for example, if they knew. If they followed the reports of Sally Hayden, the Irish journalist, she has highlighted

EU support, including Irish financial support, for funding death camps in Libya. That funding was confirmed to me by the Minister of State, Deputy Helen McEntee, just a few weeks ago in the Seanad. These are camps in which people are tortured, raped, mutilated and killed. This is the reality of PESCO as it operates right now. One does not have to take my word for it. Sally Hayden has documented and continues to document it in an effort to bring attention to the realities, unfortunately, of what PESCO is doing. Do we think the Irish people would support funding of €13 billion in research subsidies for the defence industries of Europe as set out in the next financial plan for Europe? That is a reality of PESCO. The final question I ask is as follows. Surely, the best people to decide our future neutrality are the people of Ireland. That is why Sinn Féin was right to pursue the Bill. As democrats, the best way forward in this debate is to support that call for a referendum. Let us have a full debate on the future of Irish neutrality. I thank the witnesses for their thoughtful contributions today.

Deputy Mattie McGrath: I apologise for having had to leave for a meeting of the Business Committee. I am delighted to welcome the witnesses and thank them for their contributions. We are at an important crossroads in Europe. Certainly, I have concerns about some activities taking place under the flag of and with the financial support of the European Union. We need to be more awake, engaged and vocal and to scrutinise more deeply legislation that comes before us on PESCO and other situations. Europe as a project must be preserved. We must work at that and learn from it. A recent report I intend to raise on Leaders' Questions today is on the future of farming in Europe. It states that 1,000 farmers and farm families are leaving farming every week right across the EU. That is leading to the degeneration, neglect and slippage of rural Ireland at a time when we are talking about rolling broadband out to rural areas. If we do not maintain sustainable farm families in rural Ireland, North and South, and across Europe, it will lead to more factory farms and large conglomerates buying up land, which is not good. In my own county of Tipperary, we have an equine company purchasing every square perch of land that becomes available. It has amassed almost 28,000 acres. While it provides employment and has great prowess in the equine industry, it is disgraceful that we do not have a land commission or other land agency to monitor and curtail what is happening. The family farm is the lifeblood of Ireland. In the two previous recessions to the one we have just come out of, it was agriculture that led us back to growth with, I might add, the support of the EU. People were always there on family farms and working the land in parishes and communities nationally. Every euro that goes into agriculture is spent locally. Farm families support schools, sports clubs, the tourism industry and everything else. It is therefore timely to have this discussion. I thank our visitors for attending today. It is my first time speaking in this new Chamber. I am delighted. It is an honour to be here.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: I thank all those who have contributed. The situation around security events is not a stark one. It is more the case that there are real choices and priorities to address. It is true that Europe came out of a project of peace. The wonderful thing about Europe was that after literally thousands of years of conflict, countries which had experienced in some cases hundreds of years of war against each other decided to come together to determine how to live together more peacefully and constructively. That is absolutely true. However, while there is an incredible legacy of peace in the European project, being European and being part of the European project means thinking about that constant question of how we live together. It is about being critically present and asking critical questions, as the witnesses have. That is part of being pro-European. It is about caring enough about Europe to care about the decisions it makes.

There are very important decisions being made and there are priorities and concerns. It was

a decision for Ireland to opt into PESCO. Ireland was not required to opt in, rather it chose to do so. PESCO moved us further away by involving us, for example, in joint purchases of military equipment. Ireland has an incredibly strong tradition of peace and neutrality and of leading disarmament. One of the most moving things I have ever been involved with was the global ban on cluster bombs, which are basically like landmines. The global ban was negotiated here in Ireland because Ireland was free from some of the military-industrial pressures experienced by other countries and was able to lead the way. It is not a choice between Ireland and our neutrality and Europe. It is about Ireland being a voice for peace, neutrality and disarmament within Europe. That is a key point. It is a service we provide. It was Eamon Gilmore, a former Irish parliamentarian, who represented the European Commission in Colombia to negotiate the peace deal. That is because Ireland's neutrality allowed us to have that strong voice.

We cannot turn a blind eye to militarisation. It is a disservice to Ireland and Europe if we do. It was very concerning that, just two weeks ago, the European Parliament voted against having oversight of the €13 billion European Defence Fund. That is the European Parliament choosing not to scrutinise what that fund is spent on. Will it be on autonomous weapons? How does it relate to UN mandates? We must question constantly. When we have global challenges for Europe and the world like climate change, which we will discuss later, we must ask whether we should be spending €13 billion on European defence. I do not think so. Peace and security are put together. Peace is work. We know that from the Good Friday Agreement. The work of peace is about investment in community building, understanding and social exchange. If we spent some of that €13 billion to build understanding between communities, not just here in Ireland but across the Balkan states which have come out of an experience of war as recently as the 1990s, that would deliver far more than to ramp up military spending on our borders and invest huge amounts in Frontex. As was mentioned, it is a real concern to see these immigration control deals whereby we are funding border police and military actions in places like Sudan and Libya. Those are things we need to look to. These are very important choices.

It is important to note that the current Commission is an outgoing one. We will have a new European Commission soon and it needs to hear from the witnesses about their priorities. Among the priorities the outgoing Juncker Commission has brought to today's European Council meeting on the future of Europe, what it calls "protective Europe" is number one. That means a European defence union. We must be very clear that there are high-level people in Europe who want a European army. However, that is not the same thing as saying Europe wants a European army. There are also brilliant parliamentarians and passionate Europeans from every member state of the EU 27 who want to work together on peace. That is the narrative we can push and strengthen. I would love to hear in response what the witnesses think the work of peace should be. It is not just about saying we do not want militarisation. What is the work of peace? That is the work from Good Friday and the work we have seen across the world. How does Ireland lead the work of peace within Europe to make Europe a champion on human rights and peace? It is a real choice. We cannot do that while also spending €13 billion on a European Defence Fund which we do not scrutinise. We must all challenge these issues because we want Europe to live up to its brilliant and historic past and to shape a better future. The following point is very important. In the initial PESCO agreement, the words "peace" and "peacekeeping" were not even used once. We need something that is not the PESCO agreement but which is rather a European mandate on peace work. That should be the centrepiece of Europe's next five-year strategy. I would love to hear the witnesses' thoughts on that work of peace.

Co-Chairman Deputy Michael Healy-Rae: Does Ireland's participation in PESCO, in particular in regard to cybersecurity, impact on its neutrality? I now invite the witnesses to

respond to members' questions. While I do not wish to cut anybody short I ask the witnesses to be conscious that we are running out of time for this particular session.

Ms Cornelia-Adriana Baci: I will try to address the many interesting questions posed. On defending ourselves, territorial defence is mandated to NATO. One of the issues on the agenda for discussion is to what extent EU member states should start thinking more seriously about gaining an element of strategic autonomy and independence from US decision-making. Territorial defence, leadership and nuclear weapons are some of the points linked with this debate, but many states have been silent on this particular aspect. There is also the scenario of the US abandonment, which I addressed in my opening statement. The United States has withdrawn from several multilateral or bilateral agreements. The US foreign policy narrative might in the future be linked with developments in the Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea. In the case of US inability to provide security guarantees in Europe, the EU should have a plan B and give serious consideration to the territorial defence aspect.

From a rational choice perspective, into the future, the Common Security and Defence Policy, CSDP, for member states will be, probably, a trade-off between utility and strategic choice. It is important to emphasise that security is a prerequisite and will remain a prerequisite for the other benefits of EU membership, including economic and political benefits. It is a precondition of other benefits as well. The major challenges to CSDP in the future will probably be linked to member states' commitment and the robustness of CSDP institutions. I mentioned the new strategic instruments that are likely to generate new assets and perhaps increase the value of defence co-operation in Europe.

In regard to Irish neutrality, last year I wrote an article on security, multilateralism and Irish neutrality based on debates in the Irish Parliament from 1998 to 2018, which is available online. One of my key findings was that the concept of Irish neutrality is multifaceted. I found different concepts associated with it, including positive neutrality, negative neutrality, total neutrality and so on. Every time there is a debate in Brussels related to security implications, there are intensive debates in the Irish Parliament on the implications for Irish neutrality. There is informed decision-making on a case-by-case basis. Surprisingly, or maybe not so surprisingly, Irish neutrality was found to be strongly linked with UN peacekeeping and stabilisation missions. From this we could infer that there is a compatibility between the Irish foreign policy and EU foreign policy narrative. The EU global strategy has been focused on peace and stabilisation missions in fragile states. Recent statistics show an increase in the support of Irish people for the CSDP. One explanation for this might be that the Common Security and Defence Policy works at intergovernmental level and it is likely to remain so into the future. Security might be an area in which intergovernmental co-operation is more effective. Sovereignty is not transferred at supranational level. Any change in this regard will require a change in the EU treaty.

