

DÁIL ÉIREANN

ROGHCHOISTE SPEISIALTA AN TSEANAID UM AN RÍOCHT AONTAITHE DO THARRAINGT SIAR AS AN AONTACH EORPACH

SEANAD SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE UNITED KINGDOM FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION

Déardaoin, 8 Meitheamh 2017

Thursday, 8 June 2017

Tháinig an Roghchoiste le chéile ag 10 a.m.

The Select Committee met at 10 a.m.

Comhaltaí a bhí i láthair / Members present:

Seanadóirí / Senators	Seanadóirí / Senators
Jerry Buttimer,*	Paul Daly,
Maria Byrne,*	Michelle Mulherin.
Mark Daly.	

* In éagmais / In the absence of Senators Michael McDowell and Joe O'Reilly.

I láthair / In attendance: Senator Catherine Noone.

Seanadóir / Senator Neale Richmond sa Chathaoir / in the Chair.

Engagement with Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed and Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation

Chairman: Apologies have been received from Senators Black, McDowell, Ó Donnghaile, Craughwell and O'Reilly. Senator Byrne is substituting for Senator O'Reilly and Senator Buttimer is substituting for Senator McDowell. It is the penultimate public session of this Brexit committee and I am delighted to start today with our engagement with the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed, INOU, and the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation, INMO. I hope Mr. Doran is not too tired and did not have too late a night.

Mr. Liam Doran: It was 3 a.m.

Chairman: That is not too bad. We are particularly grateful that he has come to speak with us this morning to share his experience and the opinion of his organisation and those with which he works regularly. Before calling on Mr. Doran to make his remarks, I will read the standard note on privilege. 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 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 their evidence to this committee. However, if they are directed by the committee to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and continue to so do, 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 nor make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

Mr. Liam Doran: The Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation, INMO, would like to begin this opening statement by thanking, most sincerely, the Chairman and members of the Seanad Special Committee on the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union for the opportunity to meet today on this very important issue. The INMO is the largest representative organisation for nurses and midwives in this country, representing over 40,000 members working in all areas, both public and private, of health services here in the Republic of Ireland. The INMO has very strong, professional and binding relationships with the Royal College of Nursing and the Royal College of Midwives in the UK and we have worked closely with them on many issues of common concern over many years. The INMO and the Royal College of Midwives have held for the past 20 years an all-Ireland midwifery conference in October each year for the specific purpose of co-ordinating and enhancing midwifery services right across the island of Ireland. It is against this background of strong, vibrant links with our colleagues in the UK health system that the INMO has very serious and growing concerns about the impact the UK's withdrawal from the EU will have on all areas of our health services at cross-Border, national, regional and local level. The difficulty of the UK's exit from the European Union will not only affect health services north and south of the Border but also east-west between Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

In the context of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union, we bring a number of specific issues to the attention of the committee as follows. The island of Ireland currently has a total population of 6.5 million and in this context it is imperative - this has grown in recent years - that we increasingly provide health services on an all-island basis in order that we maximise efficient and effective use of resources and, in particular, develop

and deliver specialist and tertiary level services in the most quality-assured manner. We must move to minimise duplication of services, not only in the interests of cost containment but also to enhance the outcome for patients, and this should be done, in any sensible way, by providing such specialist and tertiary level services on an all-island basis.

We already have a number of cross-Border initiatives for health care well established and these include the Co-Operation and Working Together, CAWT, partnership between health and social care services in Ireland and Northern Ireland. This has facilitated a number of collaborative projects, particularly in Border regions, which has brought great benefit and can yield further benefit in the broad area of health and social care to the populations in this region. This has also involved other cross-Border services, including GP out-of-hours services and shared expertise, such as that used in dermatological clinics. Specifically, we have radiation and oncology services and emergency cardiology services at Altnagelvin Area Hospital, which services the population regardless of the side of the Border on which they live. As for specialist children's services, such as paediatric cardiac surgery and congenital heart disease, Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin, in Dublin, has provided all-island services for many years.

The committee is also asked to note that the largest capital development in the history of the health service, the planned national children's hospital, is also being built in a manner designed to provide all-island services to children. Nothing should be done that will in any way harm, restrict or impede the access of children in all 32 counties from accessing this world-class service in the years ahead. It should also be noted that the recently published maternity strategy proposes the development of services to the mutual benefit of all mothers and children. This cannot be impeded by bureaucracy or imposed avoidable barriers to care and services.

The committee should also note that there are a number of other examples of cross-Border and east-west co-operation within the health system in such areas as the Health Service Executive purchasing care from Northern Ireland and Great Britain to address our waiting list difficulties and improve speed of access to services for patients, cross-Border health care for workers who cross the Border daily to and from work, and guaranteed access to public health care for all EU citizens travelling through member states, which, by definition, has provided access to health care for Irish people travelling to the UK and UK citizens coming to Ireland for many years.

The committee is also asked to note that from a more specific nursing-midwifery perspective, the following critical issues arise. Currently, we have mutual recognition and reciprocal arrangements for nurse and midwife registration for nurses and midwives who successfully complete programmes in Ireland and the UK. The removal of free movement of people, arising from a UK withdrawal from the EU, will see them depart from adhering to relevant EU directives pertaining to professional registration and this will have significant implications for health care manpower planning in both jurisdictions. The committee is asked to note that the number of applications for registration to the UK Nursing and Midwifery Council, its professional regulatory body, has dropped by over 90% in recent months. All this will do, in the context of Irish-registered nurses and midwives, is to increase still further the attempts by UK health authorities to fill their nursing and midwifery post shortage by aggressively recruiting here in Ireland. A simple example of this is the recurring practice of such great hospitals like Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children in London of coming to our graduates, particularly those who have just completed the joint general and children's nursing degree programme here, and recruiting them before they ever work here after registration. The pace and intensity of this recruitment drive by the UK will only increase as a result of Brexit as the numbers applying from

within and outside the EU to work in the United Kingdom will fall due to concerns in a number of areas. In addition, the committee is asked to note, particularly in recent years, the offices of the chief nurse in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England have worked increasingly together to collectively strengthen the nursing and midwifery input into health care in all five countries. This has the potential to yield greater benefits in the years ahead but this may all be minimised by the UK departure from the EU and the introduction of hard borders and all of its implications. There is a determined effort by nursing and midwifery to develop the infrastructure on an all-island basis by our all-island joint midwifery conference each year, and this will inevitably be compromised in some way arising from a UK departure from the EU and the issues that automatically arise.

In response to all of the foregoing which is universally negative for health services, the INMO believes there is an absolute requirement for proactive engagement on this issue and that is why we welcome the work of this committee. In that context, we believe it is imperative that the Irish Government, as part of the multifaceted discussions which are taking place with regard to Brexit, must focus on the following issues. Regulatory bodies in both jurisdictions must work closely together to find a way to provide to the political system methods by which the movement of nursing-midwifery and other health professionals can continue unimpeded following any departure. Standards of regulation and practice must be maintained at the highest standards in all health care qualifications and other areas, such as medicines, medical devices, food safety and public health. Whatever final shape the departure takes, arrangements must be put in place so that health care, in the island of Ireland and, indeed, from Ireland to the UK, has no borders and every patient can access, without delay or bureaucracy, the highest quality of specialist services his or her condition warrants. In that context, we must continue to develop the centres of excellence servicing all on this island in the critical areas of oncology, cardiac care, children's services, public health and primary care, including care of the elderly.

The challenges to ensuring access to quality health care in the most efficient and effective manner possible are significant as we face Brexit. We must recognise and plan to meet all of these critical issues over the next two years in the interests of all citizens.

On behalf of the INMO, I wish to conclude this statement by thanking the committee for taking the time to invite us and for allowing us to present our views. We are, of course, available for questions.

Chairman: I thank Mr. Doran and appreciate his remarks. Before we go into questions, if it is okay, we will take both witnesses together. If Ms O'Brien from the INOU has caught her breath, I ask her to make her opening remarks. She should feel free to remain seated.

Ms Bríd O'Brien: I thank the committee for the invitation to speak this morning.

I will start by noting the changing context in which we operate. Thankfully, employment is rising and unemployment is falling. However, there remains a very considerable challenge to be addressed, even with these figures moving in the correct direction.

A striking aspect of the most recent figures, from the quarterly national household survey for the first quarter of this year, is the regional spread of unemployment. The unemployment rate ranges from 5% in the mid-east to 9.3% in the south east. It dropped across all the regions but that regional spread is quite striking, in particular when there is a target within the programme for Government to prioritise regional development and aim for an unemployment rate in each region that is within 1% of the overall national average. That, in itself, highlights some of the

challenges the State faces, even with the employment and unemployment figures moving in the correct direction. This is an issue that Brexit will exacerbate.

It is important to note that these headline figures do not necessarily capture realities of the structural unemployment and labour market inequalities that face people living in disadvantaged areas, both urban and rural, and people facing discrimination because of their age, ethnicity or class, or because they have a disability or are parenting alone, or because of the implications of their long-term unemployment. A striking feature of research the CSO conducted a number of years ago on equality in Irish society was that the category with the second highest rate of discrimination discovered was the unemployed. That was captured because the CSO, in the quarterly national household survey, captures people's principal economic status. Those are issues that need to be named and addressed. They should be named and addressed anyway but with Brexit and its implications, they certainly need to be named now.

At national level, employment increased by 68,600 over the past year. It increased in seven of the eight regions; it dropped slightly in the Border region. Something we were struck by in the document the Government published in May, "Ireland and the negotiations on the UK's withdrawal from the European Union, The Government's Approach", is that it highlighted analysis undertaken by the Department of Finance that "the economic sectors most impacted by Brexit generally comprise indigenous enterprises that are small in scale, are significantly dependent on the UK as an export market, have deep links with the rest of the economy, have high levels of regional and rural employment (including around the border), and have relatively low profitability". These are challenges that already face us and, depending on the nature of the Brexit, could very much be exacerbated.

The document goes on to note, "Brexit poses significant challenges to the development of Irish owned industry and in particular to the regions which can be dependent on small, medium and large Irish businesses for job creation." It goes on to note that although reliance on the UK as an export market has declined over the past ten years, it "is and will remain the most important export market for the development of [Enterprise Ireland] client companies". Moreover, it is strategically important for first-time Irish exporters and for many small and medium-sized enterprises, and clearly for certain large companies here the primary export market of which is the UK.

It is important to look back at the employment and unemployment figures over the past five and ten years because, even though these figures are currently moving in the right direction, having that backward view highlights the remaining challenges. In terms of employment, we now have more than 2 million people employed, as compared with five years ago when the number employed was 1.8 million, but that is still lower than ten years ago, when it was 2.1 million. Likewise, unemployment has dropped dramatically when compared with five years ago when more than 321,000 people were unemployed but it is still 50% higher than it was ten years ago. Looking at long-term unemployment, thankfully, that has also dropped in comparison with five years ago, but it is two and a half times the level of ten years ago.

A figure we find useful to look at is what the Central Statistics Office calls the potential supply of labour. It helps to capture those who do not answer "Yes" to the two questions to which one must answer "Yes" to be captured as officially unemployed, which are, "Were you looking for work in the past four weeks?" and "Are you available to take up work in the next two weeks?" If, for whatever reason, one has lost heart and stopped looking, or if one has care or transport issues and believes it will take more than two weeks to sort them out, one might answer "No" to one or other of those questions. The most recent rate of potential labour sup-

ply - we use the third definition here because it is the one that is consistent over the past ten years - is 9.5%. It captures those who answered “No” to one or other of those questions or those who are working part-time but do not wish to - those who are underemployed. It is a figure that captures the employment challenge that remains and continues to face Ireland.

In my submission, I cite a number of quotes in the paper from the ESRI capturing the impact of what Brexit could do to the Irish economy, in particular, to sectors that are particularly important to Irish indigenous industry and those seeking work. At the end of the first quote, the ESRI highlights, “Approximately 30 per cent of all employment is in sectors that are heavily related to UK exports – particularly SMEs in the agri-food and tourism sectors – and are likely to feel the brunt of any negative shocks to trade.” The ESRI also notes, earlier in the quote, “The negative shock to foreign demand is expected to flow through the economy by means of lower exports, which has implications for the labour market and employment.”

In the scoping paper published a year and a half ago, the ESRI captured the reality for many that when work is not available here, the first port of call when seeking work is the UK. Both the nature of the Brexit that emerges and the nature of the border that emerges have significant implications in that regard.

I welcome that the Government, in its May document, notes the commitment by both the Irish and British Governments to maintain the common travel area, as well as the support from the European Union around these issues. There is still a long way to go in negotiations before we find the reality on the far side.

At some of our recent regional forums to discuss the impact of Brexit, people noted the importance of being able to commute between Ireland and the UK. That includes those who live and work on either side of the Border on this island. People also noted that those who live in rural and urban areas commute to Britain on a Monday-to-Friday basis to work and highlighted the difficulties Brexit could cause in this regard. People also noted, from a personal and family perspective, how individuals access health and education services and the implications of Brexit for that. Many people living in the Border area feel that the Border is no different between their counties and the other counties in Ulster than the borders between Dublin and Meath or Cork and Kerry. There is a potential impact on people trying to go about their daily business.

Our most recent conference called on the Government to plan for the employment and unemployment impacts of Brexit and, in particular, to identify the emerging and possible job losses, the potential alternative enterprises and jobs, and the education and training supports that are required to ensure unemployed people can gain access to these jobs, which must be decent and sustainable. We feel the latter is particularly important if people are to be able to move from welfare into work and be able to establish their own economic independence with its accompanying social benefits.

In May, the EU published the country-specific recommendations. The second part of the second recommendation calls on Ireland to “Enhance social infrastructure, including social housing and quality child care; deliver an integrated package of activation policies to increase employment prospects of low-skilled people and to address low work intensity of households”. These are the very people we would be concerned about. They often come from families and communities where there is experience of structural unemployment or inequalities in the labour market. They are often people whose only access to the labour market arises from activation programmes or precarious employment. We would be concerned that Brexit could exacerbate that dynamic for people and leave many in a continuing precarious position.

At present, Ireland's national employment service focuses primarily on people who are in receipt of a jobseeker's payment, be that benefit, allowance or the transition payment. The service is overseen by the Department of Social Protection and contains the following elements: Intreo, with a strong focus on the shorter-term unemployed; the local employment service, with a strong focus on longer-term unemployed and referrals from Intreo; Intreo also refers people who are unemployed to jobs clubs and the social inclusion community activation programme; and JobPath with a strong focus on longer-term unemployed who receive referrals from the Department of Social Protection.

The main policy underpinning these services is Pathways to Work 2016-2020, which was published before the decision in the UK referendum to withdraw from the European Union. It refers to changing from activation in a time of recession to activation for a time of recovery. Its two main objectives are: to continue and consolidate the progress made to date with an initial focus on working with unemployed people, particularly those who are long-term unemployed; and to extend the approach of labour market activation to others who, although not classified as unemployed jobseekers, have the potential and the desire to play an active role in the labour market. Brexit will throw up challenges to those two objectives. In order to achieve the latter and to ensure good outcomes for the long-term unemployed, it will also be important to ensure that active inclusion in principle and practice is an integral part of how this policy is implemented.

The latter part of those objectives feeds back into the European Commission's country-specific recommendation and the need to ensure that this recovery strives to be truly inclusive. However, to do this demands a level of integration across relevant Departments and their agencies that is not in evidence at the required level of consistency that is essential if we are to see the country-specific recommendations and that objective met as they ought to be.

It will also be critical to ensure that activation programmes act as a real stepping stone - as described on the Department's website - for unemployed people and others of working age into a decent job, including self-employment, or further education and training opportunities if required. I have included a table for the members' information to show how participation on programmes has changed over the past five and ten years. The number availing of the back-to-work enterprise allowance is considerably higher than ten years ago and down slightly on where it was five years ago. Tús did not exist ten years ago and now has more than 7,000 people participating. The JobBridge internship measure was introduced in response to the crisis and has since been closed, with the figures dropping quite dramatically. Participation on community employment, which is an important support for many communities trying to manage disadvantage and economic and social exclusion, has stayed at approximately 2,000. Gateway was slow to get off the ground and had a short burst of activity and now the numbers are falling dramatically. They reached a high of 2,500 approximately two years ago. The numbers on full-time training, which was under the remit of FÁS and is now under the remit of education training boards, have continued to fall, which is of concern to us because in the past they were interventions with good employment outcomes. The identified skills gap between the experience unemployed people have and the experience and skills required for the jobs available is an issue of concern for us. At present, in the region of 67,000 people are on activation programmes. For many, these are a critical first step into the wider labour market. However, a great deal of work needs to be done to ensure that people can then progress to better employment in the wider labour market.

To address the impact and implications of Brexit, it is critical that an integrated, interdepart-

mental and inter-agency approach is developed to ensure that the maximum possible number of unemployed people gain access to employment and to work with those in danger of losing their jobs. This will require a mapping exercise that identifies the emerging and potential job losses, and that looks at the alternatives and supports required to ensure people are able to access this work.

A recent report from the expert group on future skills needs on the food and drink sector highlights the importance of good inter-policy and agency co-operation. The report noted:

The Food and Drink sector has expanded significantly over the period and increased exports by more than 50 per cent; employment in Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Udaras supported firms has increased by almost 6,600 (+13%) since 2009 to reach 54,000 in 2016. This recovery in employment and expansion of output has been in the context of significant change in the food and drink sector generally with an increased focus on sustainability and traceability of origin and increased integration of ICTs, regulatory requirements and of science-based product innovation and a diversification of markets for Irish exports. The impact of Brexit will further accelerate the impact of a number of these drivers of growth, in particular in relation to market diversification. The sector relies on skills supply from both the domestic education and training system and also from a continued flow from outside the country. This is particularly the case at operative and production occupation levels.

The critical one for us is the reliance on the skills supply from both the domestic education and training system.

To ensure that unemployed people and others of working age who are more distant from the labour market are properly supported to address the challenges of Brexit, a systematic approach is critical. As one affiliate noted, it is likely that the individuals benefiting less from the economic upturn will also be impacted disproportionately by any negative fallout from Brexit. As a result of the fact that such individuals tend to live in specific communities, those communities should receive specific supports to assist them in dealing with the impact of Brexit.

That systematic approach must include: early engagement with companies that make job announcements with a view to gathering information on the nature of the positions to be filled; clarification of the skills, experience and competencies required to successfully do the jobs; and details of the recruitment process to be used for filling these positions. This, in turn, should inform the work of the local employment services and education and training provision to unemployed people and others of working age to avail of those opportunities. A quote from the Action Plan for Education captures the importance of people being able to access good education and training services and supports, both the impact on them personally and also on their personal goals in life, which for people who are unemployed means gaining access to a good job.

