

DÁIL ÉIREANN

AN COMHCHOISTE UM GHNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA AGUS TRÁDÁIL, AGUS COSAIN

JOINT COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE, AND DEFENCE

Déardaoin, 29 Samhain 2018

Thursday, 29 November 2018

The Joint Committee met at 9 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Deputy Seán Barrett,	Senator Ivana Bacik,
Deputy Niall Collins,	Senator Mark Daly.
Deputy Seán Crowe,	
Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan,	

DEPUTY BRENDAN SMITH IN THE CHAIR.

Returning Irish Emigrants: Discussion

Chairman: I ask members, delegates and those in the Visitors Gallery to ensure their mobile phones are switched off completely for the duration of the meeting as they cause interference, even when left in silent mode, with the broadcasting and recording equipment in the committee room. The meeting is being broadcast live on Oireachtas TV and across the various media platforms.

I remind members of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the Houses or an official, either 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 the evidence they are to give to the joint committee. If they are directed by the Chair 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 are 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 welcome the witnesses, Ms Danielle McLaughlin of Crosscare, Ms Karen McHugh and Ms Orlagh McHugh of Safe Home Ireland, and Ms Ciara Kirrane of the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas. The purpose of the meeting is to examine and hear witness testimony on the many and varying barriers and challenges to those wishing to return to Ireland from overseas. While the matters under consideration concern a wide range of Departments and agencies, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade commissioned a report from Indecon research economists on the challenges facing returning Irish emigrants, with the intention of identifying measures to alleviate those challenges. Along with the Minister of State, Deputy Cannon, who is chair of the cross-departmental group examining these issues, the committee looks forward to hearing the witnesses' presentations on the progress made to date and on what is still required to deal with these important issues.

I invite Ms McLaughlin to make her opening statement.

Ms Danielle McLaughlin: For those who are not familiar with Crosscare Migrant Project, we are funded by the emigrant support programme in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and provide an information and advocacy service that supports Irish citizens who are leaving and returning home.

More than 105,000 Irish emigrants have returned home since 2014 and various barriers have been identified to their transition. We have practical experience and evidential research that document some of these. In May, we published a report entitled *A Hundred Thousand Welcomes?*, outlining the issues with access to social protection for returning emigrants, while in March we made a submission to the Department of Justice and Equality on access to residency permission for returning Irish emigrant families with non-EEA members. Our presentation concerns these two key areas. I will discuss access to social protection and my colleague, Richard King, will discuss residency permission for non-EU family members.

One of the main barriers we have identified for returning emigrants who are in vulnerable situations is the issue of access to social protection for those who need assistance and support

on return. Central to this is the habitual residence condition, HRC, which is one of the biggest concerns for returning emigrants. Our service provides an information and advocacy service to enable people emigrating and returning, especially individuals in vulnerable circumstances, to make informed choices and access their rights.

Following several years of issues with the HRC, we successfully advocated for changes to the HRC guidelines which adopted specific recognition of returning migrants in 2010. The situation improved markedly for more than eight years but a decade later, it is evident that these issues with the HRC are adversely affecting people returning to live in Ireland today. Over the past few years, we have noted a growing trend for some returning emigrants who have been denied access to social welfare payments in Ireland. Most of these cases were refused based on HRC, where returning emigrants are assessed on their evidence of resuming their residence in Ireland.

Our report *A Hundred Thousand Welcomes?* outlines the need to address the inconsistencies in decision-making and the comprehension of the HRC by returned emigrants, with the help of the recommendations to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection. These recommendations are outlined in the document circulated to the members for this meeting.

In the majority of the cases we deal with, the individuals experience very vulnerable situations such as homelessness or risk of homelessness, with no income or support networks. In addition, some have children or further health and social care support needs. In 2017, we dealt with 280 queries and worked directly on 18 cases of HRC-based disallowed claims. We submitted 12 cases to the social welfare appeals office and every case was successfully overturned. Two thirds of these cases came from dual citizens who were either born in Ireland to non-Irish parents or who naturalised as adults, some of whom were forced to return in crisis from conflict zones such as Libya and Sudan on the advice of Irish consular authorities. Cases took from between five and nine months on average, and these long delays and stress had a significant adverse impact on the welfare of these individuals and families.

Respondents to our online survey told us they felt the process was intimidating, demeaning, humiliating and that they were made to feel guilty. Irish emigrant support organisations abroad expressed the misconceptions among Irish emigrants about their rights and entitlements. They perceive the lack of information and misconceptions in regard to HRC to actively deter emigrants from returning to Ireland on the presumption that they may not be able to access a safety net of income while they are re-establishing employment in Ireland.

I hand over to Mr. Richard King to continue the Crosscare presentation.

Mr. Richard King: I will cover the issue of Irish emigrants returning home with non-EEA family members, which we have seen much of over the past number of years. The majority of people we have surveyed state the reason they returned to Ireland was to be closer to family and support networks rather than other factors such as career or quality of life. Many had left Ireland after college in their 20s and 30s, met partners, started families, and now wish to return to Ireland to be close to their family and possibly raise their children in Ireland. Naturally, many of them are Irish citizens with non-EEA spouses, partners and dependants. These people will be required to apply for residency permission to live and work in Ireland, a process we have noted is difficult and, to some extent, a deterrent for some people wishing to return.

As an overview, people from visa-required countries such as India must undergo a visa process which takes approximately six months, whereas people from non-visa-required coun-

tries such as Australia can enter immediately. Spouses and civil partners can usually register immediately on arrival and are granted permission to live and work or be self-employed. We note that issues arise mainly for *de facto* partners as they must make an application to the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, INIS, on arrival, which takes at least six months. The big issue is that during this period they cannot work. This causes significant problems, especially for people who are reliant on the income of both partners or on the income of the non-EU family member, and is increasingly stated as a barrier to returning. In some cases, people have informed us they will not return at all until the barrier is removed.

Two comments from people who contacted us directly give a sense of the issue. One person hoping to return from New Zealand said she was not going to take the risk and would just wait until there is a pre-clearance system. A pregnant woman who planned to return from Australia, hoping to come home to give birth, said she and her partner did not have the savings to allow neither of them work for six months. They are simple, practical concerns that cause real worry which, in some cases, are a strong impediment to returning to Ireland.