On the value added of PESCO, for Ireland the value added is that the capabilities developed under PESCO remain in the possession of member states. For Ireland this means that capabilities developed under PESCO can be utilised in UN peacekeeping missions and other missions. As far as I am aware, Ireland has been active in providing personnel and staff to EU and international civilian and military missions since it joined the European Union in 1973. As of December 2018, there were approximately 650 Irish personnel deployed to such missions.

On Brexit, much of my research recently has been focused on the implications of Brexit. I recently co-authored a book with my supervisor, Professor John Doyle from DCU, on this subject. Brexit will transform relationships between the UK and the EU from multilateral to bilateral. This will have implications for the European Union evolutionary stable equilibrium.

The EU will need to find a way to address this equilibrium to remain stable over time and to be able to cope with so-called atypical sequences or shocks, of which Brexit could be one. The literature argues that continual change is the prerequisite to remain relevant and competitive. The implication or consequence of this would be geopolitical adaptation of the EU. This will have further implications for future transatlantic relations, the EU global strategy and international security as a collective good.

It was mentioned earlier that peace is work. Modern peace is based on anticipation, resilience and integration of aspects of daily life. One could imagine modern peace at the intersection of three epistemological debates, international - liberal values; national - nationalist sometimes as a destructive force; and, everyday life level - daily interactions and power relations between people. We have to see all three sides as knowledge production sides. Knowledge is very important for concepts such as peace, order, justice, security and so on. This is, perhaps, a matter we should further address in our research.

Co-Chairman Deputy Michael Healy-Rae: Would any other witness like to comment?

Ms Michaela Reilly: It is not often mentioned that the European project was based on political and economic values. Cultural values were disregarded. Questions were posed in regard to neutrality, PESCO and peace. If we look at the culture of all European states, it comprises the cultures of 28 different states, soon to be 27. These have very different cultural values. After 70 years of this project, it is time to introduce new ways of looking at things. It is not always driven by politics and economics, although we are in a political chamber. It is very important that we look towards cultures. I am sure most Irish people would not be impressed to hear that we are supporting PESCO. Claims were made that money we pay into the European budget for defence goes to camps in Libya and so on. That is not what we anticipated our tax money would be used for. There are also cultures within Europe that really promote a strong, hard-line defence policy, which we do not. We are more focused on peacekeeping and neutrality. There needs to be a balance in how we look at cultures and cultural values. Only in that way can we address all of the issues that have been brought up.

Co-Chairman Deputy Michael Healy-Rae: I thank Ms Reilly very much. On behalf of Deputy Brendan Smith, who is the Chairman of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence, the members of that committee, and all Members present, I thank the witnesses for that excellent and informative session. Their questions were put very well and comprehensively. We will now move on to the next session, which will deal with climate change and sustainable development. This session will be chaired by Deputy Hildegard Naughton.

Climate Change

Co-Chairman Deputy Hildegard Naughton: I thank Deputy Healy-Rae. I am delighted to be here this morning to chair what is a very important session. I thank all the witnesses for coming before us for what has been a very informative engagement. I am Chair of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Climate Action. This committee was set up to consider the Citizens' Assembly report. We published a cross-party report on 16 April, which I believe is the beginning of a new era for policy direction with regard to how the State deals with climate change. As the witnesses will know, the Minister, Deputy Bruton, is working on an all-of-Government action plan with regard to rolling out these policy changes, which will be critical for this and future generations. I will not delay because I know the clock is ticking and my colleague, Deputy Ó

Caoláin, is waiting to step in to chair the next session.

Our first speaker is Mr. Pádraig Flattery from the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. We also have Mr. Axel Leahy from the National University of Ireland, Galway, Ms Louise Fitzgerald from University College Dublin, Mr. Connor McGookin from University College Cork, and Ms Caroline Moran from Dublin City University.

Mr. Pádraig Flattery: I thank the Ceann Comhairle and the committees for inviting me to speak. I am a PhD student in the ICARUS climate research unit at the Maynooth University department of geography. My work is a drop in the ocean of climate change research being undertaken around the world every day, all of which bolsters the consensus that climate change is happening, that it is urgent, and that human activities are responsible.

I have been asked to speak today on the topic of climate action and sustainable development. When I first read the title of this topic, I immediately thought of speeches made by the young Swedish climate activist, Greta Thunberg, who has helped mobilise a generation against the actions of their governments by holding weekly school strikes. At her recent speeches to the World Economic Forum and the United Nations she told the delegates, “I want you to panic”. In the brief time I have I will try to explain the scientific basis behind why she wants people to panic, and how climate action and sustainable development must be embraced to create a sustainable future for the next generations.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, states that we must keep global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels to avoid potentially catastrophic climate change. Warming of more than 1.5°C increases the likelihood of climate tipping points being triggered. These tipping points are thresholds that, if exceeded, can fundamentally alter the state of the climate system. To provide members with an example, one possible consequence of warming above 1.5°C is the thawing of permafrost in the Arctic, a process which is already under way and which releases vast amounts of methane, which is more than 25 times more powerful as a greenhouse gas than CO₂, which will result in significant irreversible warming and is likely to trigger the collapse of other systems, including the melting of the Greenland ice sheet. This ice sheet is already melting more and more each year. If temperatures increase and the ice sheet reaches a point where it will melt entirely, we will be committed as a planet to a sea level rise of 6 m. If we allow this to happen, there will be unimaginable global consequences which pose a genuine existential threat to humanity.

When people hear climate scientists speaking about these changes in the Arctic and Greenland, they wonder how it relates to us here in Ireland, but these sea level changes will be felt on a local as well as a global scale and our coastal cities will be threatened. If we do not take action to prevent this happening, it will not matter which country did not meet its targets or which national interest was prioritised. We have already warmed by around 1°C, and will reach 1.5°C warming somewhere between 2030 and 2052, meaning we have a decade to make radical changes to our economy and way of life.

The reality is clear. As members of the EU we are committed to reducing our emissions by 40% compared with 1990 levels by the year 2030, just 11 years from now. The EU has set the goal of an 80% to 95% reduction in emissions by 2050. Current Irish policies are not aligned with our goals. While the EU as a whole will achieve its 2020 emissions target, Ireland will significantly overshoot ours. This sets us up to fail at achieving our future targets, and the longer we wait, the more difficult it becomes. We need to encourage sustainable development and ensure all members of society can reduce their carbon footprints by decarbonising public

transportation, energy generation and agriculture to give everyone the opportunity to make the right choices regarding their emissions. While grants for new electric cars are encouraging, how many people can realistically avail of them? The importance of a holistic approach to adaptation is emphasised by a 2018 statement from the IPCC:

If poorly designed or implemented, adaptation projects in a range of sectors can increase greenhouse gas emissions and water use, increase gender and social inequality, undermine health conditions, and encroach on natural ecosystems [...] These trade-offs can be reduced by adaptations that include attention to poverty and sustainable development

The joint committee's report on climate change and cross-party action echoes this sentiment in its call for a just transition to a green economy.

We need to safeguard the lives of all our future citizens. We are the first generation to feel the effects of climate change and the last generation who will be able to do anything about it. Individuals can and do take action, but the onus is on politicians to find solutions, create dialogue, and work towards our common goal of creating a better world for us all. Sustainable development is not only possible, it is essential if Ireland is to maintain our green reputation on the world stage. As shown by the committee's recent report, the transition to a green economy is an opportunity for economic growth and job creation in rural and urban Ireland, and ought to be embraced for the benefits it will bring. The recommendations of the report are far-reaching and inspiring and must be implemented urgently. They range from citizen-scale efforts to retrofit homes to renewable energy generation to a national push for offshore wind generation and decarbonisation of our economy.

As a direct result of protests by the Extinction Rebellion group, the UK declared a national climate change emergency just last week. This was closely followed by Wicklow County Council which announced a climate and biodiversity emergency last week. This shows us that there is hope, but time is running out.