At our annual delegate conference there was a call on the Government to resource the provision of good career and employment guidance to support unemployed people to make informed choices and access appropriate education and training, leading to good-quality employment in terms of job security and salary levels, and in particular to ensure this is available to individuals and communities most disadvantaged in the labour market. The onset of Brexit demands well-resourced action on this front. The provision of person-centred services that focus on supporting unemployed people to assess their learning needs and the necessary opportunities to improve their employment prospects must be an integral part of such action. This involves providing good-quality information and guidance, improving integration and transition between

employment services and education and training supports, working proactively to get the referrals and the matching piece correct - this is absolutely critical - and ensuring all programmes are open to unemployed people. The appropriate resources must be provided to ensure that people who have yet to see the benefits of an improving economy start to experience this positively in their own lives.

Chairman: I thank Ms O'Brien for her detailed and engaging statement. I ask Senators to put questions to the witnesses.

Senator Maria Byrne: I welcome Mr. Doran and Ms O'Brien and thank them for their presentations. Mr. Doran mentioned that many nurses from both sides of the Border went to England for training, including specialised training. I will mention one area that is of concern in this context. Many qualifications are recognised at present. If nurses train here, their qualifications are recognised in the UK, including Northern Ireland. The reverse is also the case. There is a fear that such qualifications will not be recognised in future. Will Irish students be treated like non-European students if they go to the UK for training? Will they have to take additional courses when they come back here? Such issues are of concern to people who are currently in training. Many nurses went for specialised training in advance of the recent opening of a new accident and emergency department in Limerick. They were unable to receive some of that training in Ireland and had to travel overseas. Such questions would cause me to fear what will happen in the future, for example, when people seek to intensify their training. Something has to be worked out if this is to be kept to the fore.

Ms O'Brien spoke about skills and training. As a member of the Joint Committee on Education and Skills, I am aware that additional money has been put in place for training and skills. I suppose third level education is not for everybody. It is important that extra funding is provided so that more courses, skills and apprenticeships can be offered. I share Ms O'Brien's view that not enough people are on these courses at the moment. There is not enough choice. I am aware that consideration is being given to expanding the range of courses on offer. I do not know whether the INOU made a submission to the Department of Education and Skills when it was looking for suggestions of areas where there are shortages. If not, I encourage it to contact the Department. This issue has been highlighted in Ms O'Brien's report. A great deal of community employment has been created under the community employment schemes. I am hearing that some community centres are finding it very hard to get people who qualify for such work now because they are working part-time. Does Ms O'Brien think the qualification criteria for these schemes need to be changed?

Senator Paul Daly: Mr. Doran referred to the recent decrease in the number of people applying for registration to the UK Nursing and Midwifery Council. How can that be linked to the potential for Brexit that is coming down the line? My colleagues on this committee hear me saying every day of the week that although we are all hoping for the best, we have to plan for the worst. The worst-case scenario is that Brexit will go pear-shaped and we will end up with a hard Border and a hard Brexit. What contingency plans are in place for such circumstances? What work is being done by the organisations represented by the witnesses with that in mind? Is any work being done? Are we just hoping for the best here? What is the position of the organisations on the outcome that none of us wants or desires? Have they drawn up plans that can be enacted in such a scenario?

Senator Jerry Buttimer: I thank the Chairman for giving me this opportunity to speak and for the work he has been doing along with his colleagues on this committee. I would like to begin by referring to something that does not relate to Brexit. I congratulate and pay tribute

to Mr. Doran regarding his tenure as general secretary of the INMO and for his stewardship of that organisation over the years. I had the privilege of getting to know him during my term as Chairman of the Joint Committee on Health and Children. Even though we come from different hurling counties - Cork and Kilkenny - I have to say he has always acted with professionalism and courtesy as an official representing his members and as a person. On a personal level and on behalf of everyone on this side of the Oireachtas, I thank Mr. Doran and his family and wish him well. At a time when people were under severe pressure, Mr. Doran never lost sight of his task and continued to do his job in a personal and convivial manner. I thank him for that.

I was interested in what Mr. Doran had to say. This is an important session because there has been very little discussion on these issues. It is important that there is a focus on health today because Brexit will have a profound impact in this area.

Mr. Doran referred to the aggressive manner in which the UK is coming in and taking some of our qualified nurses and other health care professionals. The issue of access to treatment arises in this context. We must be absolutely resolute that there can be no physical return to a hard Border in the area of health care. We must continue to support those who need to access treatment in hospitals on this island, including Altnagelvin Area Hospital and Our Lady's Children's Hospital in Crumlin, and those who need to go elsewhere under the treatment abroad scheme or the cross-border health care directive. The figures show that a staggering number of people cross the Border or the Irish Sea for health care purposes. I ask Mr. Doran to comment on whether it is possible, in the interests of the quality of that interaction, for us to retain some of best personnel here rather than having to export them. I would like to hear his views on the role of remuneration in ensuring we can continue to retain staff in our health system in a post-Brexit scenario. How does Mr. Doran envisage that the cross-border health care directive and the treatment abroad scheme will have an impact from a patient perspective? He raised an issue with regard to the quality of registration. How can we ensure there is a value system that is upheld in the same way that currently happens with the EU?

It is also important to look at the impact of Brexit from a European point of view. The Chairman and others have argued strongly in favour of the European Medicines Agency moving from the UK to Dublin. I was hoping it would go to Cork. The Chairman has been making the case for Dublin. I know the Minister of State, Deputy Corcoran Kennedy, recently attended a meeting on this matter in Brussels. It is important for us to lend our support in any way we can to the relocation of the European Medicines Agency in Ireland. How does Mr. Doran envisage that EU regulations and directives on medical devices, the quality of drugs and the monitoring of standards will have an impact? What can we do in this regard by using our negotiating power within the EU? I was struck by Mr. Doran's remarks about the national maternity strategy and the need not to be impeded by bureaucracy. I would be interested to hear his view on my fear that in a post-Brexit scenario, we will put on hold many things that are of importance for the evolution of a modern professional health care system.

My final question relates to the possible strategies that have been proposed by the INMO. How does Mr. Doran envisage that the regulatory bodies involved in the regulation of practice will move from an all-Ireland perspective? There is no power structure in Stormont at the moment. Voting is under way. I wish all the candidates well in today's elections in the North. There is no assembly and no Executive. How can the various organisations that are working with the Good Friday Agreement, including the Oireachtas and the assembly, ensure there will continue to be an all-island approach regardless of what happens?

Senator Michelle Mulherin: I welcome Mr. Doran and Ms O'Brien. For newly qualified

nurses and people who want to train, the UK seems to be a great lure as many of our nurses go there. Mr. Doran has described the aggressive recruitment drives that go on while by the same token, we need more nurses here. Mr. Doran is regularly on the radio speaking about that issue. Might the Brexit dynamic give newly qualified nurses who are considering leaving here pause for thought and make them consider staying in this country? We can look at it in terms of both a hard and soft Brexit. Could there be a new dynamic whereby we would see more graduates staying?

What is the appeal of the UK at the moment and what is actually on offer to newly qualified nurses there compared with here? How do the salaries compare? From speaking to some young nurses, it seems the conditions of work and the chances of progression in their careers might be key. Can the witnesses give us a flavour of that? We are told the HSE is recruiting here but it seems difficult to fill a number of these types of posts. I would welcome Mr. Doran's comments on that issue.

On the issue of training and education, in the past number of years it has struck me there is a cohort that has difficulty in getting into the labour force. One might be talking about people in their 50s up to retirement age who have perhaps lost a job. That particularly arose during the downturn and the mass of unemployment that was created from that. These people find it hard to get work and upskilling or reskilling is an obvious way to change that. Women who took career breaks to look after their children find that because they are not entitled to a social welfare payment, they do not qualify for particular courses that might help them find work. While there may be an abundance of options in Dublin to upskill and reskill, where I am from much of the upskilling and reskilling on a basic level is being delivered by the Department of Social Protection. I understand it is means tested and that it applies only to people on social welfare, but there are people in difficult situations who want to work and contribute but cannot get work or upskill. They feel forgotten about. It might be a woman who raised her children or a man who had worked the best part of his life in a now obsolete profession and who is not wanted anywhere. It is quite a wallop to a person when this happens, especially when there is no alternative offered by the State. I am not talking about people who are massively wealthy and for whom this is not an issue. I refer to those who are pretty much getting by and just do not meet the technicality of qualifying. I would appreciate Ms O'Brien's comments on that issue.

Ms Bríd O'Brien: To respond to Senator Mulherin's questions first, in the past, particularly before the recent crisis hit, people were able to undertake FÁS training programmes even if they were not in receipt of a payment. That was one of the early changes made when the crisis hit. Since the Department of Social Protection absorbed FÁS's employment services, access to services now is very much related to a payment. Many people, such as women who did not have an entitlement in their own right because of their partner's income or who perhaps were not claiming in their own right, often tried to access return-to-work courses or the FÁS courses, which were the only options. Their availability depended on where people lived and what access was available in those areas. It is an issue we have called on the Department to look at seriously. It absorbed the national employment service and really should be providing an employment service to everybody of working age, regardless of the payment.

It is an issue many men started to experience during this crisis. If their partner was working, once they got to the end of their social insurance payment they then did not qualify for the means-tested payment and so found themselves entitled to no supports of any nature. When we raised this with the Department at senior level, we were told that people can drop into the local Intreo office for supports. However, the reality is that the local Intreo office's work is assessed

by looking at whether the live register is being reduced and if people are getting back into work. Its work is being assessed in a way that does not lend itself to an inclusive service for everybody of working age. That certainly needs to be addressed. Depending on the nature of Brexit, we may have limited space to address that because we may start to see more unemployed people. It would be wonderful if the worst-case scenario did not arise. The issue must be addressed because services should be available to everybody of working age, particularly those who wish to try to get back into the labour market and secure employment.

On the questions Senator Byrne raised, some additional programmes have been rolled out, for example the Springboard programme, which was very welcome. Springboard was one of the programmes which facilitated people who perhaps had a certain level of education training, because many of the pre-crisis supports were designed on the assumption that those who were unemployed were in receipt of other working age payments and perhaps did not have a certain level of education. They were designed to try and bring people up to certain levels. When the crisis hit we then had people with significant experience and in some cases high-level qualifications looking for help. Springboard and the ICT conversion courses helped to address that gap, because that was a big gap in provision.

When we look at some of the expenditure over time, there is definitely less provision in certain areas and a concern that people have - particularly those who are working with people whose literacy levels are not good - is that in some of the training schemes involving community employment, there is a presumption that people are already at level five of the national framework of qualifications. In some cases people are doing well if they are at level 3. We have to design the system to meet the needs of the individual rather than designing programmes in a very tight way and then trying to squash the individuals into them.

The Department of Social Protection's strategic objective is about building services around the individual. Within the further education training strategy, the national skills strategy and the Action Plan for Education, there is a strong emphasis on creating supports and services that allow the individual to flourish. However, because of the way those systems meet, people still find themselves not able to exercise informed choice or being referred to things that may not be suitable for them. We feel it is in the system's own interest to take that initial time to really talk things through with people, work with them, find out what stage they are at, what they need to do, what is available to them and what needs to be done to get them there. Taking that time at the beginning to work that out and map out that journey would make a huge difference to the individual and would also mean that we are using resources more effectively.

Community employment plays a variety of roles that sometimes pull against each other. It is often the only access point to the labour market for people who are particularly distant and who may be experiencing discrimination because of their age, their ethnicity, where they are from, their parental status or because they have a disability. Sometimes the individuals who need that opportunity and what the sponsoring organisation needs in terms of existing skills and talent do not always fit. That can be a challenge. Again, some issues have arisen because, unfortunately, when Jobs Ireland was rolled out it had a few blips, and it still has. That has definitely created logistical issues in filling schemes such as community employment. Schemes that have been successful in being filled have very much gone back to developing personal relationship with key parts of the system in order to get referrals. There is a challenge there. The system has moved in this very directive fashion of people being directed into things rather than being allowed to opt into things. For an employment programme that can be an opening opportunity for people, the fact that the system is so different to how people secure employment otherwise

is not advisable. Apart from someone who is headhunted and is at the top of the labour market, most of the rest of us go out looking for a job and have to roll our sleeves up and all that. I think it is a false relationship that is not necessarily helpful to the person trying to move on to bigger and better things. I believe that needs to be addressed.

In terms of planning for the worst and hoping for the best, the inference of Senator Paul Daly's question was that somehow we would be able to pull it all around on our own. If we could do that, our affiliates would be delighted with life, not to mention our individual members. What we are doing and will continue to do is to engage with Government across a whole range of policy makers and implementers on what we feel needs to happen to try to lessen the impact of Brexit. If the worst-case scenario arises, the implications for employment and unemployment are unpleasant. For younger people who are trying to secure their first job and for older people who may have realised that because of their age they were not going to get work in Ireland and went elsewhere to find work, there are huge challenges. We really need to try to ensure that the Border is as invisible as possible and the common travel area is maintained. However, there is a long road to go to make sure that happens.

Mr. Liam Doran: I will begin by thanking Senator Buttimer for his kind comments. I am not going until the end of the year. I am worried now that something is happening around me. For light relief, Ms O'Brien mentioned borders. As far as I can remember, Cork has had a big border around it for years that people have never managed to get through.

I will divide my answer into two parts. One part is generic and the other part is about specifics. Let me be quite clear: from our perspective, there are no upsides whatsoever for health care, health services or health users from Brexit. Whether it is a soft or a hard Brexit, there are no positives. As health care evolves, its essential requirement, particularly in specialist and tertiary services, is critical mass. One of the best things that Ireland did in the many years of humps and hollows was the development of centres of excellence in oncology services. We have world-class oncology services, though they are in need of review and so on. One of the reasons for that is that we have critical mass. We bit the bullet and said that if we are going to have the best possible patient outcomes, we have to have a service that has the diagnostics, the capital infrastructure, the human infrastructure and the best clinicians, nurses and specialists that will give us the best chance.

We have 4.6 million people in Ireland and 1.9 million people in the North. Whether it is the brilliant work in Crumlin on an all-Ireland basis in cardiac and congenital heart disease, oncology or respiratory heart disease, we need to work together every day of every week to ensure that all of our specialist services are subject to critical mass. That does not only mean North and South. It also means east and west. We cannot think that we can be stellar over here while 100 miles away in Cardiff there is also a stellar facility costing a fortune. We must bridge those things. Brexit drives a coach and horses through that. There are no winners. In particular, the patients will lose because neither country, North or South of the Border, will invest in health.

I will be more specific in terms of the questions about travel and professionals moving and so on. I have to be quite blunt. Britain has always relied upon immigration to staff many parts of its health system, full stop. That has been generated simply by the history of the Commonwealth, as well as the EU and so on. The response of the population at large to Brexit in terms of health care has been a 90% drop off in registrations from outside the EU into the UK health system within months of the vote. Britain normally gets 1,500 registrations a month. That went down to 150. In terms of scale, we have to remember that Britain employs 500,000 nurses. We employ 35,850 nurses. Britain is 54 miles away by sea.

What Britain has done quite clearly is reduce the bursary for nurse education. It is training fewer nurses and people are coming into the country. Whatever they do with Brexit, hard or soft, the UK authorities will have a common travel area for Irish nurses because it is a tap. Irish nurses are degree-level, English-speaking people who land running. Britain will incentivise their recruitment.

Senator Mulherin asked whether they would not pause for thought. The journey our nurses travel is quite simple. It is not to the EU but to the UK they go to within the EU. Outside of the UK, they go to Australia and North America with some transitory passage to the Middle East. The impact of Britain leaving the EU will not have any consequence for the nurse who wants to travel and work in the UK if they cannot get work here or because of shorter hours, better staffing levels or better career opportunities elsewhere. The door to that will remain open wide. I genuinely and sincerely suggest to the committee that it will actually be embellished, because Britain will need that flow even more because the flow from outside the EU to the UK is going to dry up.

When we graduate 1,500 nurses a year, that is the entire pool we have, whereas 1,500 nurses is a drop in the ocean to Britain. It will take every last one. We could use the example of Great Ormond Street, which is a brilliant and world-class facility. It went into Cork a few weeks ago and took every last one of the graduating nurses. We have a four and a half year degree programme in general and children's nursing. It is a brilliant programme. It is brilliant for the graduate because he or she can walk anywhere and be taken into employment. Great Ormond Street took the entire class. The nurses have not even registered yet. We trained them and the UK took them. Do not get me wrong, being hired by Great Ormond Street is like being asked to play for Real Madrid on a free transfer if one is a soccer player or for Kilkenny if one is a hurling player.

Senator Jerry Buttimer: Steady now.

Mr. Liam Doran: Therefore, we are up against it totally both in terms of patient care and the efficient and effective use of resources. I am not saying that health is all about nursing and midwifery. It is a part of it. For my area of nursing and midwifery, Brexit is only bad. Britain will increase their incentives and thereby increase migration. We lost 7,500 nurses to the UK in the last six years based upon the certificates of verification. The reality is that movement will increase.

The issue that arises is the reciprocity of qualification. The EU did many things, but one thing it did was standardise via EU directives nursing and midwifery education. In fairness, medicine and other professions have it as well. There is no way Britain will lower its standard but we do not yet know whether it is going to respect the EU directives. It will want the 4,600 clinical hours and so on. Britain will always want that. It will want to offer pathways to train and pathways in which it can build up specialist programmes, because it can offer specialist programmes that we can never match. Without being smart for one moment, if I graduate in Cork and I am taken over to a great London hospital, Great Ormond Street, Manchester Royal Infirmary or any of those, I will be offered an incentive payment to go, accommodation for a period of time and professional development. Providing I do nothing wrong, within 12 months I will access a specialist programme such as intensive care, coronary care, emergency department nursing, theatre nursing, ophthalmic or burns. When I have that and if I get tired of the UK, Australia and North America call me because they are English-speaking countries. We do not go to mainland Europe by and large. Australia and North America will want me to be experienced so when I graduate I might stay here for six or nine months. A total of 80% of last

year's graduates have got certificates of verification to leave already. They have to pay for that and cannot do so unless they have money coming and unless they are going to use it. They are leaving.

The Senator says they will come back. I was educated in Richmond, Surrey, in England. I got home once a year. How many members have gone to London for a day? It is a different world. They can go to live over there, travel over on a Monday and back on a Friday but they will not come home. When they get the specialist qualification and go to Australia or North America, they can command very good money because there is a worldwide shortage of nurses and midwives. Britain has always been a place to which we migrate. Its attractiveness and aggressive recruitment will increase because it is not growing its own. It will rely more and more on Ireland and drain what is already a drained pool. The reciprocity of qualifications will be maintained because Britain will not worry too much about French or German nurses; it wants Irish or Commonwealth nurses. There is no upside.