The solutions, however, are quite simple. In the immediate term, a system of interim registration permission should be set up to allow people to work. They would make their application on their return and while they might have to wait six months, during that time they would be given permission to work. This system already exists for partners of EU citizens moving to Ireland. It is an unusual situation, therefore, because a partner of an Irish citizen cannot access something that a partner of an EU citizen can. Furthermore, the INIS needs to develop something specific to provide clear pathways for returning emigrants, such as information on application processes, because there is a great deal of misinformation and misunderstanding. We appreciate, however, that it is not simple to develop a complex pre-clearance system and it could take a number of years, but in the long run people would be extremely happy with it. Even if the pre-clearance process took some time, it would allow returning emigrants adequately prepare and have some security on their return.

In conclusion, Crosscare's recommendations on both issues seek to provide security for emigrants to resettle in Ireland without significant financial or emotional risk. This will help to ensure that Irish emigrants are not deterred from returning to Ireland if they wish to do so, allow them benefit from a life close to family and friends and, where relevant, raise their children in Ireland. These recommendations are also included in the document circulated to members.

I thank the committee for its interest in matters affecting returning emigrants. We ask that the members consider the issues raised and support the recommendations to ensure that returning emigrants are not placed at a disadvantage solely due to the fact they have lived abroad.

Chairman: I thank Ms McLaughlin and Mr. King. I invite Ms Karen McHugh to make her opening statement.

Ms Karen McHugh: I thank the committee for affording us the opportunity to present to it. I will highlight some of the key barriers and challenges facing returning emigrants. As time is limited and we are one of three groups, I will just focus on three key issues.

For those committee members who are not familiar with our work, Safe Home Ireland is a County Mayo-based, not-for-profit, national organisation with a global remit. We were set up in 2000 to facilitate the desire for elderly Irish emigrants abroad to return to live in their native areas. Over the years, the organisation has evolved from simply providing housing options to older Irish-born emigrants. We now provide a range of other services, including information,

advice, guidance and advocacy to all emigrants abroad, as well as outreach and advocacy support to those who return home regardless of age, circumstances or geographical location on return. Safe Home Ireland is staffed by a CEO, a co-ordinator and two outreach officers. Our head office is in Mulranny, County Mayo, and our outreach offices are located in Kerry and Galway. We are core funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade under the emigrant support programme.

The three areas that we wish to present on fall broadly under the three headings of housing, health and welfare. Regarding housing, Safe Home Ireland was responsible for the amendment to the capital assistance scheme in 2001 to enable accommodation to be provided under the scheme by voluntary housing bodies for elderly emigrants returning to reside in the State. This involves Safe Home Ireland assessing qualifying applicants while still living abroad. To date, Safe Home Ireland has supported more than 2,020 people who have secured accommodation and returned from all corners of the globe to all 26 counties.

In recent years, this process has become more complex, with voluntary housing bodies insisting that our applicants must be assessed by the relevant local authority to be considered for housing rather than accepting direct referrals, which was customary. While we know that the current housing crisis affects all citizens, we are finding it increasingly difficult to secure housing for our applicants and many are not able to return under our scheme. This is particularly applicable to those returning to cities and towns. Traditionally, if there was a delay in our securing suitable housing, some of our applicants would consider returning to housing in the private rented sector. Obviously, this is not possible now due to the lack of available housing assistance payment, HAP, properties countrywide. Sadly, the avenues open to older Irish emigrants seeking to return to their homeland under our programme are becoming restricted.

This brings me to our second point, which relates to people returning home in crisis situations, in whose numbers we have noticed a considerable increase in recent years. This can include those forced to return as a result of deportation; undocumented people returning on health grounds because they do not have private health insurance in the US; people exiting prison, which Ms Kirrane from the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas, ICPO, will cover; those returning from conflict zones, in whose respect Crosscare has done considerable work; and those being repatriated with the assistance of consular services.

There are particular difficulties for people accessing emergency housing services and supports through every local authority. Homeless services are oversubscribed in urban areas and access to emergency accommodation and supports in more rural counties is non-existent. Coupled with the fact that many returnees cannot always demonstrate a “connection” to the areas they arrive in and do not have the funds or resources to relocate to an area where they are deemed to have a local connection, these issues can exacerbate what is for some already a crisis situation, for example, family breakdown, survivors of institutional abuse or ex-prisoners. We recommend that returning emigrants be recognised as a distinct group in homeless service provision and not be forced to return to their local areas if there are negative reasons for them not to do so.

Regarding welfare, accessing social protection supports has become more complex and challenging for returning emigrants, particularly those who are vulnerable and returning in crisis situations. The introduction of online procedures to secure appointments for PPS numbers and the public services card is posing hardship for many returnees who are not computer literate or aware of the new procedures. Our outreach and support service operates throughout the Twenty-six Counties and we have noted that, in many areas, it not possible to make a telephone

appointment to apply for a PPS number or a public services card, which leads to delays in securing employment, accessing social protection supports and medical cards, etc.

We appreciate the move to online processes for the streamlining of applications, but there are some people who are not computer literate and we firmly believe that a telephone system should continue to operate, both for those at home and those returning. Where vulnerable people have support, the online systems may not be so daunting, but our concern is for those who are trying to operate the system and doing so alone.

We are also concerned with the delays in the initial assessment for carer's allowance and disability allowance, which can take up to six months. Should an application be denied, the appeals process is equally as lengthy. This leaves returnees, many of whom do not have family support, in hardship. The Safe Home Ireland outreach service is available to anyone who has moved or returned to Ireland regardless of age or circumstance. In carrying out this work, we have been contacted by returned emigrants who, having returned home under their own steam, have found themselves in crisis situations and going through the welfare appeals process. The primary reason for appeals in these circumstances is because applicants were not made aware by Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection staff of the habitual residence condition, HRC, and, therefore, had failed to provide the correct supporting documentation at the time of their initial applications or reviews. Once in the appeals process, people can only access an emergency needs payment via the supplementary welfare allowance, which is a one-off payment for those subject to an appeals process that can take months. The only other safety net available to them is the Society of St. Vincent de Paul's food parcels and vouchers, which are a lifeline for many people.