Mr. Axel Leahy: I thank the committees for giving me this opportunity to speak. I know members will fully understand my French accent, so it will not disturb them too much. Climate change is urging us to take actions and to change our way of life radically. Such actions and policies will require unprecedented levels of collaborative decision-making between all actors in society, including the public. Yet, voices of local communities are still, in 2019, facing brick walls. As European citizens, we need to be given the opportunity to participate actively and to have a real input on decisions that have effects on our daily life.

We know the positive effects that public participation can have. We know, for instance, that local communities can substantially enhance the quality of decisions with locally grounded and value-based knowledge. We should not see decisions tailored to reduce our vulnerability to climate change as purely technical. This is not to say that experts should not contribute - their role is crucial - but common technical approaches to decision-making, such as cost-benefit analyses, cannot be the sole remedy to our problems. Often, the real value of assets and landscapes can hardly be monetised and summarised into graphics, as they will have a deeper value and a deeper meaning to local communities. Moreover, we should not forget that local communities are situated at the forefront of climate change, being the first to experience damage from storms, flooding, erosion or biodiversity losses. Why should they then be kept silent? Public participation is, after all, a democratic right.

The problem is that today's conventional forms of public participation do not work. First,

uploading a document on a website and then asking people to submit comments or suggestions does not guarantee that these submissions will have any effect on the decision. Second, and most important, these forms of engagement do not resonate with most people. Do Members of the Oireachtas believe that people of my age regularly check the websites of their local authorities? This is the core of the problem. There is a gap between our decision makers and the public. This criticism demands that new mediums of participation need to be established in Ireland. The Citizens' Assembly is a fantastic example that we can build on, but it cannot be limited to that. Most decisions that affect our everyday lives take place in our communities at a local level. Should every local authority have its own citizens' assembly? Why not? There are countless examples of successful forms of active participation. Citizen panels, citizen juries, citizen advisory committees, participatory budgeting, participatory planning, participatory mapping, e-participation and citizen science are forms of active public participation that have proven to be successful around the world. Why should we limit those examples as isolated case studies rather than trying to make them the common practice?

The ball is in the court of those who represent us. As we saw recently with the school strikes for climate, many people, especially those from the younger generation, are willing to engage in climate actions. Strong and ambitious policies need to be implemented at national level to create nationwide structures for public participation and incite local decision makers to abandon the *status quo* and find innovative ways of engaging directly with their constituents. Climate change represents one of the greatest challenges of our century. We desperately need to reduce our carbon emissions and adapt to present and forthcoming impacts of climate change. Decisions aiming at driving these societal changes cannot take place behind closed doors. We need to seize climate change as an opportunity to change profoundly the way our democracy works in Ireland and in Europe.

Ms Louise Fitzgerald: I am speaking not only as an Irish Research Council-funded scholar based at the UCD school of politics and international relations but also as someone who cannot remember a time when I was not faced with fear, anxiety and a deep sense of sadness about the current ecological and climate breakdown, which is already causing pain for millions of people around the world. This is why I have dedicated the last four years of my life to researching how we can develop effective and successful policies to deal with our climate and sustainable development challenges. My presentation is based on cutting-edge research within political science as well as dozens of research interviews I have conducted in Germany in an attempt to understand the factors that have helped to underpin the success of Germany's historic energy transition. I am looking at the factors that help to create policy that is politically and socially acceptable. This is really the Holy Grail. I hope to demonstrate how we can make stringent policy without facing electoral penalties.

I will mention a few insights and factors that have the potential to help us in our work. The first of them underpins what has been said about the importance of citizen-centred energy and green industrial supports. The key causal mechanism here is something called coalition building, which is essentially about the development of policy that seeks specifically to build coalitions of support for a green policy that allows policy measures to be ratcheted up over time. The provision of direct industrial incentives to support the growth of particular green industries, such as renewables, is an effective way to build these new coalitions. This has been borne out in the case of Germany, where it was a main driver of the energy transition. The expansion of green industrial supports gave citizens access to the energy grid. A payment for the energy fed into the grid supported the development of citizen-centred and community-centred renewable energies. This solidified the societal acceptance of energy transitions, which is a key factor in

determining our success as we go forward.

A second insight is that carbon-pricing approaches can face significant barriers to effective implementation. An understanding of the dynamics of the political landscape is necessary in this context. Carbon pricing incentivises regulatory losers, those who are going to lose out as a result of certain policies, to organise politically to prevent such policies from being implemented, thereby rendering measures difficult to implement and making them no more than marginally effective in the short and medium term. It can be costly and time-consuming to tweak proposed instruments in order that they can be implemented in any form. The EU emissions trading system and its related offset schemes have faced significant challenges. Research indicates that switching to green industrial supports and focusing on such supports as well as on citizen-centred energy faces fewer political barriers and is more conducive to effective and sustainable policymaking.

Clear action on decarbonisation can have a powerful signalling effect and can create a facilitative framework. Conversely, any moves to build new fossil fuel infrastructure can have lock-in impacts that undermine and derail sustainability transitions. It is important to note that natural gas infrastructure projects that are planned within the EU's list of projects of common interest, including the planned Shannon liquified natural gas terminal, categorically impede our ability to decarbonise in a timely manner. Alternatively, research has started to show that supply side policies, such as bans and moratoriums, have significant economic and political advantages compared with demand side policies. The political advantages of such an approach include superior potential to mobilise public support, including within fossil fuel industries, as well as low administrative and transactional costs.

The EU can provide a framework for developing effective and just pathways to sustainable development and successful climate action. Countries as small as Ireland can have a substantial impact within this framework. Much of the work that is being done now involves the development of new norms of behaviour. This has a powerful contagion effect. We have an opportunity to implement a dynamic policy for effective climate action and sustainable development, but the window is closing fast. Climate and ecological breakdown are hitting us faster than was ever predicted. On our current path, a safe planet for human life will disappear before today's children reach the age of those we are addressing this morning.

No financial argument makes any sense when faced with these facts, regardless of whether it is hedged in terms of budget speak, bureaucratic processes, profits or vested interests. The survival of all of us and all of those we care about is directly threatened by climate change. This is not political. It is a scientific fact that is based on science, physics and the laws of nature. All Members of the Oireachtas will face important decisions in the coming weeks and months. I want them to understand that everything they care about will be touched by climate and ecological breakdown. They need to think about that and act from a place of love when they are making decisions. Young people are asking politicians to give them a chance to live a dignified life and to have a safe world in which to live. We are asking them to let us hope. This is not about us versus them or young people versus politicians. That is old thinking. This is about the shared fate of all of us who are interconnected on this planet. We are in this together for better or for worse, so let us make it better.

Mr. Connor McGookin: I thank the committees for the opportunity to speak. I have three brief points to make. I will probably echo much of the frustration we heard in the previous statements. First, climate change policy must be stepped up ambitiously. Second, there is growing public appetite for climate action. We have heard about Greta Thunberg. Third, local

actions must be adequately supported. This should not just be about high-level ambition. As Deputies and Senators are probably aware, European leaders are meeting in Romania today to discuss the future of Europe. At this summit, eight countries and 210 cities are urging national leaders and the European Council to adopt a zero emissions target for 2050. Last November, a report produced by the European Commission set out a number of pathways for achieving net zero emissions by 2050. This commitment is essential if we are to avoid the apocalyptic narratives of climate change. It is up to the EU 27 to lead the way.

I would like to mention one example of how Ireland is failing miserably to meet this responsibility. Last October, a stark warning in the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change gave us just 11 years to make a meaningful difference. Embarrassingly, this was followed by a failure to provide in the budget for an increase in carbon tax. This reflects the lack of political leadership that has slowed the progress of climate policy across the world. Thanks to a young Swedish girl, a growing movement throughout Europe is now demanding greater government ambition and moving climate policy onto the agenda. The recent report of the Joint Committee on Climate Action, which achieved cross-party consensus, was a significant milestone. The all-of-Government action plan that is being prepared is another important step in the right direction. The achievement of political consensus is not the final hurdle, however. We must build from here to secure social consensus.

While high-level ambition is essential, many of us have a lot to learn if we are to understand what this means at local level. This is the focus of my own research. I have explored new approaches to energy system modelling and planning that account for local values and perceptions. As Mr. Leahy pointed out, there is a need to address some of the flaws in the planning and decision-making processes that can lead to opposition to infrastructural projects like large-scale wind developments and overhead pylons. In 2015, the White Paper on energy mentioned that there was an “increasing recognition of the value that effective communication and a participative approach between developer, local community and local authority can bring to the development of energy infrastructure”. This has been echoed in recent policy with repeated references to phrases like “energy citizen” or “community engagement”. I imagine we can all agree this is a welcome narrative and is undoubtedly important for the energy transition.