I am not saying that because of the pounds, shillings and pence, but because it is true. We are absolutely banjaxed when it comes to nurse and midwife supply, recruitment and retention, and that has to be addressed. What the UK is doing in parallel with Brexit will exacerbate our problem. There will be no one pausing for thought. It will not change the flow because it will aggressively offer money and incentives to newly qualified people who will then consolidate their skills, go to Australia or North America and there is no evidence that they come back in great numbers. The Bring Them Home campaign run by the HSE, which aimed to get 500 nurses, officially brought back 92 and, of those, 40 have gone away again.

Forgetting that for the moment, for the patient there is a lot of good cross-Border work, with co-operation in centres of excellence. Hard or soft, what are our strategies? We have to find a way politically to ensure that health care has no borders and that we have critical centres of excellence in specialist services. In doing that we save money, the economy thrives, and we provide optimum patient care on the island of Ireland. The east-west relationship should not be forgotten. I do not know whether the UK is willing to have that. I understand from the Royal College of Nursing and the Royal College of Midwives that they think the authorities are willing to have that kind of arrangement but politically it must be an imperative in the talks.

Senator Jerry Buttimer: Was Brexit-proofing part of the public sector pay negotiations? Given Mr. Doran's analysis of the incentivisation programme in the UK and that the Bring Them Home campaign here has been an unmitigated failure, is there anything we can do to ensure we can retain more graduates? I accept that some will go abroad no matter what happens. How can we ensure that our graduates whether nurses, physiotherapists or doctors, stay here?

Mr. Liam Doran: I will be very blunt. At 3 o'clock this morning I left pay talks which took two and a half weeks. Nothing came back. I am a union guy but I say this without blinking. Nothing came back from the management side in those two and a half weeks.

Senator Jerry Buttimer: Does Mr. Doran mean the HSE?

Mr. Liam Doran: No, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Senator Jerry Buttimer: Was there nothing about Brexit in those talks?

Mr. Liam Doran: No, there was nothing at all. The Department showed no awareness of, interest in or willingness to address the reality. There is a general section about recruitment and retention which is generic. There is no recognition in the Department of the extent of the crisis

and no willingness to recognise it. We are still in talks on the margins and have not quite completed our part yet. To answer Senator Buttimer, there was no recognition of the reality facing the health system in respect of attracting and retaining our own people, doctors, radiographers, physiotherapists and so on. There was nothing done to give primacy, urgency or immediacy to the measures necessary to arrest the haemorrhage we have suffered for the past few years before everyone's eyes. Parts of Government appear absolutely oblivious to it. I did not come here to say that. Our frustration is absolutely beyond measure. This is not a union cry. It should be that the employer comes to us asking what does it need to do. That did not happen.

Chairman: I thank the witnesses for their contributions and for the work they are doing on this issue and the wider issues.

Sitting suspended at 11.17 a.m. and resumed at 11.19 a.m.

Engagement with Science Foundation Ireland and Trinity College Dublin

Chairman: I welcome Professor Mark Ferguson, director general of Science Foundation Ireland and chief scientific adviser to the Government, and Mr. Tom Molloy, director of public affairs and communication at Trinity College Dublin. I will invite Professor Ferguson to address us first.

Before he does so, I wish to 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)(I) of the Defamation Act 2009, witnesses are protected by absolute privilege in respect of their evidence to the committee. If they are directed by the committee to cease giving evidence in relation to a particular matter and they continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to a 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 they are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

I call on Professor Ferguson to make his opening remarks.

Professor Mark Ferguson: I thank the Chair and members for inviting Science Foundation Ireland to address the committee. Science Foundation Ireland is the Government's largest competitive funder of scientific and engineering research in Ireland. The agency supports outstanding research in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, which promote and assist the development and competitiveness of industry, enterprise and employment in Ireland. Science Foundation Ireland makes competitive grants or awards based upon merit review for excellence and impact by international distinguished scientists. This results in the agency administering research projects of global scale and international excellence, with a high potential to deliver impact for the Irish economy and society. Research projects supported by Science Foundation Ireland often take place in partnership with industry, charities and other research funders, both national and international, several of which are located in the UK.

We are at a moment of opportunity for research and innovation in Ireland. There are challenges associated with Brexit, particularly for our research colleagues in the UK, but there are

also significant opportunities for Ireland. There are actions we can take to mitigate the risks, enhance our relationships and support the Irish research community to exploit the opportunities from an otherwise uncertain period. We need to act quickly and intelligently as other countries are exploiting these opportunities too. Since the UK's decision to leave the European Union, I have been taking proactive steps to enhance relationships between research stakeholders in Ireland and in the UK, both research performing and funding organisations, and we have developed a strategy to help Ireland capitalise on these opportunities. Senior members of Science Foundation Ireland staff participate in relevant Government-led Brexit committees and the agency has an internal Brexit working group, led by a director, to ensure agency wide co-ordination.

I will outline some of relevant facts about research in the UK and in Ireland and how the system across both jurisdictions could be impacted upon by Brexit. I will then move on to inform the committee in more detail about the opportunities, strategies and actions that Science Foundation Ireland is putting in place.

I submitted to the committee a detailed appendix of the data relating to Brexit. That flows from two principal sources: the Royal Institution and the four UK learned academies, namely, the Royal Society, the Academy of Medical Sciences, the British Academy and the Royal Academy of Engineering. Those bodies have identified four areas in research that are important for Brexit: funding, mobility, collaboration and regulation. The first three of those are about mitigating the risks. The fourth is an opportunity for the UK. Based on these detailed analyses, I will highlight the relevant facts that are important for the Irish consideration.

The UK is a scientific powerhouse with many excellent universities which contribute to its high international standing. For example, the University of Oxford is rated number one in the world. The European Union provides funding for research and innovation through three principal streams. The first is the EU framework programme for research and innovation, which is usually called Horizon 2020. The second is the European Structural and Investment Funds - often the European regional development fund in Ireland - and the third is loans from the European Investment Bank. These three sources are the main sources of EU funding for research. Although the UK is a net contributor to the European Union, within the narrow focus of research and innovation the UK contributes approximately 12.5%, which is €5.4 billion, and wins 15.9%, which is €8.8 billion, back from the programmes. Therefore, the UK wins back more in research than it contributes, although, as I said, it is a net contributor to the overall EU budget. Some 80% of the UK-won EU research and innovation funding flows to UK universities, with a low uptake of less than 20% by UK industry, which is mostly SMEs. Five UK universities - University of Cambridge, University College London, University of Oxford, Imperial College London and the University of Edinburgh - are ranked among the top ten universities in Europe in terms of winning EU research and innovation funding, that is, half of the European top 10 is dominated by the UK. The top 10 UK universities win 50% of the UK funding.

It is unclear whether the UK will negotiate access to any of the EU scientific programmes post Brexit and, if it does, what restrictions might be placed on those programmes. For example, it may not be allowed to lead major programmes. If the UK negotiated access on the same terms as Norway and Switzerland, as third countries, it would end up as a net contributor to the programme at 21.9%. At the moment, it is a net beneficiary. It is unclear whether the UK would choose to pay for these non-monetary benefits as opposed to developing their own schemes, for example, with the Commonwealth, the United States, China or Japan.

The vast majority - more than 90% - of UK researchers collaborate overseas. Approximate-

ly 17% of the staff in UK universities, or 33,735 individuals, are EU 27, non-British, nationals. That percentage increases significantly in the research-intensive universities such as University of Oxford, University of Cambridge, Imperial College London and University College London. Some 23% of all UK university staff in biological, mathematical and physical sciences are EU 27, non-British, citizens. It has been estimated that many of these would not qualify for a UK visa under the current UK regulations.

Internationalisation of higher education is a common and increasing global phenomenon and the UK is absolutely at the forefront in this regard. More than 42,000 UK tertiary-level students are studying abroad, among which more than 35% are in an EU country, including 9.9%, or 2,106 individuals, in Ireland. Some 14% of PhD students, or 12,000 individuals, currently registered in the UK universities are EU 27 nationals. The UK is also a very popular destination for both overseas students and visiting overseas students and researchers, for example, through the EU ERASMUS and Marie Skłodowska-Curie programmes. On ERASMUS programmes, the UK receives 30,183 students from other EU countries and sends out 14,801 students to other EU countries. The UK dominates the EU Marie Skłodowska-Curie programme with 2,233 participations. This is many more than any other EU country - for example, Ireland has 216 participations - and is largely due to the UK's scientific excellence and native English language. Those are a few figures - there are many more - that kind of paint the picture of the UK research establishment with Brexit.

We will now examine the scientific challenges for Ireland. In the European scientific research framework programme Horizon 2020, Ireland has set an ambitious national target to win €1.25 billion of funding over the lifetime of the programme. This is more than double our performance in the previous framework programme 7. If achieved, it would result in Ireland drawing down more than €300 million more than it contributes. This is an ambitious target and I am pleased to report that we are on track to achieve it. In simple terms, the target means that we have to double our performance. We have to lead and win - those two words are important - more big projects as well as small projects. We have to lead and win more big projects.

What impact would the loss of the UK as a potential collaborator in EU programmes have on Ireland? We have done a formal analysis of the EU eCORDA database, which indicates that of all the successful Irish projects in Horizon 2020, only 11.5% involve the UK as a collaborator. As a percentage, this figure is similar to Irish collaborations with other major European countries, for example Germany at 11.3%, and to peer countries in Europe such as Denmark and Finland. In all cases, these collaborations occur in multi-partner projects so they are not exclusive UK-Ireland relationships. Ireland is not overly dependent on the UK for scientific collaboration in successful EU programmes as 88% of them do not involve UK collaboration. Furthermore, analysis of the successful EU Horizon 2020 projects with Ireland as a contributor show that only 10% of them were led by the UK, which is 9.1% of the funding. If this is analysed across disciplines, it is fairly evenly spread between energy, ICT and medical. The analysis shows Ireland is not critically dependent on the UK in a specific domain of science and is not critically dependent on the UK to lead scientific projects or as a main collaborator. Nonetheless, the UK is important. It is a manageable situation. If the UK exits the Horizon 2020 programmes, even if it does not participate in the European programmes, we can manage. We will have to manage by diversifying the funding base within Ireland but with good planning it is a manageable situation.

Other potential challenges to Ireland from the loss of the UK within the EU include the loss of a like-minded ally, for example in negotiations on framework programme 9 where empha-

sis on research excellence and protecting the civilian nature of the programme are important. Not all EU countries would necessarily see that. It is really important because there will be a smaller budget because the EU will not have the contribution from the UK. There could be a severe impact on Northern Ireland because 54% of Northern Ireland EU projects come via a North-South collaboration. We are not overly dependent on the UK but Northern Ireland is very dependent on Southern Ireland for its collaborations.

What are the opportunities? I have outlined some of the challenges, which are manageable. There are a number of opportunities for Ireland from Brexit. First, we could increase our success in the European programmes. We could lead large, ambitious projects which would previously have been led by the UK. It is clearly an opportunity. Second, we could attract outstanding researchers to Ireland. There are a large number of EU 27 nationals in the UK, some of whom might feel uncomfortable; they might think about leaving and we could attract them. Third, we could attract outstanding international students to Ireland. The UK is a favoured destination for those students. We also speak English and have excellent research facilities.

We could attract excellent international visiting researchers to Ireland. For example, we could capture some of the Marie Curie applicants. We must have significantly enhanced bilateral research links with the UK. I will come on to that. We could act as a bridge between the UK and the EU. There are opportunities within Ireland.

Having said all of that, what is the strategy for research, scientific research and innovation post-Brexit? Science Foundation Ireland's strategy is first to diversify and strengthen our scientific research collaborations with EU 27 countries so as to maintain excellence and performance irrespective of UK participation. That strategy has commenced. For example, we are jointly funding a project with the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, which is one of the leading research organisations in Germany. We will be strengthening relationships with other EU countries. It is an obvious thing to do.

The second strategy is to strengthen and enhance all our bilateral research links with the United Kingdom. Irrespective of the outcome of its final negotiations with the EU, the UK will remain a scientific powerhouse. By strengthening our relationships with the UK, it does not matter what the final outcome is. If they are within the EU programmes, we will both jointly win. If they are out then we will need those bilateral collaborations because we will not be able to avail of the current EU mechanisms. It is very important. To that end, Science Foundation Ireland has strengthened its collaborations with all of the major UK science funding agencies, namely, the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, the Royal Society and the Wellcome Trust. We jointly fund with all of those agencies. It is a single application. They fund a research team in the UK and we fund a research team in Ireland and both teams can collaborate. That is how it works. The appendix provided to the committee outlines in detail those collaborative arrangements. It is very important. It is something we have already done and we need to strengthen those links.

We are going to go further. We will launch an initiative aimed at stimulating the exchange of PhD students between the 16 Science Foundation Ireland research centres that are hosted by all seven Irish universities, some of the institutes of technology and four or more leading UK universities, namely, Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial College London and University College London. We will fund 30 PhD students a year in Ireland to spend half their time in the UK at those institutions under joint supervision. The UK will fund 30 students a year who will spend half their time in Ireland under joint supervision. It is about stimulating young people moving between excellent institutions within the UK and Ireland.

The third thing we will do is to recruit excellent researchers to Ireland. Given the potential challenges posed by Brexit for scientific research in the UK, there are some people who are thinking of leaving. We would like them to think of Ireland. If there are excellent people thinking of leaving for whatever reason, we should try to attract them to Ireland. Star researchers matter. They attract the best students and companies and maintain our international reputation. Ireland has significantly gone up the scientific rankings and is now ranked tenth in the world. Before Science Foundation Ireland, we were 48th in the world. We have gone up at least one place every year in the past five years. The status of Irish research is good. Our capacity to attract very good people is there. Science Foundation Ireland, together with the higher education institutes in Ireland, has put together the SFI research professorship programme to attract star researchers. Brexit provides an opportunity there. We will also recruit future research leaders and more junior researchers who may be thinking of leaving the EU. We will also put in place joint appointments with the four UK leading universities, Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial College London and University College London so people can be appointed jointly between those institutions and one of the UK institutions I have named and spend at least 40% of their time in Ireland. It is important and may allow us to attract a calibre of person we would not otherwise attract. All of those are new things we plan to put in place as part of our Brexit strategy and in terms of enhancing our links with the UK.

Other measures will be attracting international students and researchers to Ireland. It is very important. The Government strategy, Innovation 2020, calls out for an increase in the number of PhD students of 500 per year. We believe that as a result of Brexit we will be able to recruit very high calibre people who would otherwise have gone to the UK.

Innovation 2020, the Government's strategy for science, engineering, mathematics research is a very good strategy. It is being rolled out, budget permitting, to really build up from the strong and growing research base. There are significant opportunities we should seize. Every other country is putting in place similar mechanisms. There are some risks we need to mitigate but they are manageable. With proper planning and the appropriate budget from Science Foundation Ireland and with the help of the universities and higher education institutes in Ireland, we will be able to manage the Brexit situation. We may be able to get some positive opportunity. I am cognisant of the fact there are many challenges to Ireland from Brexit and there are perhaps few places where there are opportunities. This is one of them. We should seize the opportunities presented by Brexit.

Chairman: I thank Professor Ferguson for his opening statement and he is very welcome. He is one of few people who pointed out opportunities. We have had quite a number of sessions and the committee has now sat for 38 hours. Professor Ferguson is a rare beacon of hope in this whole process. I now invite Mr. Tom Molloy from Trinity College Dublin to make his opening remarks.

Mr. Tom Molloy: I thank the committee for the opportunity to address it. I am not sure that I can be quite as optimistic as Professor Ferguson.

I am talking on behalf of Trinity College. It is important to note that Trinity College has always prided itself on being an all-island university. Through good times and bad, during the Troubles and during present times we have always made strenuous efforts to attract students from the North to Trinity College. Around half of all students from the North study at Trinity College. Our policy has succeeded and we worry about it now with Brexit.

Trinity College is a research intensive university that receives about half of all Excellence in

Cities, EIC, grants that are given to Ireland. Trinity College is a research powerhouse and we are concerned about Horizon 2020.

I will talk about three things that are both an opportunity and a threat. The first one is academics. There is clearly a great opportunity to hire really good people from the UK who might be leaving because they are unhappy with their situation. The problems that we face in Trinity College are as follows. First, our corridors and offices are full. Second, we do not have the money to pay salaries. Third, we do not have the money to house people. If one wants to attract a Nobel prize winner to Ireland he or she needs laboratories and assistants. He or she needs a lot of people and a support system. Such people do not come by themselves. Maybe in the arts they do but in the sciences they do not. Researchers need a big infrastructure and we, frankly, do not have the money to do it at the moment. Nor do we have the flexibility. Star academics attract many good students and bring a lot of good research with them. They are free to negotiate whatever salary they want if they go to a place like Germany. It is very tempting to go to Germany because researchers are well looked after there, tax is lower and the cost of housing is lower, which are all of the usual things that prevent people from coming to Ireland.

One of the features of higher education is that one must compete for talent in an international but we are constrained by public sector norms. If the committee is thinking of ways to help third level education then funding research is one way. The pay restraints should be loosened in order to attract star academics to work in areas that are important for the national interest. Also, the same should be done with the restraints around hiring spouses, etc., that are problematic. Normally if one has a Nobel prize winner, her husband also works in the academic sector and maybe he must travel as well. I have outlined one opportunity but it is one that we are in danger of squandering. The problem with academia is that everything moves quite slowly. If we want to attract people for 2019 then we must plan now. Unfortunately, we have no oversight for how to do so.

Horizon 2020 is the main funding stream for Trinity College and Professor Ferguson has alluded to it earlier. Horizon 2020 costs a huge amount of money. When I was a boy I remember Albert Reynolds coming back to this country and telling us that he had obtained £6 million punts for Ireland. Horizon 2020 and its successor programme, which is coming down the tracks, will probably cost around €120 billion. That is a really big pot of money that our universities must be able to divvy up and get as much of it as they can. Most of our research is done in collaboration with UK universities. Perhaps it should not be but for reasons of history, language and everything else the valuable and meaningful contracts are done in collaboration with UK universities. It is by no means clear that such a practice will be possible in the future. Already we have seen signs that it is problematic with a UK university because nobody knows what will happen in five years' time. For Trinity College, and I know the same applies for all Irish universities, it would be useful if we could as soon as possible have an idea of what will happen with Horizon 2020.

Everybody in this House should be upset that there are no Irish people on the negotiating committee that is negotiating Framework Programme 9, FP9, which is the successor to Horizon 2020. In the past we have often relied on the UK because of shared norms and beliefs to push certain agendas. However, we are on our own now. If we want to push an agenda then we must ensure that Irish people are on the committee that matters in Brussels. We need diplomatic and all kinds of help to make that happen. Trinity College has joined an association of the 20 best research intensive universities in Europe. We are using the initiative as much as we can to unlock those connections but we are at the beginning. Everybody knows that Brussels is a difficult

place but we must network. Too often in the Brexit debate we talk about Britain but we are not talking about where we have to go but where we were. Our big challenge is not to double down on the bet that we made by having partnerships with British universities. Our big challenge is to open up challenges with universities on the Continent.