I wish to refer to a case study that remains outstanding. One of our outreach officers has been supporting an Irish-born citizen who returned to Ireland to care for his 87 year old uncle. The client in question had returned home independently and contacted us once his claim for carer's allowance had been referred to an appeals process. On return to Ireland, he engaged with the Department for four months before it sent out a HRC form. He was turned down for carer's allowance, as he was not considered habitually resident in the State. An appeal was submitted in mid-July 2018 and he had a successful outcome last week, which was five months later. On receipt of the award letter, our client rang the carer's allowance section and, after being on hold for 20 minutes, was told that his claim had been approved but that the award of the payment would not be processed for at least another month. He was told that the Department was processing by date and was only up to 10 October at that point. With the Christmas holiday season, it is unlikely that his payment will be made before January 2019. Our client was advised that he could apply for a supplementary welfare allowance weekly payment via the Department's local representatives, formerly known as community welfare officers, CWOs, in the interim. He is not happy to do that, as his experience since these problems started 12 months ago has been negative. He has saved the State a minimum of €52,000 by returning home to care for his elderly uncle.

We recommend additional training for the Department's front-line staff in providing guidance on the HRC to applicants at initial application and local review stages. This would not only assist applicants in vulnerable circumstances, but would save time and resources at departmental level by preventing unnecessary and lengthy appeals.

In terms of health, returning to nursing home care in Ireland is a preference for some Irish who currently live in nursing care abroad. However, the application process is extremely complicated and individuals and families are not clear that they or their relatives can apply from

abroad. In recent years, we have been contacted by individuals abroad, as well as families in Ireland who are taking their loved ones home to live for the remainder of their short lives. The numbers applying from abroad are relatively small, but the difference that this can make to someone's life is enormous. We are advocating that people should be afforded the opportunity to return home in dignity to live the remainder of their short lives in Ireland.

In recent times, we have been directly involved in the cases of three interested parties and applicants who contacted us to assist in their nursing home application processes. Sadly, due to the lengthy and bureaucratic system, all three applicants died before realising their dream of returning home to live in Ireland.

We are concerned that some of the nursing home support offices are not aware that non-resident applications can be made at all. Also, in terms of backup documentation, there is a variation in what the regional nursing home support offices will accept. It can often transpire that what is technically available on paper at HSE level does not pan out when someone goes to make an actual application. It is our suggestion that more extensive training should be provided to relevant HSE staff at a national and regional level to improve their understanding of the non-resident nursing home application process. This will ensure that they can fully brief agencies, families and individuals who may be making direct contact from abroad about the feasibility of such an application. Equally, we recommend that a separate information factsheet should be made available on the HSE website and that it be accessible to the Irish abroad.

We welcome the publication in February 2018 of the independently commissioned economic report by Indecon consultants entitled Addressing challenges Faced by Returning Irish Emigrants. This report, which was commissioned by the Minister of State, Deputy Cannon, outlines in detail the challenges and barriers that many people face on return. It also makes a number of important recommendations to identify solutions. We note that progress has been made on some of the recommendations and look forward with anticipation to an update from the Minister of State.

We believe strongly that emigration is good for Ireland. We also strongly advocate that the various Departments and other external bodies named in the Indecon report and our presentation, work together to ensure that the current barriers are lifted so that Ireland can benefit from the citizens it exported during difficult economic and social times. I thank the committee for giving us this opportunity to present. Most of the challenges we have addressed, with our colleagues, are already well documented and are in the Indecon report to which I referred. We would like an update on the progress made to date on those 30 recommendations contained in the report published in February 2018. To resolve the challenges and barriers, we suggest that a broader multidepartmental approach is required. We know an interdepartmental committee on the Irish abroad was a recommendation on the Irish globally, as contained in Ireland's 2015 diaspora policy. We would welcome up-to-date feedback on the work of this committee.

I have not had the chance to talk about this today but we would also like clarification on issues resulting from Brexit that will affect returned and returning emigrants. I am referring in particular to EU entitlements for some social protection payments and entitlements to healthcare, such as medical card provision under EU regulations, etc.

Chairman: I thank Ms McHugh. I call Ms Kirrane.

Ms Ciara Kirrane: I thank the committee for the opportunity to discuss the barriers and challenges facing returning Irish emigrants. I will focus on the challenges facing a particular

cohort of this group, those Irish people returning from prison overseas. Often invisible, these people are one of the most marginalised and vulnerable groups of Irish emigrants. They face significant difficulties in prison overseas, including discrimination, language barriers, isolation and dealing with an unfamiliar legal system. In some countries prison conditions are a major cause of concern and prisoners may, in some cases, experience extreme hardship, with limited access to food, water and medical treatment.

The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas, ICPO, works to reduce the burden faced by these prisoners and their families. Established by the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference in 1985, we provide information and support to approximately 1,100 Irish citizens in up to 30 different countries. An essential part of our work also involves supporting the families of prisoners overseas, who face significant additional pressures when a loved one is imprisoned abroad. The exact number of Irish citizens returning to Ireland each year, after having served a sentence abroad, is unknown but is estimated to be fewer than 100.

Irish prisoners overseas do not have the same opportunities to prepare for release and to access post-release supports as those serving sentences in Irish prisons. They may be incarcerated in a country that does not provide these services or training courses to foreign national prisoners, or they may be unable to access these services as they are to be deported, leaving them largely unprepared for release and return to Ireland. The Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas seeks to bridge this gap, where possible, by providing advice and information to prisoners in advance of their release and in assisting them to access the services of organisations such as those present today.

Returning prisoners face many similar challenges to other returning migrants. They may, however, be more likely to return to Ireland with little documentation or evidence of previous addresses, due to not having lived in the country for many years or as a result of the crisis nature of their return to Ireland. This makes it particularly difficult to meet the requirements of housing authorities and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection in seeking to access accommodation and social welfare. Demonstrating that they fulfil the habitual residence condition, HRC, can also be an obstacle for former prisoners, as can accessing a personal public service number, PPSN, for older former prisoners who have not lived in the country for decades. Given the relatively small number of former prisoners seeking to return each year and the challenging circumstances they face, we recommend allowances be made for the relevant forms and assessments to be commenced and-or completed prior to their return to Ireland.