However, within communities, several constraints are hindering meaningful progress. I will list some of the key challenges and opportunities. These have been compiled from my personal research and that of some of my colleagues. First, volunteers are required, but depending on them will not be adequate. As local champions these people are often part of several community groups and are already stretched. The existing community networks represent a major opportunity but must be engaged in a respectful manner. Second, I reiterate that core funding is needed. Regular funding must be made available for the administration and co-ordination of community energy groups if they are to function effectively. Third, until policy barriers in the form of tariffs, planning, finance and grid access are addressed, it will be unhelpful and perhaps counterproductive to continuously talk up community ownership of energy. The final point is closest to my heart. Community energy does not guarantee community acceptance but a more transparent and inclusive decision-making processes can help ease tensions and inspire positive action.

I will summarise my contribution. I have noted the need for European leadership in stepping up ambition. I touched on the noticeable growth in public appetite for meaningful climate action. National leadership, extensive local engagement and clear benefits for communities are essential in driving the energy transition.

Co-Chairman Deputy Hildegarde Naughton: Our final speaker in this section is Ms Caroline Moran.

Ms Caroline Moran: I thank the committee members for the opportunity to contribute. Last September, I began studying in DCU on the climate change masters programme. I have always been interested in reading up on environmental news and over several years I have become increasingly concerned about climate change and environmental degradation. Since beginning the course two things have happened. I have realised how bad the situation is, but also that there is still hope. It has hit home for me that there needs to be a fundamental change in our society if we are to tackle this problem in the short time there is left to effectively halt the worst of what could happen.

Ireland is rightly seen to be at the back of the pack. However, the recent report from the Joint Committee on Climate Action is a welcome step in the right direction. We can learn much from our European counterparts about what has worked and what has not. We can build on these in an Irish context.

Effectively communicating the challenges and opportunities to citizens is the most important step. There is a lot of fear and misunderstanding regarding climate change. Public debate on what must happen to transition to a low-carbon economy is essential. We need to have open conversations in the media and at the dinner table about how we must change the *status quo* and the best ways to do this for our local communities and large-scale industries.

I look forward to an all-of-Government action plan, as I believe it will help drive the public debate in a meaningful way to give the general public clear guidance on what is being proposed and how it will affect them personally and society as a whole.

The announcement by Bord na Móna last October of the loss of more than 400 jobs in the midlands shows the need for extensive planning and programmes to retrain workers or aid in job replacement schemes for those who will be most affected by the transition to a low-carbon economy. Last October, the Spanish Government and coal miner unions reached a transition deal. It offered early retirement or retraining for coal miners who are to lose their jobs as the industry is scaled back. This is an example of good practice that can be repeated in an Irish context. Some industries will be disproportionately affected, such as agriculture and peat production, while there will be more opportunities for green jobs elsewhere and these must be embraced. Workers who believe their livelihoods are being threatened need to be engaged in what happens but at a community level there must be a discussion as well. The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, campaigning on a green new deal platform, won the recent Spanish elections with up to 50% of the vote in some mining towns. The party had worked with the coal miners unions previously.

Recently, there has been a surge in social activism around climate change, such as the school strikes for climate and the extinction rebellion. I went to the two events held in Dublin. As a former teacher, I know how hard it can be to motivate teenagers, but at the school strike, I was moved by the enthusiasm students showed that day. At the extinction rebellion protest, I was inspired by the diversity of participants who showed up. These movements show that the public are becoming increasingly aware of climate change, biodiversity loss and the general destruction of the natural world that is occurring at an unprecedented rate. There has never been a better time to engage the public on the urgency of the crisis facing our planet. Small-scale actions that individuals can take will not be enough without large-scale actions and policies by governments. The EU, Ireland included, must lead the way and take bold unmitigated action

now, with engaged citizens at the core of this transition. The release earlier this week of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services is another stark reminder that our current system is failing and putting life on earth at risk. The technology to make the shift is in place. The financial risk will lessen the sooner we take action. The public will to act has never been stronger. It is time to change.

Co-Chairman Deputy Hildegarde Naughton: I thank everyone for those excellent contributions. I will go to my colleagues with questions. The witnesses might note the questions and then whoever wants to come in can answer them. Is it okay if we proceed that way? Agreed.

The witnesses have raised some important and key issues that the Joint Committee on Climate Action has been considering during the past seven months. Ms Fitzgerald mentioned one of our key concerns, which is the price of carbon. Although it was only a small part of our work, it was a key concern in respect of protecting the most vulnerable. We considered the need to be politically palatable in bringing people with us and not making the mistakes we have made in other areas in engagement in with the community and bringing people on board. That is why these conversations are important for us. We have a body of work to complete and we can see that. This is only the start. Community engagement and how we communicate to the citizen are important. We must protect the most vulnerable and those facing fuel poverty. Key sectors will find the transition hardest, including the peat industry, the farming community and rural communities. These are key areas that we have to work on as well.

I am keen to hear of any of the witnesses want to expand on what we can do in respect of the price of carbon. They will have seen from our report how we are conscious of protecting those affected and the need to have a short, sharp engagement on the issue of the price of carbon and the key sectors that will be affected. What else needs to be done on the regulatory and policy side? What is the nature of the regulatory and policy mix needed for that to be a success? That is one key component.

There was a major emphasis in all the contributions on new mediums of participation. Mr. Leahy mentioned this and the question of community engagement. This again is a whole-of-society approach. The Government has a role to play but we cannot do it all; it has to be within the community as well. One issue we have faced as elected representatives is that when we want to put in place renewable energy projects there is local opposition. We talk about communities coming together feeding into the grid, tapping into the grid and selling their own electricity back into the grid. We need to unlock the planning regulations. The issues goes beyond acceptance. If the witnesses have any more insights, I would be grateful to hear them.

I will bring in my colleagues now. Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy and Senator Máire Devine are first. We will then hear from Deputy Tom Neville.

Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy: I thank all the witnesses for their contributions. They will not find any argument from this side in respect of the challenge facing us all nationally and globally in terms of trying to halt global warming.

Mr. McGookin talked about reaching into local communities. I wonder if he has looked at whether public participation networks are a good starting point. I attended an event recently in my county of Offaly. The public participation network there established Green Offaly, which is a great initiative. Should initiatives like this be happening throughout the country? It is something the Joint Committee on Climate Action discussed and recommended.

Ms Caroline Moran referred to Bord na Móna. I am from Offaly. A just transition is something that we are anxious to ensure. Has she been keeping track of the efforts Offaly County Council has made recognising the challenges to the communities involved and the workers? We need to bring together all the stakeholders to ensure that the workers involved are aware of all the benefits for them in terms of social protection as well as the opportunities for retraining and upskilling. An event is being planned for the week after next. It is a job-matching initiative in which local companies will come together with the workers who are taking voluntary redundancy. There are many positives. Other areas could learn from it. Is Ms Moran keeping track of this? It is important that we be aware of such efforts.

Senator Máire Devine: I thank the witnesses. I am still a member of the Joint Committee on Climate Action. We were the black sheep of the committee when we voted against the carbon tax. The committee has done 90% of its work collaboratively, but we were concerned about the just transition and the tax's imposition on less fortunate people who are struggling.

I would like the witnesses to expand on another point. There is an emergency in our public health system because of climate change, and it will be even more harmful for communities tomorrow. This is about communicating with communities not only about heatwaves, floods, storms and the resultant deaths, but about the day in, day out worldwide epidemic of asthma, respiratory tract infections and diseases such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, COPD. Many of these have to do with pollution, for example, the quality of the water that we drink. According to the World Health Organization, WHO, this threat costs many billions of dollars and causes millions of deaths per year. The WHO believes that will only increase. Should we declare this an emergency alongside climate change?

We have received representations from the Irish Natura and Hill Farmers Association, IN-HFA. It made an important statement that has stuck with me, namely, that we must rethink how we feed the world. In the 1960s and 1970s, we did not have meat with every meal. We could not afford it, as it was a luxury. However, it has become so commonplace now that we expect it even though it is responsible for much of the destruction of the environment and our bodies' health.

When one sits down in a canteen, bistro or café, everything is packaged. When did we stop being communal and sharing sugar bowls and milk jugs? These simple points seem stupid, but they are down to hazard analysis and critical control point, HACCP, legislation. We must revisit it, as it is so clinical and clean that it is damaging us, in that we are not being exposed to stuff and material is being wasted. It is nonsensical that we all just sit around with sachets that we tear apart, adding to the destruction. The global scale is larger, but I am interested in this matter.

