



BUNREACT NA ÉIREANN
CONSTITUTION OF IRELAND



Tithe an
Oireachtais
Houses of the
Oireachtas

An Comhchoiste um Iompar agus Cumarsáide
Tuarascáil ar thuras an Choiste chun na Buiséile, 24-25 Eanáir 2024

Iúil 2024

Joint Committee on Transport and Communications
Report of the Committee's trip to Brussels 21-22 January 2024

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1. Introduction

A delegation of the Committee travelled to Brussels from 21st – 22nd January 2024. On 15th December 2023 and as part of the incoming Parliamentary Dimension of the Belgian Presidency of the EU Council an invitation was received from the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region to attend the interparliamentary conference on EU Urban Policies on 21st and 22nd January in Brussels. It was agreed by Members to send a delegation on behalf of the Committee to this conference. The conference focused on four key issues facing European cities today: financing, citizen involvement, the environment and mobility. The Committee Members were also joined by Members from the Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action.

Gerry Horkan

Senator Gerry Horkan
Leas-Chathaoirleach of the Joint Committee
2024

2. Trip Details

The following Committee Members attended:

- Senator Gerry Horkan (Leas-Chathaoirleach)
- Senator Regina Doherty

The following Members from the Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action also attended:

- Deputy Brian Leddin TD
- Senator Pauline O'Reilly

The delegation was accompanied by the Policy Advisor to the Committee.

Itinerary for the Committee's visit to Brussels 21-22 January 2024	
Sunday 21 st January	<p>3:30pm – Depart Dublin Airport</p> <p>6:15pm – Arrive at Brussels Airport</p> <p>7:00pm – Reception and dinner hosted by the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region including welcome address by the President of the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region.</p>
Monday 22 nd January	<p>9:15am – Welcome address by the President of the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region</p> <p>9:30am – First session: Financing EU urban policies</p> <p>11:00am – Second session: Involving citizens in the development of major urban projects</p> <p>12:30pm – Group photo and lunch</p> <p>2:00pm – Third session: Adapting urban environments to climate change</p>

	<p>3:30pm – Fourth session: Urban mobility issues</p> <p>5:00pm – End of Conference and departure for airport.</p>
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2.1. Session 1

Session one: Urban Mobility issues, focused on the challenges and opportunities of financing European cities post-covid. There was a presentation given by the European Commission on Sustainable Urban Development financing whereby various EU funding models such as the Resilience and Recovery Fund (RRF), Operational Programmes under the ERDF, Invest-EU and the Just Transition fund are helping regional Governments fund urban initiatives such as energy efficiency, urban mobility, urban revitalisation, and social housing. This session also included the economic case for decarbonisation with the city of Leuven presented as a positive decarbonisation case study.

2.2. Session 2

The second session titled 'Involving citizens in the development of major urban projects' centred on the importance of involving citizens early in urban projects. The role of Bouwmeester, a government appointed official, working in an independent position employed to engage with both officials and citizens in the planning process was introduced. The Bouwmeester is tasked with improving the design quality of urban development projects and is a role that has been taken up by number of cities across the European Union, including Brussels. The presentations from the Brussels Bouwmeester and an urban planner working in Hamburg demonstrated that projects from both of these cities that have seen fruition based on the successful involvement and active participation of citizens.

2.3. Session 3

The third session the delegates attended focused on adapting urban environments to climate change. The city of Brussels was presented as a case study as it is currently going through an urban greening project called 'Nature City'. Delegates were informed of the following attention areas within the greening project, heat island effect, air quality, flood risk, urban typology, lack of green space, vegetation/tree cover and biological quality. It was further

explained that the city was divided into four sections with the city centre core known as 'dense city', and suburban and outer areas called 'countryside city, water city and forest city'. All these areas are distinct geographical areas within Brussels and allocated the appropriate biodiversity input.

2.4. Session 4

The final session was titled 'urban mobility issues.' Four types of issues were identified namely: environmental, societal, technical and European. The environment issues considered were transport decarbonisation and less travel whereas societal issues concerned management of time (driver behaviours), standardisation of work hours involving peak traffic hours, private ownership, pooling of vehicles, social status, vehicle size, pricing systems and reliable assessment of investment choices. Technical issues involved real-time traffic management, smart roads, driverless vehicles and the fourth issue revolved around European subsidies, economies of scale, standards, collaboration and sharing expertise and link with European policies such as the green deal. The presentation looked at a number of solutions to these problems including the current sustainable urban mobility plan of the Brussels-Capital Region titled 'Good Move 2020-2030' with aims to improve the quality of life for the people of Brussels and to support the ambitions of the future Municipal Plan for Sustainable Development. The notable achievements of the first three years included 90% roads at 30km/h, adaptation of public spaces, implementation of Low Emission Zones, strong increase of bicycle usage and significant reduction in noise pollution.