Many former prisoners experience significant mental and physical health problems associated with their imprisonment overseas. Seeing a doctor on their release is critical. Many, however, will not have the resources to access medical care privately on their return. To apply for a medical card, they must first have a PPSN. As medical card eligibility is based on an assessment of means, they must also apply for social welfare before they can then apply for a medical card. This means they cannot get immediate medical treatment on arrival in Ireland. We believe measures should be put in place to allow Irish prisoners overseas apply for a medical card before arrival in Ireland, similar to the arrangements in place for prisoners in Irish prisons who can receive their medical card on release from prison.

Emigrants returning to Ireland as a result of deportation present their own challenges. We have provided support to a small number of immigration detainees in the United States and Australia, both before and following their deportation to Ireland. In some cases the person has not lived in Ireland for many years and has no family or support structures here. There is something very stark about meeting a person in Dublin Airport who has just left a country, a

family and all that he or she is familiar with. He or she stands in Dublin Airport with just his or her deportation papers in his or her hand and the clothes he or she arrived in. That person will be returning to a country he or she might have left when he or she was just a few years old. Such returning emigrants require significant additional support in order to access appropriate services upon the return to Ireland.

The focus of this meeting is to look at the challenges and barriers facing returning Irish emigrants. I wish, however, to turn to an issue of concern to Irish prisoners overseas who want to return to Ireland but who cannot. The Council of Europe Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons came into force in 1985 and allows prisoners to be transferred to serve their sentence in their own country. At the heart of the convention is the recognition that being imprisoned in a foreign country places additional burdens on prisoners and their families and that reintegration is best served by being in a person's home country. Ireland ratified the convention on passing the Transfer of Sentenced Persons Act 1995. Since then we have transferred 154 Irish prisoners into the State. As three times that many prisoners have been transferred out of the State, financial and resource implications should not be a concern.

Two rulings by the Irish Supreme Court, in 2014 and 2016, resulted in all applications for inward transfers being put on hold. These rulings highlighted the problematic nature of the Transfer of Sentenced Persons Act 1995 and the difficulties in dealing with considerably different sentencing regimes in the UK and Ireland. No prisoner has been transferred into the State in two and a half years and some prisoners are waiting almost a decade for a decision on their application. The Minister for Justice and Equality, Deputy Flanagan, has recently reactivated all inward applications. In the absence of the necessary legislative change, however, a significant proportion of these applications will be refused.

In October, the Minister stated that draft heads of Bill to amend the Transfer of Sentenced Persons Act 1995 is currently being finalised. While this is welcome news, it is a concern that this legislation will struggle to compete for time in the Oireachtas among the many other competing and worthy Bills on the legislative programme. We recommend that legislation be introduced without delay and, once passed into law, that prisoners' applications be processed in a timely manner. Without this, prisoners and their families will continue to bear the burden of imprisonment overseas and opportunities for providing prisoners with the supports they need to successfully reintegrate into Irish society will be missed. I thank the Chair again for the opportunity to address the committee today and I am happy to take questions.

Chairman: I thank Ms Kirrane and her colleagues for their presentations on issues affecting people daily. In regard to Ms Kirrane's remarks, some members of this committee visited London during the summer. We met with different Irish groups and visited different Irish centres. Those were often centres where there have often not been high profile visits in the past. We were delighted to meet with so many people doing excellent work with Irish communities. I refer to centres that have built housing on a voluntary basis to provide housing for so many Irish emigrants. During that visit we also met with the Catholic chaplaincy in the Irish Centre in Camden. The priest there gave us a great outline of the issues that Ms Kirrane has also outlined so well and cogently here. They are issues that need to be dealt with. All of us come across on a constituency basis the cases outlined by Ms McHugh, Ms McLaughlin and Mr. King. Regarding the habitual residency requirement, I have come across cases throughout my constituency of Cavan-Monaghan of people who emigrated decades ago and have perhaps come home to care for an elderly parent. These people have given up their jobs, have set out home again to live in their home parish and have been denied social welfare payments for so long because of the

habitual residency requirement. It is very frustrating and annoying.

Another issue many members would raise with the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection concerns the delays in processing applications for different social welfare payments. The delay in approving and processing carer's allowance applications is totally unacceptable. I have put forward suggestions to the Minister and tabled parliamentary questions regarding the need to provide additional resources to those divisions in the Department that are stretched and where there are significant delays. In my constituency, officials from the Department do a very good job in straitened circumstances where they do not have adequate personnel to deal with the cases coming before them but that is not much good to the applicant who has no means and depends on the community welfare officer for assistance. If a person is not technology-friendly, he or she is disregarded by the State and State services. It is wrong that so many statutory agencies and other major corporations only transact business with a client or customer online. This is not acceptable because, unfortunately, there are people who do not have the skills or confidence to submit their applications through technology. Again, both statutory agencies and public utilities need people to answer the phone. It is utterly frustrating when people who often do not have the confidence to use technology are told to press "X", "Y" or "Z" button and yet end up talking to nobody. It is not acceptable. It is another form of bullying by major utilities and statutory agencies. I am glad the witnesses raised that point because it is extremely important and is typical of cases we come across on a daily basis.

I will bring in other members who have questions for the witnesses. We are very glad the witnesses are putting forward those issues and as a committee, we would be glad to pursue them with the various Government Departments on the witnesses' behalf. Other issues that have been brought to my attention regarding returning emigrants are the cost of car insurance, driver licences and the cost of health insurance.

Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan: It was really good to hear the witnesses' presentations to be reminded of issues that might have gone off our agenda for a while except perhaps particular cases with which we are all dealing. I could not agree more with the Chairman regarding the assumption that everybody is computer-literate and the frustration people feel when they make a phone call to be told press one for this and press two for something else and by the time they listen to the whole list, they have nearly forgotten what the particular ones were.

Regarding Safe Home Ireland, I always thought it was a really good system to bring back elderly Irish emigrants who probably emigrated at 14 or 15 years of age and probably spent their lives mainly in Great Britain. It is very sad to now hear that they are being affected by the housing crisis. The Indecon report is very comprehensive regarding what is done, what is to be done and what is in train. How confident are the witnesses that those issues will be progressed? If they had to identify the top one that would make the most significant difference, what one would they aim for?