Deputy Tom Neville: I welcome the witnesses. It is nice to be able to address the Seanad Chamber. This is my first time doing so.

Co-Chairman (Deputy Hildegard Naughton): Make a wish.

Senator Máire Devine: Cuirim fáilte roimh an Teachta Neville.

Deputy Tom Neville: In his career, my father spent eight years in the Upper House, so it is a privilege to be able to make an address in this Chamber today on such an important issue. I sat on the Joint Committee on Climate Action and, hopefully, will sit on a permanent version chaired by the Co-Chairman, Deputy Naughton.

I welcome the witnesses' presentations. I went on a great journey of discovery during the

eight months that I sat on the committee. My knowledge of the parameters and facets of this issue was minuscule. The witnesses are preaching to the converted as regards the necessary timelines and actions.

I was struck by the question of consultation and building coalitions raised in one of the presentations. That is paramount to our success. If we do not build a coalition and agreement across all parties and sectors of society, there will be a knee-jerk kickback. Be it political or something else, it will be a “Them” and “Us” response that could set us back ten or 15 years or even a generation. We do not want that.

Our committee viewed public consultation as paramount. I was interested to hear about how an industry coalition was built on the ground in Germany, but Ireland needs to go to an even more micro level. Since we have a smaller population, we are a more integrated society. For example, managing directors of companies have siblings who are farmers or teachers. As such, we wanted to propose town hall-type meetings that would involve peer-to-peer and community learning involving people from all sectors of society - young and old, farmers and doctors, unemployed people, those in receipt of disability payments and so on. They would educate one another from the bottom up or at the same level. Politicians taking a top-down approach will not work. Europe and America have kicked back at such an approach. We must alter our communication style. That will be paramount in coalition building. It will require maturity, not only from people, but also from political parties. The latter must take a step back from the politics and build a coalition of consensus to drive this through. I would be interested in hearing more about the coalition building that happened in Germany.

Senator Michelle Mulherin: I welcome our guests, who have spoken passionately. These are issues that we considered in significant depth in writing our report. Action is needed. The requirement that we live more sustainably, which we have not been doing for years, is at the heart of this. It is the fallout of industrialisation and so on. If people were surveyed, everyone would agree with the targets under the Paris Agreement. It is only when one starts to drill down into who will take the pain and cost that a problem arises. That is what we must address if we want to see action. As Deputy Neville stated, though, there must be a consensus.

Recently, I attended a climate action forum of secondary schools in my county of Mayo that was facilitated by the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, GMIT, the county council and the latter’s climate action officer. We were sitting around a table and one of the issues debated was that of cost. In terms of transport, for example, we talked about how, if the pupils’ parents had to get electric vehicles, it would cost them money regardless of how large a grant the State provided. The same would be the case with heating systems. When I asked them if they believed that would be acceptable, they could not say that it would be.

There is another political reality. No matter what people say in the abstract about targets and the need to take action, the experience in Canada, Australia, Finland, France and Germany has been that, when politicians take political action, a large number of people do not agree with doing so. It does not mean that we should balk at trying to do the right thing, as we cannot continue taking from the Earth something that will not be replenished and will cause greenhouse gas emissions. We are smarter now and have more technology. We must be smarter and live more smartly. However, the idea that everyone is in agreement is incorrect. It is not even that they do not believe that there is climate change. Rather, they are more concerned with living in the here and now than with taking on additional pressures. If someone is in receipt of social welfare payments, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, SEAI, can fund 100% of certain energy efficiency works on his or her house. If someone is earning a low income and, accord-

ingly, will only receive partial supports, he or she will be under pressure. These are the people who will be financing their children going to college. From where will that money come? The bill will be significant. That is even evident from our social housing programme, given the additional cost of building houses. People are revolting against costs. That does not take from the witnesses' message, but we must refine our discussion to listening to people's concerns.

I have raised an issue previously and, while I do not want to labour the point, it must be borne in mind that when the witnesses refer to the measures that are necessary to tackle climate change, they are asking for more to be done by people living in rural areas. They are asking rural areas to take wind farms and grid infrastructure. They are asking for peat-burning power stations to be shut down. Where I am from, such a station closed a number of years ago. The area is only a shadow of its former itself economically. The issue of community gain is very relevant there.

There is also the issue of farming and the speaker from Teagasc earlier made a sensible proposition. We are very well suited to producing protein from dairy and beef. It does not mean that we continue exactly in the same vein but this is not discussed. There is now a situation where farmers are saying they have been doing all of this. The national herd has increased and that is why our greenhouse gases and emissions of methane have increased but farmers are farming more efficiently than ever before. They are put to the pin of their collars by payments on environmental measures, water quality and biodiversity. They have an appetite to do more but feel persecuted. People are disengaging.

I will say one final thing. The generation coming after us ask us to look at what we are doing. The reality is that the parents of the children I was talking to would give their left arms for their children. Their grandparents would do the same. The generations that have come before are trying to cope and do their best. They care and want to be given credit for that. We have to get realistic solutions which balance idealism with the reality to achieve them and not crush people in the process.

We will have a revolution. It will not be like those revolting in London who are from more middle class backgrounds and have time on their hands. The ordinary person will revolt which will create another set of problems that will set us back economically. We cannot take from the advances and lifestyles we enjoy. We must find technology to match that.

The last speaker on the environment was positive and hopeful, as I am. Human beings have great capacity to innovate and, although there will always be issues and problems, there can be business opportunities here. We see a lot of signals sent out by China and India, major emerging economies, that they have to go to green technology and transport etc. Ireland has to take these signals if it wants to participate in the global economy. We must also be clever. It is not only about misery, it is about opportunities and living in a different way.

Co-Chairman Deputy Hildegard Naughton: The Senator has highlighted the challenges. I will come to Senator Higgins. I am conscious of letting our speakers come back to respond.

Senator Alice-Mary Higgins: I apologise to the speakers that I am having to come and go from the Chamber but I was very interested in their presentations on this issue. I campaigned with Trócaire on climate change in 2008 when a group of young activists, who are no longer young, were demanding action. Even then, climate change was not new and there were huge impacts on many parts of the world and many communities were seeing their futures destroyed.

It is good that there is momentum now and climate change is centre stage in discussions. Europe Day is about Europe and the real test will be if Europe will place the sustainable development goals and climate change actions at the centre of the new five-year European strategy. Will they also be at the centre of the multiannual financial framework, the European budget? Simply putting climate action front and centre for photos at the moment will not be enough.

The European Investment Bank put €11 billion into fossil fuels between 2007 and 2013. The European climate action fund is proposed to be €5 billion. I want people to discuss the balance between where we invest and how we can stop taking backward steps.

One of the speakers mentioned the LNG terminal which is an example of something that was funded by European investment funding. How do we get that joined up? It comes down to public participation.

I am passionate about new forms of participation and we need them. I like the idea of town hall meetings, I think they are important, and I also think people should be looking at their local authority's development plans and putting in opinions. That is important. It is crucial to ask how we ensure the public discussion does not stay in a silo as a separate discussion on climate, but rather bring climate action into the economic discussion around budgets. We need to ensure that closed-door economic decisions such as trade agreements and procurement are joined up and informed by climate considerations. We need not to have any backward steps. I would like to hear the comments of the speakers on that matter.

Another consideration is the comparative roles of the public and private sectors which was touched on by some of the speakers. For example, it might be tempting to support the electric car industry because it has the potential to make profit whereas public transport might not, but public transport might lead us to make much greater progress much more quickly. There will be things that will cost money and will not necessarily be profitable but, if we do not take the action now, the cost will be borne elsewhere in the world and by those most vulnerable to climate change.

That brings us to the question of carbon pricing. I am on the Joint Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection and am very passionate about just transition. We must not wait for people to become redundant from sectors that are no longer sustainable but need to talk to them while they are still employed about their plans for the future. I have been arguing for that in the context of just transition. We must manage the pragmatic issues around just transition in Ireland and look to climate justice on a global level so we not only address the concerns in Ireland but look to climate justice for other parts of the world.

The price of carbon is artificially low and needs to be higher. The price has driven an unsustainable global development model. Do we make social protection payments? Fuel poverty payments will get us to a certain level but, as was rightly said, many people on low incomes will not be caught by the fuel supplement. How do we recognise and ensure that industry is reflecting the price of carbon and does not have artificially deflated prices because of artificially deflated carbon costs while ensuring that individuals are not taking the worst of the impacts? Those are the key questions. Perhaps we should look at bans, moratoriums and levies on sectors.