I wish to highlight the issue of students from Northern Ireland. Trinity College prides itself and is in practice an all-island university. No student in the North knows whether he or she will have to pay between €18,000 to €20,000 a year, which could well happen, once Brexit negotiations finish. Such fees would herald the end of students from the North studying in this country. This country must decide whether it wants that to happen. If it does not want that to happen then it must offer guarantees. As far as I can see, that can be done unilaterally. Of course that is up to the committee to think about and it is not for me to say. If we want students to come from the North and, conversely, if we want our students to go to the North, then we must give clarity on fees. One cannot expect any family to sign a blank cheque.

There is another problem. As many as 12,000 Irish people study in the UK every year. Most of them will probably decide that they cannot pay the foreign student fees and so will return. In the next 18 months or so we could see an extra 10,000 students entering the already overcrowded Irish system. As the committee will know, it would mean a 5% increase overnight on top of the democratic barge.

This country and our negotiators can think about Ireland's involvement in Horizon 2020, the fate of Northern Irish students who want to study in the South and how best to attract high flying academics who would bring great teaching, research and knowledge to this country. I thank the committee for listening to me.

Chairman: I thank Professor Ferguson and Mr. Molloy for their contributions. My colleagues will ask questions in a block and then I will come back to the witnesses. I call Senator Mulherin to commence as she indicated first.

Senator Michelle Mulherin: I welcome Professor Ferguson and Mr. Molloy and thank them for their presentations.

I compliment Professor Ferguson's organisation, Science Foundation Ireland, on doing the right sort of work because Ireland has leaped up the science scoreboard and is ranked number 10 in the world. There is an obvious correlation between economic growth, greater investment in research and development and the types of jobs that we want to create, which are valuable jobs in the sector, and all that it leads too. Such activity is attractive to FDI.

Professor Ferguson mentioned his ambition to have 500 additional PhD students per year. Obviously he wants to wrap up the activities and seize the opportunity presented by Brexit. I want to focus on the delivery of the programme and SFI's relationship with institutes of technology. Have institutes accessed SFI funding and how much?

I know from the Higher Education Authority that universities are more generously funded and the way they are funded than the institutes of technology. I come from the west of Ireland. NUIG is a very esteemed establishment in the region and there an institute of technology in Mayo. The Government envisions that institutes of technology will play a critical role and that they will be brought up to a university standard. What role does the SFI play in ensuring that happens? How can institutes of technology access research money? What impediments exist? We need to fire on all cylinders and bring the institutes on board.

Senator Paul Daly: I welcome both witnesses. As the Chairman has rightly said, some 38 hours into our discussions, it is a breath of fresh air to hear about potential gains because there has been a lot of negativity around this subject. The witnesses were at pains to say that Ireland is not critically dependent on the UK when it comes to science and research. Down the line, however, if there is a hard Brexit or if negotiations get dirty, could they see an “us” and “them” scenario emerging? Britain might want to become a world leader in its own right, outside of the EU. It might batten down the hatches somewhat and go on a solo run. Could the witnesses see that happening and if it did, how would we fare in that situation, particularly from a North-South perspective? In terms of further education, it certainly is frightening that families may have to write open cheques. Tourism Ireland was before this committee and said that people plan holidays one to two years in advance and that the people who are now beginning to plan their holidays for two years hence do not know what the situation will be then. None of us knows and that is what is frightening. A holiday can be put on the shelf but people cannot put their education on hold because they do not know what is going to happen. The not-knowing scenario is difficult and I do not know how we can overcome it. We must give some assurances to people who are facing such decisions but I do not know how we can do that.

I do not want to take from the optimism of the witnesses but if the negotiations go sour, will the UK go on a solo run? While the witnesses have said that we are not critically dependent on the UK, in terms of the North-South relationship in particular, could barriers be put up that would affect us? As the witnesses pointed out, the UK is a strong contributor to the pool and I cannot see that continuing if it goes on a solo run itself.

Mr. Tom Molloy: It sounds immodest to say this but Trinity College is Ireland’s largest research institution. We are 19th in Europe in terms of drawing down funding from the European Research Council. We see it slightly differently to Professor Ferguson. We believe that there is a real danger here. Our biggest collaborator is Cambridge University while our second biggest is Queen’s University, Belfast. It is not always appreciated that less than 40% of our income now comes from the State. The remaining 60% comes from fees, research and from one or two other sources, including philanthropy. Even philanthropy is in danger from Brexit but more importantly, research is endangered by it. We are struggling to see a huge amount of upside from this. We worry that Britain might be ejected, in some kind of hard Brexit, from all of the research collaborations that go on. We also worry about the future of funding from organisations like the Wellcome Trust, which has been a great friend of Ireland for the last century. It is not clear, in a post-Brexit world, whether organisations like the Wellcome Trust will be as generous as they have been in the past.

I can only say that we have had a good bounce recently. Today it was announced that we have risen in the university rankings. At the same time, we have seen two thirds of British universities fall in the rankings that were announced this morning precisely because it would seem that people are getting worried. The only logical explanation is that people are worried that there will be a squeeze on research. If there is a squeeze on research in the UK, we will feel it too, at least temporarily, as is always the case if there is a squeeze on one’s biggest partner in anything. In that sense, I am inclined to agree with Senator Daly.

Professor Mark Ferguson: I will address the question on the institutes of technology first. Excellence in Ireland is distributed. If one looks at the main areas of science, nanotechnology, food science and agriculture, one will find excellent people in all of the Irish institutions, both the universities and the institutes of technology. They may not all be distributed equally but one will find excellent people across the educational institutions. Science Foundation Ireland,

SFI, research centres mandate that all of the excellent people, no matter where they are located, be it Trinity College, UCD, UCC, the institutes of technology in Tralee, Mayo or wherever, must collaborate with one other and with industry. It is absolutely true that the institutes of technology can participate in all of those programmes but they do not participate to the same degree as the universities. That is partly because they have a stronger teaching mission but that said, they do participate. We are seeing institutes of technology working with the SFI research centres, with really excellent researchers working at those institutes. That provides an opportunity because the SFI research centres are well funded in terms of infrastructure and that has to be shared across the institutions. It would be nonsense to replicate all of the infrastructure in every university and every institute of technology; we need to have some sharing. We are very positive about having all of the excellent people, no matter where they are located, collaborating within the SFI research centres. It is absolutely true that there are fewer people from the institutes of technology than the universities but it is equally true that in the last four research centres that we announced two weeks ago, two of which are in manufacturing, there are very significant contributions from institutes of technology. It is also noteworthy that for the first time we have had an application for an SFI research professorship, one of the star researchers, from an institute of technology. I see that as progress and something good. We are open and do not mind where the excellence is based. However, we do want a coherent structure in which that can be put forward.

In terms of the Brexit negotiations and the UK going it alone, let me be very clear - the British are going it alone at the moment and people are planning on that basis. The UK has activated the scientific Commonwealth. I worked in the UK for many years and there was never any discussion about the Commonwealth in science but that has now been activated. The second Commonwealth science symposium has taken place and there are also very significant bilateral discussions going on with the United States, Australia, China, Japan and so on but they are also going on with Ireland. Our strategy there is to strengthen all of our bilateral relationships so we now jointly fund with the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, the Wellcome Trust and the Royal Society and all of those will endure, no matter what kind of Brexit transpires. Brexit is irrelevant to those relationships. We need those bilateral relationships but what is different now is that we have to provide the funding. What is different about those relationships is that under a European programme, the European Union provides the funding for the various projects but under these bilateral programmes, the UK Government will fund the piece in the UK and we will fund the piece in Ireland. To that end, the UK Government has put in £2 billion more into scientific research post Brexit but we have put in nothing, so there is the problem. The problem is not with the relationships, which are there and which will endure. The problem is we are going to have to pay for the Irish piece of the bilateral collaborations and the UK will pay for the British piece. The UK is signalling this clearly and is putting extra money into the budget for these bilateral and multilateral collaborations and we need to be able to play in those games. There are very good researchers in the UK and we want to collaborate with them. We also want the Irish institutions to collaborate with them.

The North-South piece is really interesting and really important. We had a joint funding scheme, North and South, between Science Foundation Ireland and the devolved Administration in Northern Ireland. Bluntly, we ran the scheme, the Administration funded the piece in Northern Ireland and we funded the piece in the South. As there is no longer a devolved Administration, that scheme does not operate but hopefully it will be resurrected when there is a new Administration in place or resurrected by Westminster. I am discussing that actively because we need to promote those North-South collaborations. Members must be very clear,

however, that in all of these things I have talked about, the bill lands with us and where the likely limitation will be is in our budget, to be blunt. Science Foundation Ireland does not have a sufficient budget to fund all of the excellent and impactful projects that come its way, including those with very significant industrial collaboration. That is likely to be enhanced post Brexit if the UK is not part of the EU programmes. That is because we will have all of these bilateral programmes but the bit in Ireland will have to be funded by us, not the EU. The bit in the UK will have to be funded by the UK and it has stepped up to the plate. Mrs. May has released £2 billion more for research and innovation in the UK since Brexit was announced.

Chairman: I thank both witnesses for their detailed contributions and thoughtful responses to the questions. We will now suspend for a minute to change around the witnesses.

Sitting suspended at 12.03 p.m. and resumed at 12.07 p.m.

Engagement with British Medical Association and Irish Medical Organisation

Chairman: We are now back in public session. I thank the witnesses for their patience. It looks like we will be continuing through lunch so we have all had to re-juggle our office agendas a bit. I am delighted to welcome representatives from both the British Medical Association Northern Ireland Council and the Irish Medical Organisation. Their contributions today will be very timely and will feed in what has been a marathon series of sittings of this committee, leading into a report that is starting to resemble 17 volumes of a phone book at this stage, though we might try to slim it down. We have been looking at seven key sectoral areas, the eighth being the future of Europe. This is the seventh, not through preference but as dictated by the time it took to get everyone that we wanted here. We are really looking forward to witnesses' contributions this afternoon and to a few follow-up questions. Please bear with me as I read the note of privilege before we begin.

Members are reminded of the longstanding parliamentary practice to the effect that members should not comment on, criticise or make charges against a person outside the House 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 their evidence at the committee. If you are directed by the committee to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and you continue to do so, you are entitled thereafter only to a qualified privilege in respect of your evidence. You are directed that only evidence connected with the subject matter of these proceedings is to be given and you are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, you should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way to make him, her or it identifiable.

With that out of the way I invite Dr. John Woods to make his opening remarks. When he is finished I will go straight on to the next witness and we will then take questions at the end.

Dr. John D. Woods: I thank the Chairman and the committee for that welcome. I begin by thanking the committee for the opportunity to come here today and give evidence on behalf of the British Medical Association in Northern Ireland and to outline the potential impact of Brexit on doctors and patients on both sides of the Border. I appreciate that some of the committee are perhaps less than familiar with the BMA. The BMA is an apolitical organisation. It has the dual functions of being both a professional association and a trade union. We represent 160,000 doctors and medical students across the UK and have more than 5,500 members in Northern

Ireland.

Northern Ireland's health and social care system, similar to that of the Republic of Ireland, is currently under unprecedented pressure, trying to meet the needs of a growing population with increasingly complex illnesses against a backdrop of strict financial constraint. BMA Northern Ireland is very concerned at the UK's decision to leave the European Union and believes that unless appropriate agreements are implemented, there will be a substantial negative impact on doctors' working lives. This will detrimentally affect patient care on both sides of the Border.

Given the committee's familiarity with this issue I will be try to be concise in outlining what we see as the direct challenges to the medical profession in Northern Ireland and how we think these challenges should be met.

The first significant challenge we have identified is the threat to effective cross-Border co-operation in providing health care. Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are smaller health economies and both have difficulty independently providing some highly specialist services efficiently. By pooling our resources, we can provide high-quality specialist care across the island. In recent years, such services have been developing and are providing significant benefits for patients throughout Ireland.

An example with which the committee is familiar is the paediatric cardiac surgery service based in Crumlin in Dublin, which enables children from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to receive treatment for heart conditions without having to travel abroad, and there are others. I am a consultant kidney doctor and my colleagues on both sides of the Border are exploring whether it is possible to provide some very specialised kidney transplant services together.

Our health services also co-operate in providing high quality medical care to patients who live close to the Border. Good examples are in cancer care and cardiac care. The new radiotherapy unit in Altnagelvin Area Hospital in Derry will provide access to radiotherapy services for over half a million people in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. A cardiology service based at the same hospital provides primary angioplasty, which is the best treatment for heart attacks, for patients in Donegal and saved 27 lives in its first nine months of operation. These services directly benefit Irish citizens living in the north west of Ireland. The existing open Border arrangements facilitate such co-operation between our health services.

The committee is aware of the Cooperation and Working Together, CAWT, project and the role it plays in funding cross-Border health and social care initiatives, and of the EU's related projects via the PEACE and INTERREG funding programmes. Between 2003 and 2015, more than €40 million was invested in cross-Border health and social care initiatives through CAWT. Additional project applications, amounting to €53 million, have been submitted for a wide variety of health-related services. The UK's future financial liabilities to the EU and participation in its funding programmes are a matter of some sensitivity and debate. However, given the relatively small sums involved and the return on investment see, we ask that the Irish and UK Governments give serious consideration to continuing funding of such initiatives after Brexit.

Another issue is cross-Border workers. Committee members are aware there are literally thousands of cross-Border workers in Ireland. More than 13,000 people live in the Republic but work in the North, returning home daily or weekly, and more than 3,000 people from Northern Ireland do the reverse. Many of these people work in health care and make a very important contribution, particularly in Border areas. Cross-Border co-operation and the delivery of health

care, particularly in Northern Ireland, would be impossible without the free movement of these people. To secure our ability to continue to provide high quality health care we need to put in place agreements to permit the ongoing free movement of doctors and health care workers. Maintenance of the common travel area would enable health professionals based on both sides of the Border to travel freely to work and to co-operate in joint initiatives.

I am less familiar with workforce issues in the Republic of Ireland, but Northern Ireland faces some critical shortages of doctors, particularly in primary and secondary care. Doctors who obtained their primary medical qualification from other EU states are an important part of the medical workforce in the United Kingdom. For those doctors, concerns about their future residency status and rights mean that many of our members from other EEA states are planning to leave. The BMA recently carried out a survey of our members in this position throughout the UK. We tried to shed further light on their experiences and perspectives. These European doctors make up approximately 7% of doctors in the NHS. Of the 1,200 respondents, four out of every ten EU doctors reported that they were considering leaving the UK post-Brexit. The resolution of this issue is, for once, relatively simple. Permanent residence should be granted to EEA citizens working as doctors in the UK, and *vice versa*, even if they have been resident for less than five years. Michel Barnier, who spoke to the Oireachtas last month, shares this view and has specifically referenced this issue as a priority within the negotiations.

Another challenge we face is mutual recognition of professional qualifications. A total of 9% of the doctors in Northern Ireland secured their primary medical qualification in another EEA state, with a large number of these doctors having qualified in the Republic of Ireland. Mr. Molloy mentioned the welcome Irish universities extend to students from Northern Ireland and I am one of the people who benefitted from this. I went to Trinity College. There are also doctors from the UK who work in Ireland. They account for approximately 4% of the total number of doctors registered with the Medical Council of Ireland. We understand that an extension of the EU directive is unlikely, but the European Commission's recently published draft negotiating directives state "the withdrawal agreement should continue to provide the same level of protection for EU citizens in the UK and UK citizens in the EU" and specifically referenced recognition of diplomas, certificates and other qualifications. We hope this provision will be agreed and will include medical qualifications. Failure to do so would threaten Irish students' ability to practise medicine in their home country or elsewhere in the EU, and could prevent Northern Irish students currently studying medicine in the Republic from returning home to practise. This would certainly have a detrimental effect on workforce planning and threaten the diversity of our medical schools.

At present a variety of patient safety measures exist. These depend on the mutual sharing of information across Europe. A good example of this is the sharing of information between European regulators when restrictions are placed on a doctor's ability to practise. We believe it is imperative that such safety measures, and other efforts to ensure minimum standards in medical education and training, are maintained and agreed between the respective regulatory and educational authorities.

I appreciate that time does not allow me to go into greater detail, or cover all of the issues impacting the medical profession, but I hope the written evidence BMA Northern Ireland has also submitted will be useful in addition to my contribution today. I thank the committee for its time and I am happy to take any questions.

Chairman: I thank Dr. Woods for his sincere and in-depth remarks. I welcome him and his colleague, Mr. Laffin, to this afternoon's session. Our next presentation is from the Irish

Medical Organisation. I welcome Dr. Ann Hogan and her colleague, Professor Trevor Duffy.

Dr. Ann Hogan: The Irish Medical Organisation, IMO, thanks the Chairman and members of the Seanad Special Committee on the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union for the opportunity to come before it today. The Irish Medical Organisation is the representative body for all doctors throughout Ireland. The organisation has close ties with our colleagues in the British Medical Association. Like our colleagues in the BMA, the members of the IMO have serious concerns about the impact the United Kingdom withdrawal from the European Union will have on the health and isolation of people living in the Border areas and on co-operation in health care delivery, especially between Ireland and Northern Ireland as well as between Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

Membership of the European Union has facilitated co-operation between Ireland and Northern Ireland in the area of health care. The Cooperation And Working Together partnership between health and social care services in Ireland and Northern Ireland has facilitated several successful collaborative projects in health care in the Border regions by managing funding from the EU INTERREG programme and the Special EU Programmes Body. Approximately €47.5 million worth of EU INTERREG VA funding has been provided to support cross-border projects involving Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland until 2020. The projects supported include those aimed at the enhancement of acute services through new technology and e-health solutions, mental health services, supported living, early intervention services and projects aimed at reducing inequalities in health.

Under the EU INTERREG IVA programme 53,000 people in the Border areas benefitted from health and social care services. EU funding of €30 million supported projects in the areas of alcohol, sexual health, diabetes, obesity, eating disorders, autism and disability services. While many of the projects have been limited in duration, the majority have resulted in longer-term service level agreements. These agreements include: the provision of general practice out-of-hours services in Castleblayney in County Monaghan and in Inishowen in County Donegal; shared dermatology clinics at four sites along the Border; ear, nose and throat services at Monaghan Hospital as well as Daisy Hill Hospital and Craigavon Area Hospital in Northern Ireland; and renal services at Daisy Hill. Other cross-border service level agreements exist as a result of collaboration and capital investment from both sides of the Border, including radiation oncology services and emergency cardiology services at Altnagelvin Area Hospital and the provision of all-island paediatric cardiac surgery services for children with congenital heart disease at Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin, Dublin.

The HSE currently purchases a number of high-tech treatments from the UK, including organ transplantation and treatment for lymphoedema. The HSE also purchases care from Northern Ireland and Great Britain under the waiting lists initiative and on a case-by-case basis, including 574 patients who received treatment in the UK under the treatment abroad scheme.