Progressing temporary permission is common sense. Where is that at the moment? The committee can look at how it can support those but it certainly makes sense for that to be progressed. I have been involved with non-national migrants to Ireland. We have a lot of theory and argument about what should be happening and what is happening in theory but when we come to the reality, we see it is not happening. It sounds like this is happening in respect of Irish nationals who want to come home. There is a significant gap between what we say we are doing and what we are actually doing.

Regarding prisoners, again, we would have met the group previously and some of the chap-

lains when they were over here. What the witnesses have said has struck me yet we are continuing to extradite Irish and foreign prisoners to countries where we know conditions are horrendous. Some high-profile cases are going through the courts. Could the witnesses indicate where the delays are and what this committee can do to expedite the issues that are important for them? Nobody has been transferred here in two and half years. Even though the Minister has reactivated the inward applications, have the witnesses seen anyone coming back since the reactivation?

Chairman: Could we get quick responses? I have other members to bring in as well and the issues may cross over again.

Ms Karen McHugh: Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan asked whether we could identify one key issue. It is very difficult to do so. However, I would say that the one particular challenge that covers all aspects of the work we do and probably that of Crosscare and the ICP concerns administrative difficulties, issues, delays and processes. It covers everything - the habitual residence condition, nursing care, prisoner returns and visa issues. It is administrative. There is plenty more I could say. We have not covered issues relating to driver licences and motor insurance that were mentioned but we all have separate papers on those issues and if members so wish, we can provide those separately.

Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan: And they can be addressed.

Ms Karen McHugh: Yes. We have an A to Z on which all of us have done work relating to the 30 recommendations in the Indecon report. We would like a response on each of those recommendations. One concerns administrative matters but it would be pertinent for us to get some update. It will be nearly one year since the report was published so our one ask is for the committee to do that.

Chairman: Does Mr. King or Ms McLaughlin wish to come in regarding Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan’s questions?

Mr. Richard King: Yes. There was a question about the *de facto* visa. I echo what Ms McGrath said about the habitual residence condition and its administration. The misapplication of the habitual residence condition is a significant issue for us. We have made submissions to the immigration service regarding visas and have met with the head of policy and the policy team. They appreciate the issues but I do not see any progress on implementation. To accentuate the positives with the Department, it is a good system for spouses and partners and it is quick. It is the *de facto* permission that is the real barrier. The fact that a solution already exists for partners of EU citizens means that it is very frustrating that it cannot be duplicated. It seems to me to be a relatively simple thing to do given that the system already exists but I do not feel there is a will to push on that issue at the moment.

Ms Ciara Kirrane: In response to Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan, the main barrier to people who wish to serve the rest of their prison sentence here returning home is the fact that we do not have appropriate legislation. The Supreme Court has found the Transfer of Sentenced Persons Act to be problematic. A change to that Act is needed. We understand that draft heads of Bill have been finalised so it is really about getting that legislation through the Oireachtas as soon as possible. Nobody has been transferred to this State since 2016 but even leading up to that, something like 13 people in very small numbers - possibly one or two people in most years - were transferred five years prior to an official hold being put on applications. That is a real problem. If the legislation is introduced, we want to see an improvement and an increase in the

numbers being processed and accepted back to Ireland.

Deputy Niall Collins: I thank the witnesses for appearing before us this morning. I apologise for missing the very start of the meeting. I echo the Chairman's comments. I experienced issues similar to other public representatives involving people who have difficulty accessing our public services because there is a push all the time to push people on to online platforms and to get them to speak to the electronic voice at the end of the phone. It is very frustrating for some people. The witnesses are right in what they have said and Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan alluded to it also. It is something we must highlight to ensure proper provision is made for people who have for all sorts of challenges in accessing their public services because of that.

I have high-level question for each of the witnesses. How do they find coping with the demand for their services? Are their organisations properly resourced and can they manage the workload efficiently.

Chairman: We will have one reply from each of the groups. They should not refuse more money if they are getting an offer from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Ms Karen McHugh: It is certainly challenging. We have only two outreach workers covering the 26 counties. We visit all our UK applicants throughout the UK. We do information clinics throughout the UK. Our funds are stretched drastically. We can probably just about manage. I am the CEO of the organisation and I also do casework, which as a practice I like to do in any role I have had. However, it is not necessarily appropriate. Our co-ordinator who is an office-based worker also does outreach work and casework which is not their role either. We are trying to stretch ourselves as widely as possible.

We have home-based offices which are at no cost to the State. We have volunteers doing our very fancy publicity work, etc., because we do not have any budget for extras, equipment or anything like that. Ideally, if we had more resources we could provide a much wider service.

We currently can only work in the UK with applicants and visits. We would also like to be able to do that in the United States. We have noticed a significant increase, including some who are returning tomorrow, who are undocumented and cannot afford to live there and have to return to health grounds. Our resources are being stretched in all sorts of ways and we certainly could do more if we had more resources. We have obviously had an increase. I am sure it is Government policy to consider cuts every year. We are hopeful that will not affect any of the three organisations.

Chairman: Do the other organisations have a similar experience?

Mr. Richard King: One should never ask someone from an NGO if they need more money; they will always say "Yes". We are geographically limited in the sense that we are based in Dublin and many people come back to Dublin. We cope with the volume we have by restricting the work we do effectively. While we can deal with the work coming in, we see a shortfall in the side issues that we could deal with but cannot get to. Many organisations are supported by the emigrant support programme. They have considerable expertise and skills.

The three organisations represented here do a considerable amount of work together and we refer to each other. It would be extremely useful to have increased resources to allow us to be more outward looking and work with other organisations which we can do to some extent. We avoid duplicating work, but we rely heavily on other organisations. I will give one example. Crosscare is a very large organisation with more than 500 staff offering homeless and other

services. We have the benefit of our colleagues who do a lot of work and are linked with us. We would like to be able to provide more resources to them and to deal with everything that comes in.