I will conclude because I want to hear the responses of the speakers. It comes back to the question of business as usual. Where do we frontload? Can we, and should we, balance keeping interests aligned while ensuring that we do not wait for certain climate actions to become

profitable? We have to frontload it. All of the speakers had practical thoughts on how we do that.

My key questions relate to climate justice, just transition, the public and private spheres and how to ensure this is an economic transformation as well as a social movement.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: I do not feel we are at panic stage yet. There is a great deal we can do on climate change in a relatively short time. We are supposed to achieve certain targets within ten years and it is well within our capacity to achieve them in that time period even though we are late starters.

The first thing we had to do was to convince people of the necessity to change and become less reliant on fossil fuels. As we do that, we must also become less reliant on the electricity generated from fossil fuels. Once we have crossed that part of the divide, the rest will follow readily. There is serious interest in electric cars this year where there was no such interest in the past.

Some of us have, over the past number of years, tried to sell the idea of alternative energy and the renewable energy sector and been publicly criticised and ridiculed for it. That is part of the battle we must face into. We must balance our approach, try to ensure that we do not target part of our community, or be seen to do so, in our journey towards achieving the necessary change. We have the capacity to do that, provided we do it right, and avoid the possibility of postponing forever something we need to start doing now.

Co-Chairman Deputy Hildegarde Naughton: I thank the Deputy for his brevity and clarity.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: As usual.

Co-Chairman Deputy Hildegarde Naughton: I do not want to cut people's time but the key concerns are very clear if our speakers can briefly try to target them. The shorter the contribution the better it will resonate with all of us. I will start with Mr. McGookin.

Mr. Connor McGookin: There is obviously a lot to come in on.

Co-Chairman Deputy Hildegarde Naughton: Does Mr. McGookin want to come in on any area that seems particularly pertinent?

Mr. Connor McGookin: I am an academic so I like talking. The first point made was about carbon tax and we looked at that and what it would mean to raise the weekly allowance in order to offset the extra €10. It was something like €4 in the winter and €2 in the summer. We will revert to the committee as we have some figures on that. It would not hit the people in fuel poverty. Much of what comes from our research must account for fuel poverty.

Climate change is a cross-cutting matter and there were questions as to how to overcome the problems. There are significant benefits to dealing with climate change, particularly in the rural sector, and I hope dealing with climate change would address many of the problems of rural degradation and help to revive many rural areas. It would help farmers through diversification of income by generating electricity, growing other crops or being paid for the carbon captured in their forests. Reforestation would be a major part of achieving carbon neutrality, along with restoring wetlands.

Public participation networks were a recommendation in the report from the Joint Commit-

tee on Climate Action, which is why I left them out of my bullet points. I certainly agree that we need such town hall meetings and there is an attempt to achieve this with the national dialogue on climate change. It is important to capacity building in communities to have access to impartial experts who can point to the facts and challenges being faced. It is about open discussion. My research in the Dingle peninsula relates to this if the members are interested.

Somebody mentioned going through the local authority and we thought that if we could follow the example of the UK and Wicklow in declaring a climate emergency, local authorities should have it as a top priority to have a climate change officer who would be able to advise homeowners or community groups. It is an important element in building capacity, which has been mentioned quite often. There was mention of the middle class accessing grants. It is a major problem. I know in Australia, poorer people were basically subsidising richer people getting solar panels put on their homes. We must be careful to avoid such things.

Co-Chairman Deputy Hildegard Naughton: I thank Mr. McGookin, who hit many points there.

Ms Caroline Moran: There was mention of Offaly and Mayo with respect to peat production. As has been mentioned, it is really important that there should be plans in place before peat production is closed so workers can have options in what they do afterwards. If there is to be a change, those workers need different options and time to think. At a community level there must be thought on what new industries can be brought in to benefit the entire community.

There was mention of carbon tax and feed-in tariffs for solar photovoltaic equipment, which is really important. The uptake of solar photovoltaic technology in countries with feed-in tariffs has been huge. If there is fuel poverty or people have low incomes without supplements, they could get profits from a feed-in tariff rather than just a grant. Retired people in their homes during the day may use electricity while it is generated and therefore it would cut their costs. Conversely, if people are at work all day they do not get the benefit of energy that is being produced but they would see a benefit through a feed-in tariff. They would get the money back. Such a process could work, especially in rural communities. We have spoken much about farmers and if they are leaving land spare, there could be large-scale solar photovoltaic installations to generate income as well. We need to be creative in what we do.

Ms Louise Fitzgerald: With regard to coalition building, I am speaking to this new dynamic understanding of policy that is coming out of social and political science research and how we can harness the feedback effects of policy and understanding the political landscape. This goes beyond just public consultation, which is also a good step. This is also about what policy choices we make and the outcomes and effects they have. To underline what has already been said, feed-in tariffs, for example, have the effect of building powerful coalitions. In Germany there were all sorts of actors who became supportive of the policy and really tried to protect it, including people who may not necessarily have been green-minded. They support it being ratcheted up.

It is really important to note the social dimension. We have seen the yellow vest movement in France and what happens when we do not have this lens in implementing the decarbonisation policy. There was mention of a just transition and this should not be about climate action versus farmers or peat workers. Farmers are on the front line of climate change and they are already experiencing it. We have seen that with the fodder crisis. The fossil fuel age is collapsing and one way or another, peat workers will see an impact from climate change policy. We must achieve this in a just way.

I will speak briefly to carbon pricing. As I stated, I am drawing on an understanding of policy dynamics. Carbon pricing should be seen as one of many tools in a policy mix. One of the issues is the need to build alternatives and allow people to have alternatives through something like a feed-in tariff. To draw on a German case, there was a delay in trying to implement carbon pricing through the emissions trading system and, essentially, there was neglect of the areas of transport, heating and the idea of a more systemic just transition. Now the country is facing the consequences, so we would do well to learn from their mistakes and not have this happen with carbon price implementation in Ireland. Green industrial support, citizen energy, bans and moratoriums can be used. The paper I quoted was by Mr. Fergus Green and Dr. Richard Denniss from 2017 and it is available online. They argue that supply-side bans have a host of advantages and gain much support, including from actors like the fossil fuel industry, which we might not expect.

Citizen energy feeds into the transformative elements and resilience in communities and globally. It builds more community resilience and this enables communities to face climate change issues. That work comes from people like Mr. Craig Morris. There is a need to look locally but also globally at what is coming. People in Mozambique are panicking, for example, and people across the global South already facing the impact of climate change are panicking. We would do well to respond right now to what we are all facing.

Mr. Axel Leahy: I will not respond to each point because there has been much information that is brilliant. We could speak about this for hours and all the information has almost given me a headache. There is one point that has been mentioned a few times and it relates to consultation. It is one type of participation but this cannot just be about consultation. According to my research, many different authors and academics have stated that typical formal consultation does not work. Submissions may not be taken into account with a final decision and there is also the question of when consultation happens. Does it happen when all the options are closed and if so, how efficient can that be? There is the question of timing in participation.

I can give a brief example. Last year the national adaptation framework was published in January and it marked the first step in a process of building national adaptation for different sectors and local authorities. It was put out for consultation in September 2017 and there were 27 or 28 submissions. It was not a very high number. The submissions are available online and only four were submitted by private individuals not representing an organisation or State agency. This demonstrates a problem. Is the general public just not interested in those policies or is there a lack of communication in advertising those formal consultation processes? It is something we must be aware of and we probably need to go a step further than just consultation. It would amount to considerable responsibility for local authorities but this needs to happen at a local level.

Mr. Pádraig Flattery: I do not share the opinion of the member who said there is no need to panic and we have enough time. There is certainly a need to panic as we are missing our targets for 2020 and we are set up to miss the 2030 targets. If by 2050 we are to be carbon-neutral or reduce our emissions by 80% or 100%, we are not on track to do it, even if we implement many of the recommendations of the report.