Significant scope exists to further develop services on an all-island and cross-border basis, especially in the area of high-tech tertiary care and in the management of rare diseases. There is also scope to further fill gaps in services to the Border areas. We estimate there are 30,000 frontier workers, many of whom are entitled to access care in both jurisdictions, while all Irish and UK citizens are entitled to access necessary care while temporarily in each jurisdiction with a European health insurance card. An increasing number of patients have taken advantage of the patients' rights in cross-border care regulations with 700 patients accessing care in Northern Ireland last year.

Of necessity, cross-border co-operation exists in the area of public health, especially in the area of health protection. It is essential for the health of the populations on both sides of the Border that this cross-border co-operation continues, especially in the areas of control of outbreaks of infectious diseases, which may have a cross-border dimension, and in emergency planning and response.

Currently, a total of 3,196 doctors who received their primary medical degree in Ireland are registered with the General Medical Council in the UK while 742 doctors who received their primary medical degree in the UK are registered with the Medical Council in Ireland. Many Irish graduates complete their post-graduate training or spend a period in the UK before returning to Ireland, although increasingly, fewer are returning.

The UK departure from the EU will have a significant impact on health and access to health care, particularly in the Border regions. A total of 1.6 million people live in the Border regions. The economic impact of Brexit will increase deprivation rates and isolation, with consequent impact on the health of individuals in the Border areas. The greatest challenges posed by the UK withdrawal from the EU will include ensuring ongoing and future collaboration in the field of health care as well as timely and seamless access to care for patients in Border areas. We cannot be complacent and assume that co-operation will continue in future once the UK has left the EU. Political interests and issues of funding may impact negatively on access and cost of care for patients on both sides of the Border. While INTERREG VA funding has been guaranteed to 2020 there is no guarantee yet of funding thereafter. We know that in the short term EU social security arrangements are to stay in place but in the medium term the rights of cross-border workers and patients' rights to access treatment on a cross-border basis are unclear. Regardless of how hard, or soft, a border will be in place in future, impeding the free movement of patients, ambulances and doctors across the Border will be problematic. Common European regulations relating to pharmaceuticals, medical devices and data protection may no longer apply. Legislation which has aided the movement of health care professionals may no longer apply. In addition, the rights of doctors to work in both jurisdictions and the automatic recognition of medical qualifications will no longer apply. Bureaucracy will affect the flow and training of medical professionals between jurisdictions.

Planning must begin immediately to ensure that patients, especially those in the Border regions, have ongoing access to vital health and social services. The IMO believes that, rather than adopting a wait-and-see attitude, careful planning is required to ensure that collaboration in the area of health care continues and develops in future. We recommend that a cross-border committee be established to examine the impact of Brexit on existing and future cross-border health services and to ensure that watertight agreements are in place for collaboration in future. The committee should include relevant decision-makers within each jurisdiction as well as stakeholders with practical experience. For each collaborative arrangement, every possible future scenario should be developed to assess potential risks and barriers to patient care that may develop and to ensure that pathways for accessing services, treatment and follow-on care are seamless. Long-term cost and funding arrangements for current and future collaborative projects must be secured. Mechanisms must be put in place to ensure that patients, ambulances and health care professionals in both jurisdictions can move in a timely manner across the Border. Where EU legislation has facilitated cross-border health care, bilateral agreements must ensure ongoing co-operation. For example, regulatory bodies in Ireland and the UK should work closely together to ensure the recognition of qualifications and to facilitate the movement of medical and other health care professionals across jurisdictions to avoid duplication of legal requirements.

Future regulatory requirements must ensure that high standards are maintained in respect of medicines, medical devices and food safety. Arrangements must ensure that prescriptions written by medical professionals on one side of the Border are recognised on the other side. Future regulatory arrangements and eHealth standards must ensure that patient data can be securely transferred between health care settings from one side of the Border to the other side. Finally, the North-South Ministerial Council should develop a proactive strategy to ensure ongoing and future collaboration in the development of cross-border and all-island health care services.

Chairman: Thank you, Dr. Hogan and Dr. Woods. I have two questions that you might be able to address. One relates to the last comment you made, Dr. Hogan, in respect of the potential for the North-South Ministerial Council and the context of where we are now in terms of UK-Irish relations and the reliance on the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council and the various other forums for discussion and agreement. Is the North-South Ministerial Council the best way to replace the ongoing discussion at ministerial level? What do you imagine would be needed to expand that role?

My second question relates to a comment we heard earlier from representatives of the INMO. They referred to the European Medicines Agency, the ultimate relocation from London to somewhere else and the ongoing bid from Dublin to attract the EMA to Dublin. We know what the positive impacts of that, from the perspectives of both employment and the economy, on the region would be but if it was to come to Dublin, what would it mean, either positively or negatively, to either organisation and those they represent? Does either of my colleagues want to add anything to that?

Senator Paul Daly: I will take up one point Dr. Woods made. He stated four out of every ten doctors in the UK have indicated the possibility of moving on or leaving. What detrimental effect would that have? While we are here to formulate a report and steer matters from this side, the UK's problems are not our problems but they are our problems. I was intrigued by that. Did they give reasons as to why they indicated that?

I will elaborate on the Chairman's question on the problems these organisations foresee with regard to regulation, in particular, drug regulation, drug standards and new drugs perhaps being accepted in a new UK and not here. Irrespective of the cross-Border issues they mentioned, what issues may arise in that regard? In the greater scheme of things down the line, what is the possibility of certain drugs not being available in the North which would be available, accessible or sanctioned in the South, or *vice versa*, and can they see that creating problems for those with rare diseases in one jurisdiction wanting to access such drugs from the other?

Senator Michelle Mulherin: I thank the witnesses for their presentations and practical recommendations.

I have a question. We had Liam Doran of the INMO here earlier and he foresaw that the issue of Brexit would accelerate the drive to bring more health care professionals, particularly nurses and midwives, to the UK because it is not supplying its own to meet its needs. With our doctors leaving, it is a problem. Do they envision that there will be an increased number of doctors leaving or will Brexit, or the other factors, play into that? Also, although it is not quite strictly Brexit, how do we keep our doctors?

Chairman: It is absolutely strictly Brexit. I ask Dr. Woods to respond first, and then Dr. Hogan.

Dr. John D. Woods: On the subject of the Chairman's question on the EMA, it is certainly clear that having the EMA in London has been positive for the UK pharmaceutical industry and for medical research in the UK. It is clear it will leave. If it comes to Dublin, we would view that positively from the point of view of Northern Ireland because, as was outlined earlier, there are very significant collaborations in terms of medical research between universities, North and South, and anything that would benefit that would be of benefit to us all.

When I talked about the four-tenths of doctors who would eventually leave the UK, those are European graduates. European graduates make up 8% of the medical workforce overall in the United Kingdom but of those, just under half have said that they would potentially leave. The first problem for them is insecurity, for instance, as to whether they will even be entitled to residency. That is why one of our asks was for them to be given guaranteed residency in the UK. I suspect another problem is that many of those are doctors in training who are gaining UK postgraduate qualifications which, until now, have currency throughout Europe. If those postgraduate qualifications were no longer recognised, for instance, by the Greek medical council, I would foresee it would be less attractive to them.

The Chairman was quite right about the issue of innovative new drugs. I see this as a problem for us rather than for Ireland because Ireland will still be in the European medicines regulatory framework. However, we will be stepping outside of that. We will be a small market then. I would anticipate that major pharmaceutical companies will be much less likely to go through the rigorous process early of licensing their new drugs. For us in the UK, it will mean that we will gain access to new innovative treatments later than we would at present. It is a problem for us rather than for Ireland.

Senator Mulherin talked about doctors leaving Ireland being attracted to the UK. We see the problems being the reverse. We are concerned that lots of Irish graduates who are working in the UK currently will come back to Ireland and will not want to work in the UK. As I stated, doctors who graduated in another EU country contribute 8% of our workforce in medicine overall and we desperately cannot do without them. In some specialties, particularly surgical specialties such as obstetrics and ophthalmology, 15% of the doctors are graduates from other European countries, including Irish graduates, and we cannot fill those positions currently without those doctors.

Dr. Ann Hogan: To follow on from the issue of the doctors, an awful lot will depend on the recognition of qualifications. If Irish doctors working in the UK are in training and the qualification concerned will not be recognised in other EU countries, they may well leave the UK, but then if the qualifications are recognised, who knows what will happen? There has traditionally been considerable movement of Irish doctors back and forwards to the UK for training and for longer-term work, as there has been with all kinds of Irish workers, but increasingly, Irish doctors are going further afield to other English-speaking countries. They are going to Australia, Canada and the US also. The UK is not the main market for Irish graduates, whereas it used to be.

On the question about the North-South Ministerial Council, I suppose if the UK is leaving the EU, because of the UK being our closest neighbours and that making it practical for us to collaborate on many issues, particularly in relation to rare diseases, and also due to part of the UK being part of our island where collaboration in all areas makes the most sense, negotiating bodies at every level will have to be established between us and the UK to replace negotiations that would have gone on at European level in the past because it is too important to both populations to let those connections die.

Does Professor Duffy want to add anything?

Professor Trevor Duffy: If I may?

Chairman: Of course.

Professor Trevor Duffy: I suppose I have a couple of comments. First, on the North-South Ministerial Council, very much as Dr. Hogan has said, it will certainly have a much more significant role, but it is important to see this as not only a North-South issue. A significant component of our health care co-operation exists with mainland UK also. For example, historically, one thinks of transplant programmes, such as lung transplant programmes that would have worked through places such as Newcastle. That council could probably do with being broadened to work across the UK.

Taking both drug regulation, availability of new innovative products, etc., and the EMA together, undoubtedly, if the EMA were to relocate to Ireland, it would have all sorts of positive knock-on effects, not only economic. Specifically, within health care, one would hope it would give Ireland a reasonable voice at the EMA. If it leaves London and goes to mainland Europe, we would certainly have to fight to maintain a voice at the EMA.

If the EMA resides in Ireland, one would hope it would have a knock-on impact on clinical trials that happen in Irish hospitals. Currently, the clinical trial activity within the hospital sector is probably 30% of what happens in comparators, such as Denmark. There is clear, well accepted evidence now that research-active hospitals, that is, hospitals that engage in not simply education but clinical research, have significant mortality and morbidity advantages over non-research active hospitals. It is a strong drive for organisations, such as the HRB, to increase trial activity. The European Medicines Agency would have significant positive knock-on effects all the way through to new drug opportunities and availability. While I put my hand up here as being quite ignorant of the details of this, I want us to consider the potential of having the EMA here, the potential of the UK leaving and the effect this might have on drug pricing here. Drug pricing is something we obviously struggle with. It has an EU flavour when we talk about the reference pricing across the basket of 14 countries and so on.

There are two sides to implications for medical professionals. There is certainly an unhealthy exodus of medical professionals from Ireland at the moment, not just to the UK but across the English-speaking world in particular. That is a different day's work. There has traditionally been a very healthy sharing of medical professionals between Ireland and the UK. All the way through the training cycle, for example, our higher surgical training schemes are very much co-governed between the UK and Irish colleges. Many of our specialists spend some time on fellowship training in the UK. I can think, for example, of one patient in particular who attends us at present with a complex immune disease. Through contact with one of our own trainees who is now a consultant in one of the London hospitals, we were able to gain advice and that patient is now going to seek a very considered and planned consultation in London. The hope is that that trainee will eventually come back to take up a post and bring those skills back to Ireland with her. It is a very healthy exchange.

Given the tightness of training, one could paint a possible scenario that if the UK loses many of its other EU graduates, its French and German graduates for example, that it might try to fill that gap with Irish graduates. There is potentially a downside to the number of doctors suggesting that they might leave the UK.

One thing that we have been good at within the medical profession, both here and with our colleagues in the BMA, is really seeing the value of the larger European project. We are very well acquainted with each other through organisations like the European Union of Medical Specialists and the approach that organisations like that take to trying to improve the standardisation of postgraduate qualifications across Europe. That side of our work and engagement also needs to be protected through the course of Brexit.

Chairman: I thank Professor Duffy and all six witnesses for coming here this afternoon and for sharing with us a wealth of knowledge. We appreciate that, as well as their detailed responses to the questions posed by all three of us. We will now suspend the meeting briefly to change around the witnesses.

The select committee suspended at 12.43 p.m. and resumed at 12.46 p.m.

Engagement with Tourism Ireland

Chairman: We are now back in public session. After a morning discussing health and social issues we are moving back to one of our all-island bodies that was unable to join us at the previous session. We are delighted, however, that they could come in today to talk about an issue that got a lot of headline coverage yesterday from some of our speakers so we look forward to further engagement. I am delighted to welcome both of our guests from Tourism Ireland. Before I invite them to make their opening remarks I will read out the standard note on privilege.

Members are reminded of the longstanding parliamentary practice to the effect that members 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 them 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 this committee. If they are directed by the committee to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to a qualified privilege in respect of their evidence. They are directed that only evidence connected to 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, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

With that out of the way, I invite Mr. Niall Gibbons to make his remarks.

Mr. Niall Gibbons: I thank the Chairman and the Senators. My name is Niall Gibbons and I am the Chief Executive of Tourism Ireland. I thank the committee for the opportunity to address it here today. As members will know, Tourism Ireland is the organisation responsible for marketing the island of Ireland overseas. We undertake marketing campaigns in 23 key source markets around the globe.

Tourism is a vital industry for the island of Ireland. It is a significant driver of economic growth and helps to support more than 281,000 jobs in communities right across the whole island. Overseas tourism has recorded six consecutive years of growth. Last year, 2016, surpassed all previous records, where we welcomed some 10.3 million overseas visitors, spending more than €5.3 billion. Northern Ireland has shared in that record growth. In fact, last year it welcomed more than 2.1 million overseas visitors, an increase of 9% over 2015, generating

more than £543 million for the Northern Ireland economy. That is an increase of 12%.

This year, 2017, represents a mixed picture. The latest CSO figures show continued strong performances in the first four months of the year. North America is up 27%, Australia and developing markets are up 18% and mainland Europe is up 3% overall. Visitor numbers from Great Britain to the Republic of Ireland, however, declined by 8% in the first four months of 2017. Of greater concern is the fact that British visitors to Europe increased as a whole in the same period. This means that the island of Ireland has lost market share. In fact, we have seen the annual rate of growth in British visitors go from a rise of 8% in 2016 to a drop of 12.4% in the month of April 2017 alone. This is quite a change.

The UK voted to exit the EU last June and Tourism Ireland took immediate steps to deal with that new situation. These included: market research undertaken by RedC in Britain to evaluate consumer sentiment on holidaying in Ireland; market assessment of economic trends by Oxford Economics; liaison with key tourism industry partners to assess implications; and liaison with key international partners and bodies such as the European Tourism Association, ETOA, and UKinbound, to gauge reaction and implications. According to Oxford Economics, outbound holidays from the UK will decline by 1.5 million trips this year. It estimates that travel to the island of Ireland from the UK will decline by 4% in 2017. This means we are likely to welcome 141,000 fewer British visitors this year and experience a shortfall in tourism revenue of €43 million - and this is before any withdrawal from the EU or any attendant changes.

In addition, our Red C survey found that of those Britons who will holiday overseas, 50% are likely to spend less on holidays, 26% will change their accommodation type, 25% will reduce their length of stay, 18% say the Brexit vote will influence their holiday choice in the next year and 17% will think about postponing a trip outside the UK.

The other major issue identified relates to currency and competition. Ireland's competitiveness as a destination is also under pressure. The movement of sterling versus the euro and dollar since the referendum makes Great Britain a more competitive destination for visitors from mainland Europe and the United States. We have observed our competitors, VisitBritain, VisitScotland and VisitWales, intensifying their operations across all of Ireland's major tourism markets to capitalise on this.

According to Britain's Office for National Statistics, inbound tourism to the UK was up by 7% in the early months of 2017. Bookings for flights to the UK for spring and summer are up by 19%. Staycation searches within the UK are up by 25%. In terms of Ireland's competitiveness, searches on *Booking.com* for hotel accommodation across a basket of European cities - Amsterdam, Barcelona, Copenhagen, London and Paris - show Dublin to be the second most expensive. Our value for money message is more important than ever in 2017.

The challenge of Brexit is very real. As outlined earlier, we are beginning to see the impact in the latest CSO results for visitors from Britain to Ireland. Working closely with our tourism industry partners, and with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland has identified and is implementing a number of strategic actions to mitigate the adverse impact. First, we are pursuing a strategy of market diversification. This strategy commenced in 2014 and focuses more effort on markets with longer staying and higher spending visitors. This saw mainland Europe become the largest contributor of overseas tourism revenue with €1.8 billion spent in 2016 and if current trends continue, North America will overtake Britain as the number two market in 2017. This spring, our national TV campaign in the United States of America reached an estimated 255 million

potential visitors and our TV and digital campaigns in Germany and France reached 36 million potential visitors. Second, Britain will continue to be an important market for the island of Ireland. As mentioned earlier, competitiveness and value for money are more important than ever. Tourism Ireland is placing greater emphasis on the consumer segment that we call the culturally curious, who are generally less affected by currency fluctuations than other groups of travellers. In Britain, we have a year-long marketing programme in place with greater focus on digital marketing, cinema and online advertising and publicity. Our expanded partnership programme with airlines, ferry operators and tour operators, is communicating strong price-led messages to drive home the value-for-money message. One example is the partnerships we have developed this year with Stena Line, Irish Ferries, Rosslare Europort and Waterford, Wexford and Kilkenny county councils to attract British visitors to Ireland's Ancient East.

Great Britain is a vital market for tourism to the island of Ireland. To the island as a whole it delivers 47% of all overseas visitors and around 30% of all overseas tourism revenue. The British market is even more important for Northern Ireland. Britain accounts for 65% of all visitors and 58% of all tourism revenue there. We simply must continue to defend our share of this highly competitive market. Against this backdrop, the tourism marketing budget has seen a 34% reduction over the past nine years.

We have also identified a number of key priorities from an overseas tourism perspective arising out of Brexit. Retention of the common travel area and free movement of overseas visitors across the Border are both vitally important for the continued development of tourism to the island but especially for overseas tourism to Northern Ireland and to Border counties. On average, 75% of visitors from North America to Northern Ireland and 66% of visitors from Europe arrive via the Republic of Ireland. In addition, about 950 international tour operators now programme Northern Ireland, predominantly as part of an island of Ireland tour. Any impediment or perceived impediment to free movement between the two jurisdictions and delays at Border checkpoints could discourage tour operators from continuing to programme Northern Ireland and Border counties and holiday visitors from travelling between the two jurisdictions.