Ms Ciara Kirrane: Our case is similar to that outlined by the previous two speakers. Our numbers are relatively stable. We do not see a significant fluctuation in the numbers of clients we see each year. More resources would mean we could do more with them. We could do more casework, more preparation for release and more post-release support which is very limited at the moment. Certainly more resources would have an impact. The vast majority of the people we work with are based in Britain. We have an office there. Members of the committee met them there in the Irish chaplaincy. They have a very heavy workload and more resources would enable us to share that workload better.

Deputy Seán Crowe: I welcome the witnesses. Does the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas have a breakdown by country for the Irish prisoners in jail abroad? I am familiar with the difficulties experienced by Irish prisoners in prisons in Britain, with people being moved around, ghosting and so on. Even when the legislation was there allowing people to be transferred home, the British Government was reluctant to do so at the time.

Ms Kirrane referred to the Supreme Court decision and the legislation going through. The committee might be able to do something on that, but it is down to Government time and so on. Are there particular parts of the world about which the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas would be more concerned about prisoners wanting to come home? Are there difficulties there? It is easier for people to travel within Europe, but more difficult in Latin America and the US. Is it down to agreements between governments outside the European Union?

She spoke about the conditions in jails, which has also come up in extradition cases in the courts. Do certain countries have particularly bad conditions even in the European sphere? I have visited jails in some of the Latin American countries. It is not only food; prisoners have to pay for their bed, security and water. The tap water cannot be drunk so people need bottled water which costs money. What is the role of Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas in that? Does it contact religious organisations that go to visit those Irish prisoners? Is there a website so that people visiting a particular country could visit an Irish prisoner? What can we do about the Supreme Court?

Ms Kirrane mentioned the slowdown in transfers. Was that on the Irish end or from the other countries? Reintegration works and families, particularly children, should not be made to suffer for the crimes of the individual family member. The conditions that children might have to go through to visit a parent or a loved one are appalling in some cases. Having them in prison at home makes it much easier.

Ms McHugh of Safe Home Ireland mentioned the phone calls. As a Deputy we have a direct line to the Departments, but it broke down on the medical card issue. I do not know if this was the experience of other Members. It was impossible to get through. As elected representatives we should have this access; it was not happening. Extra resources were put into it. There was particular difficulty with the medical card issue over the summer period. Deputies have access and there is a number there. I am not looking for work from Safe Home Ireland or anything else. However, Deputies may be able to make an intervention on behalf of people in particular areas.

Part of the reason for appointing a Minister of State with responsibility for the diaspora was

to have a joined-up approach. We have a briefing paper which mentions information provision, housing, driving, employment, health and so on. The list is there. They are actually looking at it. Since the appointment of the dedicated Minister of State, has there been a better joined-up approach or are the witnesses still experiencing delays?

Did Safe Home Ireland raise the difficulty it experienced directly with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and what was the Department's response? The Crosscare interim registration permission seems practical. What are the blockages? What is causing the delay in the system? That is maybe something that we, as a committee, could do.

The second suggestion that included a section on the website of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, INIS, seems a no-brainer. The briefing note from the Department says there is information on the global website but people are going to the INIS website. It is a difficult Department to deal with, in my own experience of it. It must be even more difficult for others.

Has NAMA ever offered housing assistance to returning migrants?

Most emigrants dream of returning home, no matter where they come from, unless their experience of their country of origin was particularly difficult. We need to facilitate that. Large numbers of people are returning. In 2016, there was something like 20,000 returning. Last year, the Department's figures state that a third of the 90,000 immigrants were returning Irish migrants. We understand there are difficulties, but some are outside the control of the Department. We questioned the Minister and the driving licence issue is a European problem. Are some of the difficulties that have caused delays European problems as well as Irish problems?

Ms Ciara Kirrane: I will try and address each of the questions the Deputy asked. He asked about the numbers of Irish prisoners abroad. The data the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas has collected of numbers of people in prison abroad are significantly higher than those of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. We have in or around 1,100 or 1,200 prisoners every year, the vast majority of whom are in Britain. There are also small but significant numbers in traditional countries of emigration like the United States and Australia. Australia has seen an increase in numbers in recent years. There will always be some dotted around Europe and throughout the rest of the world, but those numbers are quite small.

The Deputy asked about difficulties in dealing with the legislation of particular countries and our concerns about people being transferred from particular countries. There are two different difficulties. If somebody is in prison in Australia and his or her family is based here, the chances of that family being able to visit the person in prison abroad is limited. The financial burden is immense to undertake a visit overseas. Obviously, for people who are very far away and in prison abroad, we would----

Deputy Seán Crowe: Even getting a visa visit might be difficult.

Ms Ciara Kirrane: Yes. Trying to get those kinds of prisoners home would be a concern. We know that, if prisoners have contact with their family, they are less likely to re-offend and there is data from the UK to suggest there is a 39% decrease in re-offending if prisoners have had contact with their family throughout the period of imprisonment. That is why we would like to have people returning to serve their sentences in Ireland if they so wish. When they are very far away, like in Australia, that makes a lot of sense. The bigger numbers are in Britain and even though it is only a short enough trip across the water, the costs for families to visit are still

immense. I dealt with somebody who was undertaking a trip to Scotland with her children to visit her partner, the children's father, and accommodation alone was £500 with the cost of the ferry on top of that. There are huge costs involved when one is bringing children.

There are different trends and factors we observe when it comes to concerns about conditions in different countries. Deputy Crowe mentioned particularly hard countries such as those in Latin America and Africa where there is real hardship. That is what one would expect. Countries in Europe can have restrictive remand conditions. When people are on remand, they will have more restriction than they would have in Ireland. Talking to a family member can be challenging. It can be difficult for the family to visit when the prisoner is on remand. That is a trend in many European countries and this is before the person has even been convicted. That is particularly difficult.

The prison system in the US is particularly hard. Conditions are difficult because there is overcrowding and the sentences are long. That is a hard thing.

Deputy Seán Crowe: Irish people are travelling all over the world and things happen on trips.

Ms Ciara Kirrane: The Deputy also asked about a slow down in applications. There have always been about three times the amount of applications as have been successfully completed. There will always be some people who are ineligible or who do not meet the required criteria under the Transfer of Sentenced Persons Act. There is a difficulty at the processing end of things in getting through the amount of applications received. We would certainly like to see an improvement in that. That might require more resources for the Irish Prison Service to deal with the applications, or it might require more focus. I am not entirely sure what the solution is but we certainly have not reached the level of applications being accepted that we should have.