To focus on agriculture, my research was on soils and soil carbon in Ireland, taking into account the effect of extreme weather on those soils. Our natural grasslands are carbon sinks because they are grazed by cattle and they provide minerals for the soil. Those soils are carbon sinks in the same way that our untouched peatlands are. There are 7 million cows in Ireland producing methane. I do not understand how we square getting to carbon neutrality by 2050

with retaining that number of cows. We need also to recognise the benefit the cows have to the soil. These are complex issues and communicating their complexity is very important, especially if we do not want an “us versus them” strategy coming out. Farmers are certainly looking after their land to the best of their ability as they want to pass it on to future generations. Focusing on the complexities of the issue is important but so is recognising the limitations of our current actions.

Co-Chairman Deputy Hildegard Naughton: Mr. Flattery came in very concisely in addressing our key concerns. We would love to engage with him further through our committee and would welcome any evidence-based information he has. It is all about evidence-based policy now and Mr. Flattery has some great ideas around carbon pricing and all of that, which we need to be listening to. We need help with this as well. I will pass over to my colleague, Deputy Ó Caoláin, who is Chairman of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality.

Migration

Co-Chairman Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I join my colleagues in extending a fáilte to the witnesses. I especially welcome the three speakers for this section, Ms Sara Thompson from UCD, Ms Laura Bartley from DCU and Ms Maeve Richardson from UCC. It has been a very interesting and illuminating morning for the members listening to all of the witnesses' contributions. I also welcome the presence of an ever-depleting number of my colleagues from the Dáil and Seanad. Such is the draw on all our time here in the Houses. I represent two Ulster counties, Cavan and Monaghan, and have been Chairman of the Joint Committee on Justice and Equality since 2016.

Migration is the final topic of today's session marking Europe Day 2019. This is a very important topic, especially on this day, for as Europeans we have known the reality of migration, most often forced migration due to war, conflict, famine, disease and escape from poverty across the centuries. It is beyond dispute that the people of Ireland have known migration and its causes like few others across the Continent. This generational awareness, experience and knowledge should contribute to our being a truly welcoming people, giving truth to the claim that this is an Ireland of the welcomes. Sadly, of course, this is not always the case.

While we have some time issues, there will be no restriction in respect of the three speakers. If I have to restrict anybody it will be my colleague, Senator Devine. I call on Ms Thompson to address us.

Ms Sara Thompson: I thank the members for having me here today. I will present some facts and numbers and some challenges that the EU is facing in respect of migration. The 2015 migration crisis became a starting point to a wider debate on migration in the European Union but also on burden sharing and the member states' responsibilities. The lack of joint action between the member states has shown that in 2015 the EU was unprepared to handle this issue, which resulted in disorderly migration, human trafficking and tragedy. In respect of the numbers, 2.5 million immigrants entered the EU from non-EU countries in 2017; and 4.4% of people living in the EU on 1 January 2018 were non-EU citizens, which is 22 million people out of a total of 512 million. The European agency for human rights has pointed out that the number of irregular migrants crossing the borders dropped in 2017, when 200,000 people crossed the EU borders, in comparison to approximately 500,000 in 2016. The number of deaths at sea has also dropped; however, the emergency remains as the deaths are continuing, mainly in the

central Mediterranean.

Also concerning is the fact that migrants arriving within EU borders have been mistreated. This mistreatment worsened in 2017 with Bulgaria, Hungary and Croatia as the leading countries of migrant mistreatment. Another issue is the relocation of immigrants and the problem of overcrowding. This has been critical in numerous locations, especially in Greece, France and Italy. Providing adequate housing remains a challenge and the lack of co-operation between member states has a significant impact on how immigration is handled in the EU. The European Council established a temporary relocation scheme with a plan to relocate 160,000 people in need. This was not accomplished due to lack of co-operation from the member states. President Antonio Tajani has stated that migration is our biggest challenge and that it is putting at risk the very future of the European Union. As a result of intense migration within the EU in recent years, EU internal borders have been subject to additional border controls, which is putting the free movement of EU citizens at risk. There is a need for better co-operation between member states with regard to border management as the migration crisis has put major pressure on the member states' border authorities. The European institutions responded with a call for strengthening the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, however this remains a work in progress, with a plan of giving the agency a standing corps of 10,000 border guards by 2027, which is a bit far away. A Eurobarometer survey has reported that 73% of European citizens want the EU to do more on the issue of migration and 58% described EU action on migration as inadequate. There is a need to do more on the part of both member states and the EU as a whole. Reaching agreement on migrant issues has been a challenge for the European Union. It is a sensitive issue and member states have different views and policies on migration, making it difficult to negotiate co-ordinated common positions. The migration crisis in 2015 showed that the EU was not prepared to handle a humanitarian crisis. Plans to relocate migrants, strengthen the borders, integrate refugees and much more are still a work in progress.

Member states and their representatives have to become aware of the next upcoming crisis, which is climate displacement. This crisis is not spoken about or understood by many. It is not defined or backed by international law. It is true that civil war and unrest in Syria, Libya and the Middle East are reasons for the migrant crisis but there are deeper reasons for current migration from these places. These areas are experiencing rainfall patterns, unbearably high temperatures, floods, droughts and all sorts of natural disasters which lead to major changes in farming, fishing and herding, causing migration from these areas to more developed ones. Reports on climate displacement presented by the EU are often very generalised and do not provide clear solutions to the problem. Following the 2015 migration crisis, it is clear that member states are not united with regard to burden sharing and this has to be addressed in order to prepare Europe and help those in need.

I will present a couple of recommendations made by the Mary Robinson Foundation on Climate Justice in its 2016 position paper. Above EU national level, the rights of climate displaced people have to be respected in the same way as human rights in general. The burdens in respect of dealing with climate migration have to be addressed together as a Union. There is a need for engagement with already displaced people but also with those who are vulnerable to climate displacement, in order to protect the rights of people who are at risk of climate displacement. The most important action the countries can take is to reduce the impact of climate change at all costs. This will reduce the threats in areas at risk.

Ms Laura Bartley: I thank the committee for the invitation to address it. As a younger citizen, I am particularly grateful for this opportunity to engage on such a timely policy issue. My

knowledge is based on my European-funded research at Dublin City University, the University of Glasgow and Charles University, Prague. My research focuses on migration to Europe, specifically the power of the media and policy makers to shape public opinion. My current research examines the ways in which migration has been constructed as a threat and questions the dominance of this threat-centric approach.

It is without doubt that international migration and issues surrounding migrants, refugees and asylum seekers can be seen as defining characteristics of the 21st century in an era of globalisation. In the context of conflict and growing inequalities, the IOM's 2018 report estimates that there are 258 million international migrants globally. Ireland's strong cultural memory and historic trend to emigration mean that we are acutely aware of the realities of migration and displacement. Yet more recently, Ireland has experienced increased inward migration and has become an increasingly diverse society with the 2016 census indicating that the 535,000 non-Irish nationals living in Ireland originate from 200 different nations. Such figures illustrate the increased diversity and prompt the need to examine political and societal attitudes to immigrants, and explore different ways to support integration and social cohesion within Irish and European society.

The first challenge I will address relates to the power of language and narrative. Migration has remained one of the most divisive issues for the public in recent years and this is reflected in the polarised narratives and language which frame discussions. Past decades have seen a language shift from emigrant and immigrant to the use of the word "migrant" which has effect of de-contextualising the experience of these people by removing their home location and their destination. There is also selectivity in respect of those to whom we apply these terms which often indicates a hierarchy of worthiness, suggesting that we have "good" versus "bad" migrants.

The language we use matters. It has power to reinforce negative stereotypes and racial hierarchies which permeate to every level of society. As such we must recognise and challenge harmful, polarising language and myths regarding migration. We must refrain from using terms such as "illegal migrant" in any forum of discussion and instead use "irregular" or "undocumented". We must commit to increased engagement in order to confront the myths of migration at local, national and EU levels.

There is a need to engage in difficult discussions regarding migration for policy makers, journalists and activists to maintain credibility. We must create a space where communication of the perceived and actual challenges of migration is possible, but not in a way which stigmatises or alienates communities. The creation of action plans and strategies by Government and local authorities, such as the migrant integration strategy or even the UN migration pact convey effective messages which are honest, fair and accessible.

The second challenge I wish to address is promoting integration in communities. There is increasing recognition of the inherent potential of diverse society. There is also an awareness of the difficulties associated with integration policies and programmes. The dilemma often relates to how to prioritise integration without fuelling unfairness among certain groups that feel left behind. Research has shown that encounters with the reality of migration foster a more tolerant mindset within host communities, which needs to be looked at further.