With regard to developing markets such as China, India and the Middle East, the British-Irish visa scheme, introduced in 2014, and the short stay visa waiver programme, introduced in 2011, have provided a significant boost to our promotional efforts in these markets. Tourism Ireland and VisitBritain signed a memorandum of understanding in April 2014, with the aim of working more closely together - particularly in long-haul markets outside of Europe and North America - to promote the island of Ireland and Great Britain as destinations to be visited as part of a single holiday. Over the past three years, the two organisations have worked together to highlight the British-Irish visa scheme in India and China. We welcome the recent announcement that the short stay visa waiver programme is to be extended for a further five years to 2021. The ongoing status of the British-Irish visa scheme requires clarification.

On a more positive note, we were very pleased that the World Economic Forum's global travel and tourism competitiveness index now ranks Ireland at number three in the world, out of 136 countries, for effectiveness of marketing and branding to attract tourists. This has been achieved despite, diminishing resources, through the development of world-class marketing programmes, including a significant digital footprint. *Ireland.com* now attracts close to 20 million visits a year and is available in 11 languages. Tourism Ireland is the fourth most popular tourism board in the world on Facebook, the fourth on Twitter and the third largest on the globe on YouTube. The creation of award-winning digital campaigns has capitalised on our connections with "Game of Thrones" and "Star Wars" and has allowed us to reach new audiences and

millions of active fans across the world. Campaigns with the major air and sea carriers serving the island of Ireland and with traditional and online tour operators leverage significant funding each year from the commercial sector. This is encouraged also with investment by Irish Ferries and Stena Line in the past few years.

Our annual overseas publicity programme and our relationships with 22,000 international media around the world, generate positive exposure for the island of Ireland worth an estimated €326.7 million each year and greatly influences perceptions of Ireland overseas. It is, however, not just about marketing. Favourable winds such as a 42% increase in air access since 2010, particularly on transatlantic routes, supportive currency exchange levels, the current fashion status of the island of Ireland as a location for “Star Wars” and “Game of Thrones” and our capacity to shift to new, lower cost, digital and social media marketing have helped to deliver record performances to the island of Ireland over the past six years, despite diminishing budgets. Few, if any, of those factors will continue indefinitely. This spring, we will see the impact of exchange rates on the market from Britain. Research is also showing a significant and worrying diminution in what we call Ireland’s share of voice, or visibility, in our top markets. Over the past year, we have seen major competitors intensify their marketing - not just in Britain where there is a major push for domestic holidays but also in North America, mainland Europe and Australia - in Ireland’s most important tourism source markets.

It is not just about tourism boards. For example, last year Ryanair announced 15 new routes into Scotland from mainland Europe, including Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain. Another critical component is the future of the EU-UK open skies agreement, which has the potential to have significant downside risks for Ireland if a successful solution is not found. In addition to this, a range of practical issues have been flagged by ferry operators in respect of the impact of Brexit.

The challenges are very real. We all know the world is a very turbulent place. I convey my condolences to the people of Manchester and London on the recent tragic events there. Issues of safety and stability, consumer confidence, exchange rates, energy and oil prices all play a role in the global tourism market.

Notwithstanding that, Tourism Ireland is working with industry partners to grow overseas tourism spend this year by 4.5%. We also aspire to deliver on the Irish Government and Northern Ireland Executive’s long-term targets, the success of which will be dependent on the external factors I have already mentioned and the resources to implement world-class marketing campaigns in our overseas markets. I thank the committee for the opportunity to present today and I am happy to discuss these matters in further detail in the question and answer session.

Chairman: I thank Mr. Gibbons. I have some questions but I will first go to my colleagues if they would like to come in at this point.

Senator Michelle Mulherin: I thank Mr. Gibbons and Mr. Clarke for their attendance today and for the presentation. I want to hone in on the figure that has been given of an 8% decline in people visiting from Great Britain. Is this to the whole of the island of Ireland or just to the Republic?

Mr. Niall Gibbons: That decline relates to the Republic of Ireland for the first four months.

Senator Michelle Mulherin: Equally, I note from Mr. Gibbons’s presentation that while people are travelling, they are making a different choice to go to mainland Europe. I wonder

why this is. I see the figures in the Red C survey on Britons' attitudes to travel but we must ask why those who travel are not opting for Ireland? The way Ireland is marketed is very impressive and even being Irish we get a certain pride from the images that come at us about what it means to be Irish. I am not saying this is what it is to be Irish but the whole promotion definitely has a very positive feel about it. If we are to be ahead of the curve and looking forward into markets and trends, we know that people will not keep doing the same thing all the time and that people get older. Mr. Gibbons can tell me more about this than I can tell him. What do we need to do to avoid sliding? Mr. Gibbons has identified areas where flags are being raised. What do we need to do?

In the neck of the woods where I am from - they are sick of listening to me talking about it - in the west of Ireland, I believe that the Wild Atlantic Way has been fantastic in that it has shifted focus northwards. Traditionally perhaps it stopped at Galway and went south. There are towns and villages where people with bed and breakfast accommodation rarely had guests but now are at capacity. It has brought a new vibrancy. In terms of the marketing, what more can we do? To me, there is way more potential. Notwithstanding the numbers, we are talking from a very low base. I am excluding on the western seaboard Westport because that was already in formation as being a strong performer in both domestic and international tourism. I am wondering about north of there. Naturally we do not want to sit on our laurels and want to press on. What advice would Tourism Ireland give to community groups, councils and different bodies involved in these areas? They are trying to promote their areas and are doing their best at every opportunity. I noted with interest a blog by a North American tourist that was posted widely on Facebook. For some reason, he went off the main track and went north of Galway and ended up in County Mayo and around counties Sligo and Donegal. He was blown away and could not get over how people do not know about it. I know this is an individual with a blog but it reinforces what I am saying, which is that there is an awful lot there. It is wild and it is not very commercialised. What advice would Tourism Ireland give the people there? There are limited resources to market. What is the best way to do it?

Senator Paul Daly: Coincidentally I wanted to take Mr. Gibbons up on that point as well, because I was taken aback by the drop in UK visitors here. I said straight away to myself that it was the effect of the sterling-euro rates. He carried on to state, however, that the number of UK citizens travelling to the EU had not changed but that involves the same exchange rate. I would like to hear the answer on that one.

With the Brexit scenario, could there be a silver lining? If we manage to negotiate and maintain our common travel area but it is more difficult for UK citizens to travel to the Continent, could that potentially open up a bigger market for us due to the ease of access? Have we any plans in place to sell along those lines depending on the outcome of the negotiations? Has there been any thought been put into that? Are there other worldwide options that we should be exploring? We would be the only English speaking area in the EU etc. Could there be potential here down the line?

I compliment Mr. Gibbons on the figures he has given over the years. Thanks to the great work of Tourism Ireland, tourism in Ireland is a real success story. It is a success story to date. I know there is the little blip that is Brexit in every sector. As the Chairman pointed out earlier, this is our 38th or 39th hour here interviewing and meeting people from all the different sectors. There are no, or not many, positives in any sector or area. Tourism will be no different. Can we turn it around to a positive? At the end of the day that is the question I am asking.

Chairman: The great thing about allowing colleagues to go first is that that was one of my

questions but I have two other ones. We heard in general economic terms in other sessions about the need - for obvious reasons - for capital infrastructure. Many of those feed into the transport sector, which I can only imagine will have a major impact on the tourism sector. These include the development of our ports, not just for commercial reasons but also for tourism and leisure reasons, as well as the development of metro north, the DART underground and the M20 among so many other projects. Are there other key capital infrastructural programmes Tourism Ireland would identify as being vital for promoting and maximising the tourism product that the island of Ireland could offer? Excuse me if this is a little blunt, but what additional resources has Tourism Ireland received post-Brexit, what has it asked for and what more does it need?

Mr. Niall Gibbons: I will start at the top and give some detail on the figures. When the referendum was held last year and the result turned out the way it did, we went immediately into action mode. We visited the UK to interview some key players in the marketplace there. We asked Red C to carry out a survey on consumer sentiment, which is critical in our business. Economic sentiment has a huge impact on people's intention to travel. Some of the figures I referred to were similar. We did the Red C survey twice. We did it in July and then again in January and there was little change in sentiment. Essentially, what it reflected is that people feel they are going to be poorer and that then they are going to spend less on their holidays.

We also wanted to watch how the British market would perform. To date what we have seen is that the British take approximately 65 million trips abroad every year in total. That is the size of the market. Oxford Economics, which advise us, initially reckoned that they would take 1.5 million trips less - a 2% reduction. We are now looking at travel into Ireland this year being down by perhaps 4%. The forecasts are starting to get worse rather than better. We only got the information in from the Office for National Statistics in the UK last week. This showed that the number of British people travelling into mainland Europe has slightly increased, which is interesting. We do not have all the information or the answer as to why. However, competitiveness is a key issue for us at the moment. It is there in the eurozone. However, we know, for example, from looking at booking engines such as *Booking.com* that Ireland's hotel prices are among the most expensive in Europe at the moment. We just took Dublin by way of example and benchmarked it against Copenhagen, Amsterdam, London and Paris. We were ahead of London and Paris. Only Amsterdam was more expensive. That was across a range of dates as we headed into the summer season. We have seen, according to STR data, average room rates in hotels increase by 8% again during 2017. We need to be mindful of this because we cannot expect to walk into 2017 increasing prices on last year when we have already had approximately 10% to 15% depreciation on currency. Competitiveness is absolutely and utterly crucial.

On the regional question, we are also at a point where at peak times of the year we have capacity constraints within our industry, both in terms of hotel accommodation and visitor attractions. It is vital that we start to work to develop season extension and our regional proposition. We have worked closely with our colleagues in Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland on products such as the Wild Atlantic Way and how it gets projected into the marketplace. The advice that I would give to community groups is to work with the people on the ground in Fáilte Ireland. We need to see and find out if there are ways we can bring the stories of all these small places to life in the overseas marketplace. People are coming to Ireland to look for an experience that stands out and about which they can brag. There are many places off the beaten track that offer that. It is important that people offer these experiences longer into the season than they currently do. It is very hard when in a rural area. Sometimes the season only goes from perhaps May to September. In our most recent meeting with our colleagues in Fáilte Ireland, we were encouraged to see them try to work with clusters of the industry to push the opening of

the season out longer. Unless there are things to do and restaurants and visitor attractions stay open a little longer, it will be very hard to deliver that season extension.

The Wild Atlantic Way has been a great success. It has been really well received overseas. I always keep reminding people that our clock goes back to zero on 1 January and that we have to do it all again. The in excess of 10 million people it is hoped will come in 2017 are not the people that came last year. When we speak of a spend of a 4.5% increase, it is really a 104.5% because all the people that come this year are not be coming back again. We have to keep on working with the industry on the ground. The northern part of the Wild Atlantic Way offers an awful lot of opportunity because there is a lot of congestion on the southern part of the Wild Atlantic Way. I know that our colleagues in Fáilte Ireland are looking at places such as Sliabh Liag in County Donegal and towns such as Sligo that offer additional capacity for us to sell into the international marketplace.

Is there a silver lining to Brexit? Last year 1.2 billion people took trips around the globe spending approximately \$1.5 trillion. That is the size and scope of the global travel industry. Forecasts from the United Nations World Tourism Organization are that it will continue to grow by approximately 4% to 5% per year and that there will be approximately 1.8 billion people taking trips around the world by 2030. Brexit will come and go, and I do not know how it will unfold, but people are still going to travel and we have to make sure that we have sufficient visibility in the international marketplace to grow our fair share of that. Everybody in the political and business world would like the common travel area to remain but our market diversification strategy, which we started on way before Brexit came into existence, has seen some amazing results. Our growth in places like France and Germany has been really spectacular. Spain is now our fifth largest tourism market and has seen business quadruple in the past 15 years, to the point where we have 400,000 people visiting Ireland every year. Italy has grown very strong. Operators from China are reporting very strong double digit growth on the back of the British-Irish visa scheme and some of the promotions that are on offer. The silver lining that will come out of it is our capacity to diversify and grow as much business as we can from other markets, but we must get the message out there that we are not giving up on Britain. It is still a really important market for us, but when one's budget is down by 35% one has to make tough choices. We cannot be out there with the same level of visibility that we had five or six years ago. That is a big risk for us.

The responsibility for capital infrastructure largely falls to our colleagues in Fáilte Ireland. They have spending proposals but I cannot elaborate on the detail of what those are. Some of the projects mentioned there are important. As our main tourism sites get busier and busier it is really important that we develop a second tier of visitor attractions, and Fáilte Ireland have submitted capital proposals to that effect. I do not have the details of those today, but I am very supportive of that.

We have made the point that we cannot continue to grow at this rate while our share of voice starts to shrink. It has been shrinking in the last number of years. Our visibility in all our key main markets has been falling at quite a rapid rate over the last number of years, and Ireland's ranking compared to competitor destinations has been falling as well. That is a concern for us. As part of the tourism action group established by Deputy Paschal Donohoe when he was Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport there was a commitment to restore the tourism marketing budget, although it was silent on the timescale. We saw our budget stabilise in 2017, although as a result of the collapse in the value of sterling versus the dollar we were left nursing a wound of over €1 million in exchange rate losses. We get a grant of £11 million from the Department

of the Economy in Northern Ireland which more than covers our spend in sterling in the UK, but we have to then convert that to US dollars. We lost over €1 million last year on the currency exchange because of the collapse of sterling against the dollar. These things have had unintended consequences for us. We sought restoration of budget in discussions as part of the development of our corporate plan over a four year period. We have not been successful in that yet but we will keep hammering away at it. However, we have seen great successes and we are delighted with them. I thank the committee for the compliments. It was nice that the World Economic Forum gave us a good accolade as well. That is only sustainable for so long. We are in the business of generating economic growth here. We intend to generate spend this year in excess of €5.5 billion. The summer season still appears to be very positive, because the exceptionally strong growth that we have in North America, the very strong growth we have had in long haul markets and the modest growth in Europe is certainly painting over the mixed picture that we are seeing. That 8% fall in Britain is quite a worrying trend.

Chairman: I thank the witnesses for their contributions. I am proud to say that I am staycationing this year and doing my bit for the cause. Perhaps it is because I had to pay for a Seanad election last year, but that is neither here nor there.

Senator Michelle Mulherin: The Chairman can staycation and go abroad on holiday.

Chairman: I thank the witnesses sincerely for their contributions and for the detailed answers to our questions. We are now going to suspend the meeting as time has caught up on us.

Sitting suspended at 1.15 p.m. and resumed at 2.35 p.m.

Engagement with European Youth Forum, Education and Training Boards Ireland and Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Chairman: I welcome members to the afternoon session of today's marathon meeting, which will focus on social, labour and youth affairs. I am delighted to welcome a range of interesting and expert speakers from various backgrounds: Mr. David Garrahy from the European Youth Forum, Ms Anne McHugh from the Education and Training Boards Ireland and Ms Patricia King, general secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, ICTU. I will invite the speakers in order and there will then be a question and answer 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 outside the House 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 their evidence to the committee. However, if they are directed by the committee to cease giving evidence on a particular matter and they continue to do so, they are entitled thereafter only to a 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 they are asked to respect the parliamentary practice to the effect that, where possible, they should not criticise or make charges against any person, persons or entity by name or in such a way as to make him, her or it identifiable.

I invite Mr. Garrahy to make his opening remarks.

Mr. David Garrahy: I thank the Senators for their invitation to be here today. I represent the European Youth Forum which advocates for the rights and the interests of tens of millions of young people across Europe. We do that through 104 different youth organisations. I am based in Brussels. I am an Irish person who has lived there for the past eight years. In that period, I have gained a profound appreciation for what has changed socially and politically, especially for young people, in this period of great change.

Another Irish person who lived and worked in Brussels in a period of great change was the former commissioner for education and trade, Mr. Peter Sutherland. In 1985, he launched the first ERASMUS programme, which created one of the EU's greatest success stories. Today, ERASMUS has a budget of about €2 billion every year. Because of it and other similar programmes, 10% of European students spend some of their studies abroad. In the period from 2014 to 2020, ERASMUS will provide opportunities to more than four million young people to study, train, gain experience and volunteer abroad. It is especially relevant for young Irish people because 56% of young Irish people now access higher education. That is due in no small part to a lot of support that EU funding for higher education infrastructure has given to the Irish people over the years.

My own secondary school in Lisdoonvarna, County Clare, benefited from one of these programmes in 1994. It is a programme that is now part of ERASMUS Plus. In 1994, I visited the European Parliament in Strasbourg on a school trip. Speaking there with many people from different backgrounds such as Spanish, French and Italian - or sometimes gesturing because as 14-year olds we did not have the language skills necessary - brought home to me at a very young and influential age the real benefit of the vastness of Europe and how big the different cultures and approaches are. I was as excited back then as I am now about the potential there is when people explore different identities, exchange and look at different ways of approaching problems and try to implement them together, which is what the EU is all about.

I mentioned that four million young people will have accessed ERASMUS by 2020. One revealing statistic is that one million of those people will meet their life partner through ERASMUS. One in four ERASMUS students end up marrying, partnering or living their lives with someone else from a different cultural background. It is estimated that there are already one million of what they call ERASMUS babies, that is, children that have been born because of cross-cultural exchange programmes such as ERASMUS. It brings home the fact that ERASMUS is a fundamental way for Europe to start discovering and knowing itself. Europe does not exist; it has to come into being. This knowledge must be renewed every generation. I think young people in the UK recognise this, which is why between 2007 and 2014, the numbers of young UK people accessing ERASMUS increased by about 115%. That is a huge increase.

As we all know, however, the result of the Brexit referendum on 23 June 2016 put all of this at risk. There are knock-on effects not only for young British people, but also for young Irish people. Young Irish farmers may see their markets disappear, Irish students may not be able to go to the university of their choice if that university is across the Border, for example. Irish citizens in Northern Ireland may not be able to access their EU rights. Just before the referendum, I spoke at a British Chamber event on young people and Brexit. I said something then that I still believe, which is that there is no upside to Brexit for young people.

Young people in the UK are profoundly pro-EU. Some 73% of 18 to 24 year olds and even 61% of 25 to 34 year olds voted to remain. It was the overwhelming votes of the over 65s that tipped the result narrowly in favour of the leave vote. We are in a moment of profound uncertainty right now. Depending on what happens in the UK general election today, who knows

what will happen with the EU-UK negotiations. However, there seems to be a bit of a phoney war going on right now. That will settle down when the negotiations start happening. There are already a few issues and a few potential solutions that I will try to highlight that are very clear right now in terms of what young people are going to face.