Ms Danielle McLaughlin: I will take up the question about approaching the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection on the HSE issue. Crosscare has been in contact with the Department quite regularly. The first presentation we attended was with the inter-departmental committee chaired by the Minister of State with responsibility for the diaspora. There are representatives from each Department at that. It was raised at that early stage. We produced our report, entitled *A Hundred Thousand Welcomes?* in May this year. It highlights a number of cases and research we conducted. It was forwarded to the Minister and the Department. To date, we have not been able to get a meeting. We are hopeful we will meet the principal officer soon under a response to the letter from the Minister recently. It is a matter that we are concerned is growing again because staff are losing that training, or it is not being renewed as often as it should be with new staff, or staff are being moved around. There is a specific clause that refers to returning migrants. That has not been implemented in cases we have taken to the appeals office that have been overturned. It has been very inconsistent. It is a complicated piece of policy that is difficult to determine. Five factors are taken into consideration but people in vulnerable situations or difficult circumstances often do not have all the required documents. In the meantime they are left destitute and they may have other difficult circumstances to deal with, particularly homelessness.

Our concern is the delay with the processing times. That is further hampered by backlogs in the appeals office. We are looking more for consistency in the overall implementation of the habitual residence condition, HRC, and improvement in the information that is being provided to customers of the Department, whether online, by letter, in person or through leaflets available in the offices. We emphasise that people who are worried about their decision to return to Ire-

land should have more user-friendly information available. The website is directed at deciding officers so it is difficult to read and understand. There is very little information about which specific documents are required. We have pointed out a number of these issues to the Minister and we are hoping to get some progress on that. We are interested in the committee also.

Deputy Seán Crowe: On a practical note, how does one deal with simple issues like data protection where one is dealing with a person who is abroad? It has gone crazy. If one sends a document over to the person to sign to act on his or her behalf, it is a simple thing, but it causes major problems for any organisations. Has Crosscare encountered that difficulty?

Ms Danielle McLaughlin: It can depend on the person. People are able to make queries on their own behalf from abroad. However, they might have some difficulty getting through on the phone or all the information may not be on the website. Those coming back in difficult circumstances may be unprepared or in crisis. We have talked about naturalised Irish citizens who might have been out of the country for a long time with some family members still learning English.

Regarding communications with the Department, it is simple for us to draw up a consent form where we act on behalf of someone, but there can be circumstances where it can be questioned if it is over the phone.

Deputy Seán Crowe: That is another one. I am talking about the barriers that are there for the organisation.

Ms Danielle McLaughlin: That is another one, yes.

Mr. Richard King: To briefly address the point about the Department of Justice and Equality and the joined-up approach from all Departments, the establishment of a ministerial position was an excellent step. To have a major report published to make recommendations public is really good and it facilitates all of the things we are doing. However, we are only at the start of the process. I would like to see the Departments state publicly how they intend to address these barriers and deal with the recommendations. I do not know why there is a hold up in the Department of Justice and Equality. I suspect it relates to concerns around how it might impact domestically in that there will be people in both situations. In general, the Department and its immigration service look at the immigration system having regard to people already within Ireland. That is where they develop policy from. They do not necessarily look at it from outside Ireland but that is where the shortfall is. We have a national diaspora strategy and we have identified barriers, which is why I am a little disappointed. The only thing the Department of Justice and Equality can do relates to this issue of barriers. It does not have a significant remit otherwise, excluding prisoners. It is the immigration services rather than the Department of Justice and Equality *per se*. I would really like to see them engage publicly and state what they are going to do and in what timeframe. It is lacking there and it is lacking across other Departments also. By the way, I note that we are in contact with the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and will meet its representatives again. However, we need the will to be there to push these issues over the line and we are not aware that it exists at the moment.

Ms Karen McHugh: As Mr. King said, SafeHome Ireland welcomes the publication of the Indecon report and congratulates the Minister of State, Deputy Cannon, for publishing it very soon after taking office. What is needed now is for the recommendations, of which there are only 30, to be subject to a timescale and action plan. While there are written recommendations, there is no timescale for their implementation. It does not say if it is one year, five years or ten.

It makes it difficult for us to do much without calling various bodies to account. We recommend those timescales. We have not approached NAMA, but I might do so after this.

Deputy Seán Crowe: If there is anything left.

Ms Karen McHugh: The SafeHome model involves working with people who are abroad before they come back and we have a very good process in place. If someone who comes back has come through us and worked with us at all stages of the process, we do not encounter as many difficulties. That is a matter of resources perhaps. If more resources were available for those who are abroad and want to come back, they would know they could get the support. People might come across SafeHome, Crosscare or the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas by accident, but we have everything done before our qualifying housing applicants get back here. As such, they can get into the system. They will have a personal public service number and a medical card ready to go. They will have housing and a housing assistance payment if that is required. We work quite well on the GDPR issue. We have a standard GDPR fact sheet and consent form for every single applicant. We get our applicants to fill those in across the board. Our major concerns is around people in vulnerable and crisis situations who are left in hardship because of that, whatever category they fall under.

Ms Orlagh McHugh: The 2016 statistics were mentioned. As a returned immigrant who came back that year, I am one of those statistics. I am also a member of the board of SafeHome Ireland. I worked in Australia with an organisation supported by the emigrant support programme. I refer to the Irish Australian Support Association of Queensland. As part of that organisation, we had a mothers' group and a seniors' group. We dealt on a daily basis with mothers who had Irish partners but also Australian partners and whose long-term plan was to return to Ireland. They were coming across issues such as the *de facto* partner or father not being able to get a visa or to work while that visa was being processed. Issues also arose in the context of securing mortgages, school places, driving licences and delays regarding Australian work experience and rental history. These are basic things but they were big factors for people planning journeys home. People in the seniors' group had fond memories of what Ireland was like when they left in the 1950s, 1960s or 1970s but times have changed. For them the issue is ringing the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and being asked to press 1 rather than being able to get a physical voice on the phone to support their inquiries.

Deputy Seán Crowe: It was the period when people went to school on the back of donkeys.