In discussions on the topic of integration, it is often said that the process is a two-way street involving the host community and the newcomer. However, we need to move away from this binary give-and-take view of integration, as it does not always capture the complex, multifac-

eted and dynamic process which involves a network of actors and interactions. As such we must disrupt the preconceptions that contribute to a gap between the expectation and reality of migration. We must do this through promoting intercultural competency and integration programmes, such as arts and language acquisition, for all members of society. We must aim to equip all citizens with the education to gain empathy and perspective-taking skills.

We must view the integration process in the context of the whole of society and facilitate the undoing of notion of “us” versus “them”. We must broaden the view of immigration beyond simply contributing to GDP or market growth. It is not just about financially benefiting from migration, but about the overall health of our societies over the next generation. In addition we need to carry out further research into attitudes towards diversity and integration within Irish and European society, such as the recent ERSI study.

With the immense challenges facing European and Irish society, such as changing demographics, political fragmentation, labour market changes and the pace of political and social changes, we need to have broader perspectives on the challenges we are facing and also an ambitious vision of what our future communities may look like.

We should not think of integration as an endpoint, but to understand it as an ongoing, inclusive process which provides opportunities and builds resilience in communities to confront the growing range of future challenges, not just in respect of migration.

I look forward to hearing the committee’s views.

Ms Maeve Richardson: I echo my colleague’s views on migration. I am honoured to be addressing the committee today. I am a BSc student in University College Cork in the second year of my undergraduate studies. Appropriately we are speaking on Europe Day about a month before the European Parliament elections. Given the changes in the political climate, it is now more important than ever to use the ballot box to have our voices heard in Europe.

The Treaty of Rome established the freedom of movement in respect of goods, services, capital and, what seems to be getting most attention lately, the movement of people, as we have seen from our colleagues in the European Union. Migration has many different definitions and comes in many types, including economic migrants, refugees and ex-pats. The perception of migration is intriguing as to whether it is harmful or positive, and what are its economic effects and difficulties. Many people see the advantages of labour gaps being filled and society becoming more diverse. We also see the negativity that jobs are being take away by members of the migrant community or that there is a social pressure on civic services along with an increase in racism and discrimination.

The cross-national Role of European Mobility and its Impacts in Narratives, Debates and EU Reforms, REMINDER, study shows that more than half of EU citizens regard the freedom of movement as positive for Europe despite an increase in support for far-right parties which has the effect of making mainstream parties take tougher stances on immigration. European countries tend to view the effects of migrants in two ways - cultural and economic. More recently we are starting to think about safety and terrorism. The REMINDER study took place across seven countries in western Europe. Apart from the UK, most countries showed more than 50% in favour of the freedom of movement. These viewed most immigrants to western European as beneficial and not an economic or cultural threat. Africans were viewed as most threatening to the economy while Middle Eastern migrants were considered the most threatening to safety and culture. This has been as a result of the image of migrants portrayed in our media.

Europeans perceive that migrants from outside Europe make up 16.7% of the EU population. The reality is that it is about 4.4% as of January 2018. The representation of migrants in the media has had a profound effect on how we view our migrants. The media provide both a human face in the form of refugees but also a mild terror attack in the form of big news headlines which terrify us.

Migration is an important topic for us all. It has been shown to be a top priority for countries in the southern coastal part of Europe, namely in Croatia, Italy and Greece. It is not so much of an issue in Ireland and is not a voter priority. This is mainly due to the fact in the late 2010s it is shown that the majority of non-EU migrants arrive by sea.

Our landscape is changing through climate change and we need to become proactive rather than reactive if we are to prepare for another migrant crisis such as we saw in 2015. We need to make sure that with coming of an EU army we are not creating a fortress Europe but rather creating a Europe that is open to all and not just Europeans.

Co-Chairman Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I thank our three contributors. I am getting numerous messages that we have very little time. I ask the two remaining colleagues to just take one minute for the most succinct responses. Lunch or something is beckoning.

Senator Máire Devine: I thank the witnesses for their very interesting contributions. This is not my area of expertise. The Seanad has a public consultation committee. In the autumn I plan on opening a conversation by inviting representatives from the direct provision system, which is a shame and stain on our country. I would like to invite the three witnesses present to come to talk about migration and how people get to that point of desperation. We are displaying inhumanity to people who need embracing, care and love, and a shelter from the horrific circumstances they left behind.

The witnesses talked about climate displacement - which could have been appropriate to the previous speakers - the greed of the developed world and our destructive impact on those less fortunate. Our objective in having a public consultation in the autumn will be to challenge perceptions in this country and reach out to the 40% of people who feel afraid of and unsure about migration. It is about getting the media to respond and to counteract some of the hysterical and hateful headlines we have seen. The witnesses noted that voters in several European countries have elected more delegates from right-wing, fortress Europe parties. My colleague, Senator Gavan, was in Hungary recently and may speak about what he saw there. I will be happy to extend an invitation to the witnesses, who have made an excellent contribution to this debate, to attend the public consultation later this year.

Senator Paul Gavan: I congratulate all the speakers on their contributions and apologise for having to leave a few times to attend other meetings. We have had very impressive contributions from all the witnesses. As part of my work as a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, I have witnessed teenagers the same age as my own children being kept in cages, for more than six months in one case. That is what is happening in parts of Europe to migrant children. The witnesses have played their part today in seeking to break the shameful silence around this issue. I am interested in the witnesses' views on the EU's deal on migration with Turkey, which is deemed a third country of safe origin. It is no such thing but is, in fact, a dictatorship in which horrendous human rights abuses are taking place. It suits the EU to do that deal, however, because it keeps people out and there is apparently little interest in how migrants are being treated in Turkey. It is an appalling human rights situation and the EU is utterly complicit in it. It is a situation that must be ended. I thank all the speakers for their

contributions.

Ms Maeve Richardson: I am delighted there will be a public consultation in the Seanad on direct provision, a system which brings shame to our country. However, compared with countries like Hungary and Turkey, there are ways in which we can seek to integrate people into our society as much as possible. We have seen great projects, for example, from Scouting Ireland and the Irish Second-Level Students Union. However, if we remain silent on what is happening in other countries, what is the point of any such efforts? We should be taking the lead by saying we will not stand for this. We are a Europe of peace but there is no point if we are not working to keep the peace between people internally in our member countries.

Ms Laura Bartley: I echo what Ms Richardson said about direct provision, which will be 20 years in operation next year. It is timely, therefore, to have a public consultation on the issue. I agree that the EU seems to be outsourcing many of our problems with migration to a neighbourhood comprising Libya, Morocco and Turkey. There needs to be a re-engagement across European society on the values we are meant to uphold, such as strength in diversity. The actions being taken in the EU at a high political level do not reflect those principles. Likewise in Ireland, the refugee programme has reached only half its quota. We need to reflect on our claim to be the island of céad míle fáilte. A public consultation will be very helpful in that regard.

Ms Sara Thompson: On the EU agreement with Turkey, it is a question of whatever is suitable for Europe. On burden sharing, as long as countries do not take responsibility for that at European level, nothing will change. As it stands, burden sharing is voluntary. We must push at European level to make such commitments binding and ensure we take responsibility for the care of migrants. In the context of climate displacement, we in Europe are the lucky ones who are safe for now, but we must take responsibility for the damage we are doing to the planet and to the people who will be displaced by climate change.

Co-Chairman Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I thank the witnesses for their contributions, the main points of which I will briefly recap. Ms Thompson clearly linked increased migration with the climate crisis, especially as it affects less developed and impoverished parts of the globe. Ms Bartley spoke about the importance of language and how “illegal migrant” is an inappropriate and stigmatising term and one we should not use. I thank her for that strong message. She spoke, too, about how an “us and them” outlook is blinkered and serves to feed prejudice and racism. Ms Richardson noted that the free movement of people is one of the key principles of the European Union and, like her colleague, linked migration to the importance of addressing the climate crisis.

In the absence of my Co-Chairman, Deputy Michael Healy-Rae, it falls to me to draw the meeting to a close. The witnesses have distinguished themselves and their respective colleges and organisations. It is a great pleasure for us as Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas to welcome young, focused and enthusiastic voices from across the length and breadth of the island of Ireland. That has been an important feature of today’s discussion. I especially welcome the fellow voices from Ulster, which makes me feel at home. Every time I cross the Boyne Valley Bridge, I let out a small cheer that I am heading there again. I thank colleagues for their part in marking Europe Day so well as we have done. I hope it will be the first of many years of interesting engagement between ourselves and witnesses like those we have heard from today.

The joint committee adjourned at 1.10 p.m. *sine die*.