The economic effect will be huge, especially if there was to be an exit of the UK from the EU without an agreement. Young people always tend to be the first hit by unemployment in terms of an economic downturn. Ireland must look to ensure continuing investment in training for young people. Planning for this is vital. There is a huge amount of funds, such as the globalisation adjustment fund and the youth guarantee to help Ireland ensure that, if there is a downturn in the economy, young people will still have the necessary skills for the job market. The common standards and laws that protect young people from harm, both online and in real life, will be brutally unpicked by Brexit, with potential impacts on the safety of young people and cross-Border co-operation in the future. In terms of family law, data protection laws and the European arrest warrant, there are huge impacts on Irish-UK co-operation. The two governments should immediately enter into discussions on police, legal and judicial co-operation after Brexit.

As I mentioned, young farmers could be hit with export tariffs and see their markets disappear. Some 43% of our beef and dairy produce goes to the UK. An Bord Bia and other State agencies should be focusing on developing markets in the EU 27, especially in the central and eastern European markets, which have not been a traditional focus but are developing with very strong momentum.

The future for cross-Border exchanges and access to higher education could be in jeopardy. I mentioned ERASMUS. With regard the future mutual recognition of qualifications, are we sure that a degree in Ireland will still be recognised in the UK in two years' time, for example? There is an opportunity here for Irish education institutions to develop co-operation with EU universities. There are a lot of projects and partners that the UK is no longer able to provide support for. With our strong higher education infrastructure, Ireland has an opportunity to step in and be part of projects and exchanges that will broaden the minds of educators and students alike. Language learning should be mandatory in schools up to leaving cert level.

Cross-Border co-operation is one of the biggest worries and fears that young people face. We have to ask the question: in the future, will young people look and see the people across the Border to Northern Ireland or to the Republic of Ireland as the other? This has never been the case for many young people growing up today in Ireland. What about the rights of Irish citizens, and therefore EU citizens, who live in Northern Ireland? We need to invest in developing and continuing the links across the Border, especially between young people from different backgrounds and communities. The contribution that young people can make is in terms of youth work and sport, which can play a very important role in that.

Ireland has one of the youngest populations in Europe, with one third aged under 25, a proportion which is increasing every year. I spoke about borders earlier. It is the same situation across Europe. Under-25s are called "generation Maastricht" because, with that treaty, borders disappeared across the EU. Young people developed a more open mindset. They did not see borders or obstacles but rather saw opportunities. It was the same in Ireland. Our own Border mainly disappeared at this time due to the peace process. Seamus Heaney once described his own young generation in a way which is also applicable to young people today. He said that they had "intelligences brightened and unmannerly as crowbars". The ultimate solution for young people today - for this "generation Maastricht" or "generation Good Friday Agreement"

- is to enable them to take that crowbar to division, separation and divisiveness and to continue to enable them to live together.

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Deputy Zappone, hosted a forum on the impact of the UK's exit from the EU on children and young people, which was very timely and useful. I sent information on this as a background document in January. The forum reflected a number of the issues I raised today about employment and protection of young people. Other issues reflected were the maintenance of peace on our island and the continued dialogue between communities, which is so important for young people.

I thank the Senators for taking the time to listen to me today. I am pleased to go into more detail if there are any questions on the issues I have raised.

Chairman: I thank Mr. Garrahy. We really appreciate that contribution.

Ms Anne McHugh: To give a little bit of background, I represent Education and Training Boards Ireland, ETBI. All our education and training boards, ETBs, are responsible for second level schools, a number of primary schools and further education and training, FET. We do some other things as well - music education, outdoor education and other programmes. That is our remit. In terms of Quality and Qualifications Ireland, QQI, levels, we are responsible for level 1 to level 6. The institutes of technology and institutes of higher education go from level 6 to level 10. That is the space we are in. A lot of my remarks today will be about further rather than higher education.

Since Brexit was announced, we have been involved in a lot of work with the county councils and other groups, particularly in Donegal and the Border areas. Last month the Minister of State, Deputy Joe McHugh, hosted a Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Brexit event. We also had a function in December which was co-hosted by the two councils, Derry City and Strabane District Council and Donegal County Council. A document was produced as a result of that. I have one copy of the map, which I believe I included in the presentation, which shows very interesting patterns of cross-Border commuting. It highlights some of the issues I will talk about as I go through my presentation. I have about nine items. I will not go into detail on all of them. I know that Mr. Garrahy has also touched on a few of them.

Our biggest concern or issue is the student, learner and trainee flows across the Border. The big issue is that Irish students who study in the UK and Northern Ireland may now possibly face non-EU fees. That is an issue. The other big issue is that there are approximately 2,000 students doing their leaving certificate examinations now, which the committee will know are ongoing. In the past, and I have some facts and figures to back this up, a lot of those students would have gone to the North and UK to continue their studies. Those students will possibly now opt to remain in the South for their further and higher education. I will come onto that shortly. One of the results of that is that it will possibly put additional pressures on the CAO system. It will certainly put additional pressures on the FET system. For example, quite a number of our Border students would transfer to colleges in Northern Ireland for further education.

The best example is the North West Regional College. It was formerly known as the Derry Tech but they now have a number of campuses in Strabane and Limavady and there is also a connection to Enniskillen. In terms of higher and further education coming from the South, we tend to get more of our students going for further education in the North. According to my figures, more will remain in the South for higher education, but for further education they cross over. That will have an immediate effect on us as the statutory body providing further educa-

tion in the South through our Border ETBs. There are four ETBs affected. We anticipate that we will experience increased numbers of students wishing to study in the South. I might come back to that later as well.

As the committee will know, we took on the former FÁS training centres in 2013. All ETBs accept learners from Northern Ireland onto our training courses. They undertake work experience, and job placement following a training course, in the North. We are concerned about the implications for that. Will our students who are resident in Northern Ireland be able to continue with their work experience in the North if they are doing courses with us in the South? How would apprenticeships and traineeships be affected?

The obvious solution is free movement. It is very important that some arrangement is made. The idea of an education permit has been suggested. Educators and learners would have a permit which would allow them to move quickly and easily across either a hard or a soft border.

Data collection has traditionally been a problem for us in the South. Our management information systems were not always what they should have been. I am happy to report that things are improving in that regard. Although it is not fully up and running yet, we have the beginnings of a robust FET data collection system called the programme learner support system, PLSS. It is a joint initiative between SOLAS and ETBI. It is a suite of software applications which will allow ETBs and others to closely monitor programme outputs, outcomes and performance over all ETBs and for all FET learners. There is a mechanism for secure sharing, collecting and utilisation of FET data. We are pleased about that and it is going to help us greatly as we negotiate the fallout from Brexit.

A solution to the problem of more of our FET students, who would have gone to the North, now remaining in the South is to provide extra places. That would obviously mean more resources, both human and financial. Border ETBs in particular will have to increase their bid to SOLAS through the funding allocations requests and reporting, FARR, system. This system allows us to indicate our plans for our ETB for the year and then we normally get the funding. There will be changes in that regard if things continue. There is probably more of a flow of students from the South to the North, but there is the possibility that the Republic will become more financially attractive for Northern Ireland students. It is a possibility.

The next main issue is course provision. ETBs may have to develop new courses. While we have a good range of courses in ETBs in the South, a cursory look at the websites of the Northern further education colleges shows a much wider choice. There is that possibility that we will have to start to develop new courses.

The next issue is student access to UK colleges and training facilities. The question was asked whether the arrangement should continue as it is as a consequence of visa issues and administration. It will possibly put future pressure on Irish third level colleges and further education and training as the only English-speaking country within the EU. It is something we are conscious of. While one can look at it as an opportunity or a threat, it is something of which we should be mindful. There is a possibility that a lot of people will relocate. Financial services will relocate from the UK to Ireland which could bring with it an increased need for education and training provision which we may need to provide to the sector. I have suggested that the Dublin infrastructure might be a limiting factor with opportunity for other areas to see an improvement in their infrastructure so that they can provide the training if there is a great deal of relocation.

We use City and Guilds and a lot of non-Irish, UK-based certification. There is a concern about getting UK assessors over to our education and training boards and whether there will be a problem with work permits and visas for them. It may impose an extra cost on us. There is also the issue of dual certification. If dual certification is used at certain institutes in conjunction with UK partners, there may be a problem. Tendering was mentioned but I will discuss it under procurement. The solution here is largely resource-based. We are in the process of re-engaging with QQI in terms of our QA systems. That is ongoing and timely. It is a good time for us to upgrade our QA systems. Following the 2013 amalgamations, each education and training board has a number of different QA systems and we are working towards creating a single one per ETB. That has not finally happened but it is timely for us to do it. Mr. Garrahy referred to young people and it is important that we consult with them through town hall meetings and focus groups. I have been doing a lot of talking at meetings on Brexit, but I am not sure that students and learners themselves have been consulted. I am interested in that, certainly.

The next point is about academic qualifications and teacher mobility which Mr. Garrahy also addressed. Quite a number of our teachers and tutors work in the South but live in the North and we are wondering about that. A good number of our teachers have qualifications from UU and QUB and we are a little concerned in that regard. Education has been one of the areas of major co-operation with the North-South Ministerial Council, which has been in place for 20 years since the Good Friday Agreement. A great deal of good work has been done in the area of special needs, educational underachievement, teacher qualifications and exchanges and we are anxious to see it continue. Members may be aware of the excellent facility at the Middletown Centre in County Armagh which does a great deal of good work on autism. It would be a shame if those links were suddenly cut off. The solution is the mutual recognition of qualifications. I alluded briefly to employees. A significant minority of ETB employees reside in the North and we are concerned about their financial situation and travel arrangements.

On language, we may become the only majority English-speaking country in the EU and that may become much more significant for us. We encourage schools to consider offering more European languages as a result of that. That is about resources also. Could we become a hub for attracting English language students and learners? On goods and services, we purchase a lot of those from the North. We have recently started a building programme at Moville in Inishowen the architect for which is based in Northern Ireland as are a number of other members on the team. There are concerns around that and future tenders and procurement. Revenue may make VAT changes. Sterling devaluation affects a lot of the business we do with our suppliers. I refer also to EU funding and the other partnerships. Mr. Garrahy mentioned ERASMUS+. In Donegal and all along the Border, we are very involved in PEACE funding. PEACE IV funding has not yet been released but we have been assured we are getting it. After that, there is nothing definite. Our ETB has not benefitted directly from INTERREG funding, but our local institute of technology has. Horizon 2020 funding is also the subject of concern. Education is very important for everyone's development and the improvement of community relations. We have come a very long way since the Good Friday Agreement, in particular in the Border counties. Any barrier to the provision of education will certainly be a problem.

I neglected to mention earlier SUSI, the grant awarding body, which will also run into problems. SUSI is based in the city of Dublin ETB. Issues will arise around the lack of eligibility on nationality grounds. SUSI can only provide maintenance grants to EU citizens. Post-Brexit, students from the North will not be eligible under nationality. Residency is another issue. One has to be resident for three out of five years in order to get a grant and that will cause a problem. It will also cause a problem for some courses. Any barrier will impose additional costs and ob-

stacles on our learners and educators. We cannot allow that to happen. Things have moved on a great deal in 20 years, in particular in Border areas. It has been hugely positive and it would be a shame if things were to take a turn for the worse.

The document provided relates to our cross-Border higher and further education cluster. We have been meeting as a group which consists of Derry and Strabane District Council, Donegal County Council, North West Regional College, the University of Ulster, Letterkenny Institute of Technology and ourselves. We have been trying to do a little bit of work around the Derry-Strabane-Letterkenny city region which we have been promoting in the document. We are trying to do some work on mapping pathways and we have some memoranda of understanding in place. We are trying to stay ahead of things as best we can. There are many complex cross-Border links. Derry is seen in Inishowen as its natural city. Inishowen people tend to gravitate to Derry rather than even to Letterkenny. There is a lot of history and complexity involved there. We are doing our best and working together closely to see what we can do to make it easier for students and learners in our general communities. That is just an example. The same pertains all along the Border.

Ms Patricia King: I thank the committee for the invitation to address the Seanad. I will make a few brief points and then assist by answering any questions. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions represents over 750,000 workers on the island of Ireland and is set to be the only trade union confederation in Europe which represents workers on both sides of the frontier between the EU and the UK in 2019. Our position on the European Union project is clear. It is that the European Union is vital to the living standards, wages, public services and labour rights of workers and their families across the island. However, the EU needs to change. There has been a growing dissatisfaction with the policy direction of the Union in recent years. Congress believes that the diminution of the European social model has undermined the progress of European integration and given rise to a level of mistrust between the institutions of the EU and its citizens. Ireland, along with certain other member states, suffered an unnecessarily severe and unbalanced fiscal adjustment in the years from 2008 to 2013, inclusive. Congress believes such policy errors must never be repeated.

Aside from a unique set of constitutional arrangements, the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom are inextricably linked by the scale and intensity of the trading relationship between them. The Republic of Ireland exported €13.5 billion worth of goods to the UK in 2016 and a further €1.6 billion to Northern Ireland over the same period, which is over 13% of total Irish exports in goods. Northern Ireland exported just under £3 billion worth of goods to the Republic of Ireland in 2015, which is over 30% of its total exports. Great Britain exported just over £15.5 billion worth of goods to the Republic of Ireland in 2016. This is in addition to the significant trade in services across the UK and Ireland. Therefore, east-west trade, as it has become known, is hugely important.

Many statements have been issued in the months since the Brexit referendum on the unique circumstances on the island of Ireland and the necessity, in the context of the Brexit process, to find a mechanism to negotiate unique circumstances. Congress believes that the Good Friday Agreement already provides the structure for dealing with these issues and that the Agreement must not be viewed as an impediment to the negotiation but rather as a resource. The Agreement places an obligation on the Governments of the Republic of Ireland, the UK and Northern Ireland to act and make decisions in the best interests of all the people on the island of Ireland, both economically and socially. The intergovernmental structures already exist. They should be utilised during the Brexit process to ensure that decisions taken do not cause manifest harm

to workers on any part of the island. We must acknowledge that there are hundreds of thousands of workers across the island who face a huge challenge to retain their jobs. Likewise, there is an equal number of people who may very well be affected by a diminution in the terms and conditions of their employment. All of this is what we commonly refer to as the race to the bottom in the interests of what we have been told is competitive. The EU has an obligation to ensure that all past and present members states live up to their obligations as set out in the Good Friday Agreement.

Congress believes that failure to reach a post-Brexit arrangement that protects trade and jobs would necessitate a significant policy shift on the part of the European Union. Central to this must be an end to the straightjacket of fiscal rules that effectively discriminate against public investment. This is imperative not only for Ireland, which is likely to be the worst affected member state of the EU 27 when Brexit happens, but for all states in the Union characterised by under-employment, lack of public investment and pressure on productivity and living standards, along with associated social costs.

Chairman: I thank Ms King. I thank all of the witnesses for their attendance and appreciate their valuable contributions. I shall now open up the floor to questions from my colleagues. Senator Noone will commence.

Senator Catherine Noone: I have a brief question that I shall mainly direct at Mr. Garrahy. I was an ERASMUS student in Verona, Italy, around 1999 or 2000 so I know that an emphasis was not placed on formal education. However, the experience was an extremely maturing process for me. I returned home with a renewed focus on the wider implications of studying and needing to get on well. It was one of the best experiences of my life. Mr. Garrahy mentioned ERASMUS babies and people meeting their partners while studying. My parents were not too thrilled with who I met while an ERASMUS student. I would say they are damn glad that I did not end up with them long-term, but that is neither here nor there.

On a more serious note, one of the most depressing statistics to emerge from the Brexit referendum is that almost 80% of people under 25 who were eligible to vote wanted to remain while a similar percentage of those over 65 voted to leave. A lesson that young people can learn from Brexit, although one wonders if it has been learned, is to get out and vote. Does Mr. Garrahy have any ideas on how to engage young people and encourage them to vote? There is a lot of discussion about the UK election at the moment. The UK political parties, especially the Labour Party, are trying to get young people to vote. Statistics show that the older a person is, the more likely he or she is to vote and that the group comprising those over 65 is the largest demographic to vote. What can be done on a practical level to encourage people to vote that policymakers may not have thought of? Does Mr. Garrahy think people should be able to vote from the age of 16? I am dubious whether reducing the age at which one can vote would have a positive effect. Perhaps politics should be added to the school curriculum or something along those lines. That is all I have to say and I thank the witnesses for attending.

Chairman: I welcome all of our guests seated in the Gallery, particularly the former Senator, Mr. James Heffernan. I call Senator Paul Daly.

Senator Paul Daly: I welcome all of our guests. Their contributions have been very informative.

It seems that the response given to every problem is that the solution lies in education. Brexit is unique in the sense that it is problem and we do not know the dynamics of it. Nobody

will know exactly what is ahead of us until the final deal is done and the papers have been signed. What will be the ramifications of a hard Brexit from the point of view of the ETBI in the context of the training centres and apprenticeships? If the SMEs, the farming sector and food businesses are hit as hard as some commentators have predicted, they will need to diversify or their employees will need to be retrained or moved into new areas. Have the witnesses considered what new types of apprenticeships and training may be needed? Have they considered new directions in training and education? I do not want to sound pessimistic but we, as a committee, must ask a wide range of questions and try to cover every angle. We all hope for the best but we must plan ahead. The committee must include in its report some contingency plans to counteract a worst-case scenario.

Yesterday, the committee met representatives from local authorities in the Border region, North and South. They conveyed a lot of what Ms McHugh said about education. Although education was not their specific topic of conversation, they mentioned how students and workers traverse the Border. They also mentioned the possibility of job losses in SMEs located along the Border area and a possible loss of INTERREG funding. From the point of view of education, reskilling, upskilling and introducing new and unheard of industries to the area, have the delegations focused on or carried out preparation or planning for a hard Brexit?

Ms King has said that she represents workers North and South. She also mentioned that there is a race to the bottom in terms of companies trying to do things as cheaply and as efficiently as possible. Will companies in the North have to become self-sufficient if the UK is isolated and cannot put trade deals in place? From her experience of representing workers in the North and the South, is Ms King of the view that workers' rights, terms and conditions will take a hammering? Where do the unions stand on this matter? Are they trying to keep ahead of the posse? Has ICTU taken steps to avoid such a scenario? On education, Ms McHugh mentioned the ETBs and how their training centres use City and Guilds a lot. Could there be a problem with the acceptance or recognition of awards in the two different jurisdictions? Representatives from the IMO told us this morning that it was very fearful that for doctors, there was a possibility that an EU qualification might not be accepted in the UK. I thought it was a bit dramatic but they seemed very strong on this, or that, *vice versa*, someone training in the UK post-Brexit might not have their qualification recognised or accepted in the EU. Could that also be a problem, North and South?