Chairman: Some of the Dublin people have a skewed vision of rural Ireland. I assure our Dublin colleague that the south of Ulster was not like that. I call Senator Mark Daly from the deep south.

Senator Mark Daly: I apologise for having to leave to attend another meeting. I thank our guests for all their work. I realise that my colleagues have asked a lot of questions and I ask our guests to feel free to point out if I ask one which has already been posed. I will refer to the minutes. The Minister of State, Deputy Cannon, has done a great deal of work in the review. I refer to the implementation of the recommendations. I have dealt with things like driving licences with the Irish ambassador to Canada. A lot of it is on our own end. The answer from the Canadian and Irish Governments was that each province in Canada issues its own licence but we do not deal with bodies at sub-national level. That was our excuse for not dealing with it, albeit eventually it was addressed. However, it was being done state by state, which is a lot of work. The Government and its embassies must do that practical work of making deals with, for example, Ottawa and Newfoundland to move those issues on.

Whereas EU citizens moving to Ireland who have partners who are not EU citizens can bring them here, the case is different for an Irish person moving from outside the EU into Ireland with a non-EU partner. What is the impediment to simply extending that cover? There are a lot of silver bullets in relation to what the witnesses are talking about. I refer to that cover whereby they would get the same rights as EU citizens and the six-month waiting period to which Mr. King referred regarding an automatic entitlement to work which means one is not stuck neither getting social welfare nor being entitled to work. What is the Minister's response as to why that has not changed? Does it require legislation? Usually, it does not and only requires a ministerial order. Someone has to write up a statutory instrument to extend to the partners of returning Irish citizens the same entitlement to work in Ireland as applies to the non-EU citizen spouses of EU citizens who come here. Has the Minister reverted on the reasons that has not happened?

Mr. Richard King: No, he has not. The Senator may have touched on some of the concerns of the immigration services regarding how policies and legislation are implemented. The rules regarding EU citizens are based on a European directive which has been implemented here in a particular fashion. The extension of the rights afforded to EU citizens to returning Irish emigrants could be addressed in policy and would not require legislation or a statutory instrument. In fact, many of the immigration systems are not underpinned by legislation. The EU system is being applied here and derives from the directives. Fundamentally, the rationale is that the immigration services cannot give an Irish citizen a higher status than an EU citizen. In this case, returning Irish citizens have a lower status. There is no impediment to a very simple policy change such that applicants for that type of permission be granted temporary status to allow them to work while awaiting a grant of permission. That would not require a statutory instrument as INIS has the power to implement that policy. I do not know what the problem is in that regard. It may be that INIS perceives that the floodgates would be opened in terms of de facto partners of Irish citizens who are already in Ireland. I do not think that would manifest as an issue.

Senator Mark Daly: I ask Mr. King to send me a note on the matter and I will request that the Oireachtas Library and Research Service look into it. Some 95% of laws enacted in Ireland each year are EU regulations and directives. The Minister has the power to amend those regulations. The answer might be to outline to the Minister that all that is required is for him to sign a statutory instrument to extend the rights in regard to working in Ireland to Irish citizens returning from outside the EU. Once he is provided with the answer, it will be quite easy. However, if we do not provide the answer, we will still be discussing this in five years' time. It is about identifying the impediment. That seems to be a serious issue. Similarly, the entitlement to social welfare is a policy issue. The Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Deputy Regina Doherty, has the power to state that those rights will accrue to Irish citizens returning from outside the State.

Mr. King indicated that a lack of awareness among returning emigrants is the root of the problem. They do not know what should be done before arrival. They end up on the witnesses' doorsteps because they are in difficulty. The Department tried to create a one-stop shop in the form of the returning emigrants section, but emigrants do not know it exists. The lack of awareness is the major cause of the problem. Returning emigrants should be made aware that they need to take certain steps long in advance of their return. That would avoid the trauma which is caused, as particularly demonstrated by the case of the man who returned to look after his elderly uncle and ended up in poverty for doing the State the significant service of preventing the uncle from having to go into permanent care. We need to tackle the lack of awareness and try to ensure that returning emigrants are aware of the existence of the witnesses' organisations

and that they should take certain steps long in advance of returning. Accessing certain services on their return can be hugely problematic if they have not taken those steps.

Perhaps the committee should ask the Minister to appear to discuss what action was planned on this issue 12 months ago and what has been done in the intervening period to improve the situation.

Chairman: The select committee will be meeting later this morning and this afternoon. The Minister of State, Deputy Cannon, will be there to discuss the Estimates. We will mention to him the concerns raised by the witnesses. He is also due to appear at a meeting of the committee in the new year in regard to the Indecon report. The contributions of the witnesses will provide very good material for our meeting with him. If there are developments or issues of which the committee ought to be aware in advance of that meeting, the witnesses should send any relevant material to the clerk to the committee to be automatically be circulated to all members. The Tánaiste, Deputy Coveney, will appear before the committee on 13 December and we will raise with him the issues highlighted by the witnesses, as well as with the Minister of State, Deputy Cannon, at the meeting in the new year.

Deputy Barrett wishes to make a brief comment.

Deputy Seán Barrett: Has there been a noticeable increase in the number of people seeking the assistance of our guests' organisations as a result of Britain exiting the EU? Have they noticed any significant change in that regard? Is there a level of fear regarding what will happen?

Ms Karen McHugh: We work extensively in Britain. Brexit is raised as an issue in every conversation, home visit and information clinic we have. There is much uncertainty and concern. We have noted a small increase in the number of people returning from the UK specifically because of Brexit. People are waiting to see what will happen. There is a lot of worry regarding entitlement to payments under EU regulations for those returning to Ireland from Britain. It is a significant cause of concern. *The Irish Times* held a Brexit workshop at an information clinic in Luton last week at which people of all ages expressed significant worries. There is a real sense of fear and insecurity. There is far less certainty in Britain than there is in Ireland.

Chairman: I thank Ms McHugh and the other witnesses for their presentations. They should ensure that they contact the committee in advance of its meeting with the Minister of State, Deputy Cannon, on this subject.

The joint committee adjourned at 10.55 a.m. until 2 p.m. on Thursday, 13 December 2018.