Senator Mark Daly: I thank the witnesses for coming here. It was a very sombre presentation. Has the ETBI done costings for a worst case scenario where Irish students were no longer able to go over to Britain? In a worst case scenario where there is a hard Brexit, the impact it might have on the Irish system is frightening. If Irish students were not able to go to England or to the North and there was no transition and they had to pay full international fees which would mean they could not go to college in England, the points would increase in Ireland as a result because of increased demand. The same with the North. What would the Irish system have to do in order to meet that capacity if, in March 2019, there is no transitional agreement? It is not feasible in two years or less. It will not be good anyway. Along the line, there will be some increase in fees for EU students who want to go to the UK. Then there is the impact of the North-South issue on that. This is also a question for Mr. Garrahy - are there comparisons between EU and non-EU countries, EEA countries such as Norway and Switzerland? Northern Cyprus has access to EU programmes. It is our best case scenario because they are all treated as EU member states, as citizens of the European Union. They are not living in the European Union, they are outside it but it is as close as we have got to a precedent. Is there a precedent that we can draw on there that would assist in this, that those who were EU citizens in Northern

Ireland would be able to continue to access Erasmus? The same applies to the ETBI, is there something in the current educational model in Cyprus on the border that we can draw on and point out to the European Union so we can say that it is already doing it for Cyprus, so it would not be a huge leap to do it for us? The effect it will have on Irish colleges and the lack of access for Irish students going to colleges where we do not have the capacity already is frightening. Have we any broad figures on that?

On the impact on workers, we know that workers' rights in Ireland would not be what they are if it was not for the European Union bringing them forward and imposing them on the Irish State in many cases which was lagging so far behind on workers' rights. What can this committee include in its final report regarding Northern Ireland to protect the rights of European workers? We have had a proposal that even if Britain leaves and has an agreement between itself and the EU, that Northern Ireland would be treated as a special case as an EEA area. That draws on the precedent of East Germany before the wall came down, when it had direct trade links with West Germany. It was effectively treated as a member of the European Community even though there was no formal structure around that. We are trying to point to all these other precedents that would allow us to make the case for workers in Northern Ireland and for trade unions being able to appeal to European courts even if they may not do it in England or Scotland. That is what we are hoping to do and we would welcome any assistance or want to hear anything that the witnesses wish us to include in our recommendations. We have been told by the EU, by Michel Barnier and others, that no matter how left field an idea is, they would like to hear it because no one has been here before and we need to give them solutions. If we do not give them solutions they will not come up with them for us. We have to come up with solutions for them.

Chairman: I will go back to the witnesses in the same order we started, and ask each witness to comment on whatever questions were addressed to them and to comment overall. I will ask Mr. Garrahy to begin.

Mr. David Garrahy: I thank the Senators for their questions. On young people's participation and voting, one could look at referendums where young people have been facilitated to vote at an earlier age. Take the example of the Scottish independence referendum in which 80% of 16 and 17 year olds voted. It was a significant amount. It is interesting how they did it in Scotland. They did not just drop it on the heads of 16 and 17 year olds. They included schools and youth groups and they built knowledge and held debates between young people to look at both sides of the issues. When it came to the vote, 16 and 17 year olds felt empowered and enabled to vote and make a strong decision for the future of their country and their lives. One could see a certain joy among these voters where they felt so empowered and worthy because this task had been given to them for their first vote. That is the spirit with which we need to engage young people. Young people are incredibly idealistic, or more accurately, they are not incredibly idealistic but maybe more idealistic than previous generations. Their interest in politics is about enabling the human rights of their friends, families and co-citizens, ensuring there is no discrimination, making sure that marginalised groups are being taken care of. They go on the streets to campaign for this. That is the kind of idealism that we have to capture and bring in to the system somehow while also going to the places where young people are active politically. That is online, where there are huge political debates in which young people engage and through petitions.

These are areas where traditional structures of politics do not engage a great deal. A change needs to happen from both sides. It is something that I have been trying to do through the Eu-

ropean Youth Forum regarding the 2019 European elections, where we are trying to first bring young people to where politics is happening through elections and try to have more young candidates and lower the voting age; and, second, bring politicians and active politics to where young people are debating it, whether this is in their youth groups, online, on the streets, and try to get that conversation going. My organisation and I believe voting at 16 is extremely important but it cannot be done without good citizenship education in schools and in youth clubs that prepares young people to take this big step of voting for the first time. Studies in Austria and other countries that have implemented this have shown that once students vote in their first election, and vote earlier, they will continue to vote in subsequent elections because they feel that empowerment and they have made a conscious choice which is very important.

On Irish citizens and their rights to access EU programmes, an EU citizen will always be able to access EU programmes by the fact that they are citizens of an EU country. The problem with programmes such as ERASMUS is that whether a student's university is structurally set up to participate in a programme has a big bearing on students' potential participation in it. The big risk is that if ERASMUS or similar programmes are suspended for the UK, universities there will not offer these opportunities any more to their students because it is not beneficial and most of their students will not be EU citizens. Irish citizens living in Northern Ireland may not have those opportunities because their universities will not take part in ERASMUS or facilitate this type of cross-Border co-operation. It was very revealing that following the Swiss referendum three years ago that put limits on free movement between the EU and Switzerland, one of the first actions of the European Commission was to suspend ERASMUS co-operation with Switzerland. As a result, no Swiss student or organisation has been able to participate in ERASMUS since. It is very linked with free movement. The European Commission said that if there was to be no free movement, there would be no ERASMUS. The risk is that if freedom of movement becomes an issue in the negotiations between the EU and the UK, the EU may follow the Swiss precedent and automatically suspend ERASMUS for the UK, which would have a huge impact on young people there.

Ms Anne McHugh: Mr. Moriarty will answer the first question and I will respond to the other two. He has a little more information than I regarding the first issue.

Mr. Michael Moriarty: I will address Senator Paul Daly's remarks on the importance of skills and the budgetary pressure that will arise in respect of education and training. As my colleague, Ms McHugh, has alluded to, very significant pressure will be created by additional students in education and training availing of courses south of the Border rather than north of the Border or on the UK mainland if there is a hard Brexit, which is the big imponderable. The British Treasury estimates that every 1% drop in GDP in the UK will give rise to a 0.4% drop in GDP in Ireland. There is significant pressure. I will address the context in terms of skills later. The International Institute for Management Development, IMD, World Competitiveness Yearbook has ranked Ireland first in the world for skilled labour. We are ranked first for flexibility and adaptability and second for openness to foreign investment. In 2014, ManpowerGroup ranked Ireland the global leader for availability of skills. It is very obvious that economic globalisation has transformed the Irish economy, as all those present know. The Irish GDP growth rate is three times the EU average.

In regard to Senator Paul Daly's remarks on the importance of skills, ETBs are now involved in the development of apprenticeships. A big problem with apprenticeships and traineeships is they have been very much associated with blue-collar activities. We are now developing apprenticeships in white collar activities such as insurance brokerage, the legal profession, com-

mis chef and other activities in the hospitality sector. We are broadening things considerably. This week, one course to become a commis chef is almost over the line and will be announced shortly. Kerry ETB is taking the lead with that course. That is our first apprenticeship since the training centres came into being. Traineeships are as important as apprenticeships and we need a budget sufficient to provide for them both. There is going to be huge pressure on education and training budgets. There will also be the pressure of maintaining competitiveness on the world stage. When the ETBI holds seminars with the business community, business people tell us a big problem is that those applying for jobs have no work experience. While applicants may have masters degrees, they are completely unfamiliar with the work environment. This is where apprenticeships and traineeships come in, some of which can now be pursued up to levels 6 to 10, or the equivalent of a doctorate. The glass ceiling or belief that an apprenticeship or traineeship is second rate is now gone and that is as it should be. I contributed an article published in today's edition of the *Irish Examiner* on an issue that I have been raising for a significant period, namely, the fixation of Irish mothers or fathers with the concept that accessing third level is a badge of honour. The area of skills, apprenticeships and traineeships will be a cornerstone of the future economic development of this country. Although our growth rate is rising, there will be massive pressure on providing more places in education, training, apprenticeships and traineeships. Two thirds of school leavers in Switzerland take up apprenticeships, while in Ireland less than 10% do so. That is a very small percentage. That is a structural weakness in the Irish economy which must be addressed and overcome. ETBs, which are an amalgam of VECs and the training division of FÁS, have been brought together in the regions to consolidate and streamline the delivery of education and training. That cannot be done on a shoestring budget. We have come to a very significant transformation process, as Senator Paul Daly, who is very involved with the ETBs, is aware. Senator Mark Daly may also be aware, although I am unsure of his level of involvement. It is critically important that the ETBs are the delivery arms in the regions.

As Ms McHugh said, there is a clear perspective in the Border regions on the impact of Brexit. We do not know whether it will be a hard or soft Brexit. However, the challenges facing Ireland, whether in industry, farming, SMEs or, in particular, the area of skills, will be very significant in the context of the Irish education system having to provide for thousands of extra students who otherwise would have gone to the UK for third-level education. It is a big risk for us but it is a challenge that must be addressed. The second big challenge facing the education and training sector is the great need to expand our skills base in terms of apprenticeships and traineeships.

Ms Anne McHugh: In regard to the City and Guilds qualifications, we do not know if there will be a problem with the acceptance or recognition of awards in the two different jurisdictions. Most of our work is with QQI but we do some with City and Guilds and some specialised work with other providers. It is an area on which we will have to work. We will have to work far harder in terms of QQI and ensure we re-engage with it fully in a timely fashion. I do not know how that will pan out but we need to start working on it now.

In terms of the effect on the Irish colleges, I made the point earlier that, based on my research of schools in my area, most higher education students are going to third level in the South of Ireland. In 2016, 1,960 Irish students were in higher education in the UK at either undergraduate or postgraduate level. That is not a huge number. It is borne out by my figures. Students are going to Northern Ireland to participate in further education, not necessarily higher education. Students are pursuing further education in Northern Ireland for reasons such as geography, economics or situations such as a child in Carndonagh knowing a person who will give

him or her a lift into Derry every day whereas the bus to Letterkenny would drop him or her at the bus station, which would leave too long a walk to get to his or her destination. The decisions are down to issues such as local geography and the complex links that exist along the Border. I will speak in particular about Donegal, which does not have a dedicated PLC college. That is the first port of call for our further education students. If they are not going to a third level college they are going into further education in a PLC college. We have been talking with our local institute to see about locating a PLC college on its grounds. We are trying to think outside the box in that regard to see what we can do to provide places for our further education students. As Mr. Michael Moriarty said, the feeling is we will be getting a lot more of them staying in the South from now on. That is our big challenge. A lot of it is down to geography and economics and finances within families in those areas.

Chairman: I have a question before I ask Ms King to make her final remarks. I fully agree we have lost social Europe. It is not what it was in the 1980s and is not what it should be. It is one of the great challenges. As a politician of a certain persuasion, I do not believe the EU should be solely an economic ideal going forward. The eighth term of reference in the report is on the future of Europe. How do we guarantee the future of Europe, the viability of the European Union and the real viability of Ireland remaining within the European Union? A number of speakers have said we should just leave although obviously, I am not one of them. On that aspect of social Europe, can Ms King expand briefly on what concrete measures we could take in the next five to ten years to copperfasten and reinvigorate our commitment to a social Europe?

Ms Patricia King: I will address that first while it is fresh in my mind. Yesterday the European Economic and Social Committee, which is made up of all of the civil society groups, came together in the Mansion House and had a very good discussion on that issue. If social Europe is not reignited, Europe is over anyway. History has shown that workers initiate counter movements after periods of oppression. That is the issue. Under the stewardship of Delors, there was an attractiveness about Europe. There were directives on equality and issues that affected citizens and made their lives better. If one takes the past ten years, the main image of Europe has been of the big creditor countries holding a very large stick over the heads of the debtor countries and doing it in a way that meant the citizens of those states, who did not cause the problems, had to produce the goods to solve them. It has given Europe, in overall terms, a very bad image. One of the key things is the ECB has no counterbalancing institution. It is one of the things that will remain in my memory forever. Out of the 11 meetings the troika had here, I went to ten and they were probably the most difficult. I have done industrial relations all my life so I have been party to several very difficult discussions and negotiations. They were probably the most difficult set of discussions I ever went into. It is my personal opinion that the IMF was the more humane. The ECB's attitude was "We gave you the money, can we have it back?", while "When can we have it back and how fast can we have it back?" was the view of the European Commission. We know about that. Dealing with Europe as just an economic entity without any reference to the citizens is no longer an option. The European Trade Union Confederation put together a pact in November 2016. Effectively, we are saying we should develop social Europe. We have a pillar of social rights, which Juncker put forward as part of his attempts to deal with the reformation of Europe. The pillar of social rights has 20 principles in it but it is very light because it leaves the implementation of certain things to the national jurisdiction. There should be a social semester whereby European officials go to every country, as they do on economics, and check out what a country is doing to implement social pillar principles. We should start taking the social aspect of Europe seriously and line it up as seriously as the economic principles in Europe. We should start saying the European Union project is about the implementation of those principles. Some of the principles in that social pillar are very use-

ful and very good and progressive. If they were implemented they would improve the lives of the 510 million citizens across the European Union.

The Senator who referred to the voting has left the Chamber. When we look at Brexit, we should look at why it happened. It happened because one cannot keep one's foot on the neck of workers and their incomes for years and expect there to be no reaction. Workers have experienced zero-hour contracts, low wages and no prospect of self-advancement. If people are in that stratum for years, what will they do? Unfortunately demagogues appeared on the scene from the far right saying "We can fix this for you" and people believed that philosophy and voted accordingly. Nobody should be puzzled about why this happened because it is simple. The same thing happened in the US. Protectionism was the same and there was a demagogue who said "We will bring you to the promised land." People were so badly off in the land they were in they said "We will go with you." The jury is out and time will tell the outcome of that.

The principles in the social pillar should be taken as seriously as the economic principles. We should do the semester, the implementation scrutiny and push the EU project into that space. The prospect of it not happening is beyond contemplation. The European project has been the longest lasting and biggest peace project after the Second World War that the world has ever seen. If it is dismantled it is unthinkable what could happen. We are grateful to the Senators who have listened to us on this. It behoves us all to take every opportunity to make sure the citizens of Europe start to get an anchor back into a social Europe that makes their lives better.

On workers' rights, it is not an exaggeration to say the economy of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland has the possibility of being turned over completely by Brexit. Hundreds of thousands of jobs may be affected, not just in the agrifood sector and not just in the Border areas, because 82% of all of the jobs linked to the agrifood sector are around the towns and villages we all come from. As many companies are tight-lined in terms of profits, if there is any imposition of tariff or a close-off of trade facility that decreases a company's prospect of profits, we could be talking about one of two things, namely, companies putting on pressure to bring down terms and conditions in order that they can survive or closure. Employer groups are already advocating to member companies to relocate to the UK. They do not tell anybody that publicly but if one goes in deep and listens and reads their policy papers, one will see it is the advice they are giving to some companies. With regard to this business of a soft or hard Brexit, tariffs and customs are major issues. It is not just about trucks queuing up on one side of Newry or the other. It is about people's livelihoods. We might end up with hundreds of thousands on either side of the Border losing their incomes and jobs. That would mean generations of people will have seen their children's life chances turned over as well. I cannot tell the members how many canteens I have walked into where companies have told us they will have redundancies. If one walks into a canteen where hundreds of workers will lose their jobs, one knows their lives are flipped because their income has gone. All the university prospects of their children would be gone. I lost my job in the car industry in the late 1980s, as it was one of the fatalities of the accession. There were 12,000 car assembly jobs lost and nobody cared. There was a recession afterwards. The number of jobs lost because of accession will be minor compared with what will happen here.

We are saying there should be a much more robust civil dialogue between the UK Government, the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive, if and when the Northern Ireland Assembly comes together. We should start to prepare. To be fair to the Government in the Republic of Ireland, it has done some good work in preparing for Brexit. For example, we interact with the Trades Union Congress, TUC, and it is quite surprised by the level of activity

in which we have engaged generally in Ireland. Our judgment is there must be a much more in-depth and robust exchange at civil society level. Certainly, employers, trade unions and other groups should be in. I sit on the Apprenticeship Council and the trade unions advocated for decades that apprenticeships should be extended and so on. Even in that small segment, one can see that people are finding it difficult to come to terms with what this could mean. Nobody wants to be dramatic or put the fear of God into people but at the same time we must be realistic.

We met Mr. Barnier and the scariest part of the meeting was he did not know the answers either. I am sure he is an extraordinarily proficient man. As I know only too well - even from the past few days or weeks - when one goes into a set of negotiations, one is dead meat unless one knows what is the goal. A negotiator might know what will be gained before going in and if that is not the case, he or she is a foolish person. Never ask a question when the answer is not known etc. We are not in that space with Brexit and it is scary. Nobody knows the answer. There are constitutional issues. As we said in our submission, the Good Friday Agreement, the Belfast Agreement, was put together by people who did not dream of Brexit 20 years ago but the institutions are now there, as well as the all-island committee and the ministerial council. All of these could be stretched to put in place a good mechanism and scaffolding to implement trade pieces from an economic perspective. We are not straying into constitutional issues but the structure is there and should be utilised to the maximum. Whether we like it or not, we are dealing with two jurisdictions who will be on opposite sides of the table when the negotiations happen. I agree with Senator Mark Daly that we need many of the solutions. I never like to use the word “impossible” but it is next door when we are looking for a solution for two sides of the table.

We think nobody has the answer but we must find it. We will do that over a period with good engagement with all the people and groups who will be affected by this. That is good civil society engagement with the Government. I am not necessarily meeting obstacles to that; there is no ideological obstacle. Obviously, we would like everything to have happened yesterday. Senator Paul Daly asked what we will do. We are saying to employers that as we can be quite influential on the shop floor, where change is needed they should start the engagement with us in order that we can start to deliver with them those required changes. Diversification and transitional arrangements will be required. Our objective will be to keep jobs, although it will not be to keep the jobs at any price, as one might imagine. There should be a training and education element and redevelopment and retraining. All of that will be key. Could we stop the race to the bottom? We have our own methods of trying to stop the race to the bottom, which I am sure we should not iterate in the Seanad Chamber. We will not have control over the UK, so we will have many challenges in this regard. We have spoken with the TUC in the UK, including its branches in Scotland and Wales. They hear and feel our pain but they are already suffering. They would like to have some of the employment rights legislation we have, such as that relating to joint labour committees, even if all sectors do not involve themselves in it. They would like to have sectoral employment orders. We have far worse collective bargaining legislation here. Trade unions have no rights here; there is a right to join a union but it ends there. It is not the same in the UK or up the road in the Belfast. All these issues must be dealt with if we are to get to the other side of this. The matters are anything but easy and they are quite complex. From our perspective, dialogue will be a key part in doing the work.

Chairman: I thank the witnesses for their contributions and for being here. It is greatly appreciated. I was reminded of a quote at the weekend that the difference between the possible and impossible is that the impossible takes a little longer. We have much work to do in our committee. The witnesses are not the last to come before us and there will be another session

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in two weeks. They are the last substantive sectoral participants. I thank them very much for their patience.

The select committee adjourned at 3.57 p.m. until 2.30 p.m. on Thursday, 22 June 2017.