APPENDIX I – Committee Membership

Joint Committee on Transport and Communications



Joe Carey TD
(Cathaoirleach)
Fine Gael



Cathal Crowe TD
Fianna Fáil



Alan Farrell TD
Fine Gael



Martin Kenny TD
Sinn Féin



Michael Lowry TD
Regional Group



Steven Matthews TD
Green Party



James O'Connor TD
Fianna Fáil



Darren O'Rourke TD
Sinn Féin



Duncan Smith TD
Labour Party



Senator Lynn Boylan
Sinn Féin



Senator Gerard
Craughwell
Independent



Senator Regina Doherty
Fianna Gael



Senator Timmy Dooley
Fine Fáil



Senator Gerry Horkan
(Leas-Chathaoirleach)
Fianna Fáil

APPENDIX IV – Orders of Reference

Standing Orders 94, 95 and 96

Scope and context of activities of Select Committees

94. (1) The Dáil may appoint a Select Committee to consider and, if so permitted, to take evidence upon any Bill, Estimate or matter, and to report its opinion for the information and assistance of the Dáil. Such motion shall specifically state the orders of reference of the Committee, define the powers devolved upon it, fix the number of members to serve on it, state the quorum, and may appoint a date upon which the Committee shall report back to the Dáil.

(2) It shall be an instruction to each Select Committee that—

(a) it may only consider such matters, engage in such activities, exercise such powers and discharge such functions as are specifically authorised under its orders of reference and under Standing Orders;

(b) such matters, activities, powers and functions shall be relevant to, and shall arise only in the context of, the preparation of a report to the Dáil;

(c) it shall not consider any matter which is being considered, or of which notice has been given of a proposal to consider, by the Joint Committee on Public Petitions in the exercise of its functions under Standing Order 125(1)1; and

1 Retained pending review of the Joint Committee on Public Petitions.

(d) it shall refrain from inquiring into in public session or publishing confidential information regarding any matter if so requested, for stated reasons given in writing, by—

(i) a member of the Government or a Minister of State, or

(ii) the principal office-holder of a State body within the responsibility of a Government Department or

(iii) the principal office-holder of a non-State body which is partly funded by the State,

Provided that the Committee may appeal any such request made to the Ceann Comhairle, whose decision shall be final.

(3) It shall be an instruction to all Select Committees to which Bills are referred that they shall ensure that not more than two Select Committees shall meet to consider a Bill on any given day, unless the Dáil, after due notice to the Business Committee by a Chairman of one of the Select Committees concerned, waives this instruction.

Functions of Departmental Select Committees.

95. (1) The Dáil may appoint a Departmental Select Committee to consider and, unless otherwise provided for in these Standing Orders or by order, to report to the Dáil on any matter relating to—

(a) legislation, policy, governance, expenditure and administration of—

(i) a Government Department, and

- (ii) State bodies within the responsibility of such Department, and
- (b) the performance of a non-State body in relation to an agreement for the provision of services that it has entered into with any such Government Department or State body.
- (2) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall also consider such other matters which—
 - (a) stand referred to the Committee by virtue of these Standing Orders or statute law, or
 - (b) shall be referred to the Committee by order of the Dáil.
- (3) The principal purpose of Committee consideration of matters of policy, governance, expenditure and administration under paragraph (1) shall be—
 - (a) for the accountability of the relevant Minister or Minister of State, and
 - (b) to assess the performance of the relevant Government Department or of a State body within the responsibility of the relevant Department, in delivering public services while achieving intended outcomes, including value for money.
- (4) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall not consider any matter relating to accounts audited by, or reports of, the Comptroller and Auditor General unless the Committee of Public Accounts—
 - (a) consents to such consideration, or
 - (b) has reported on such accounts or reports.
- (5) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may be joined with a Select Committee appointed by Seanad Éireann to be and act as a Joint Committee for the purposes of paragraph (1) and such other purposes as may be specified in these Standing Orders or by order of the Dáil: provided that the Joint Committee shall not consider—
 - (a) the Committee Stage of a Bill,
 - (b) Estimates for Public Services, or
 - (c) a proposal contained in a motion for the approval of an international agreement involving a charge upon public funds referred to the Committee by order of the Dáil.
- (6) Any report that the Joint Committee proposes to make shall, on adoption by the Joint Committee, be made to both Houses of the Oireachtas.
- (7) The Chairman of the Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall also be Chairman of the Joint Committee.
- (8) Where a Select Committee proposes to consider—
 - (a) EU draft legislative acts standing referred to the Select Committee under Standing Order 133, including the compliance of such acts with the principle of subsidiarity,
 - (b) other proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues, including programmes and guidelines prepared by the European Commission as a basis of possible legislative action,
 - (c) non-legislative documents published by any EU institution in relation to EU policy matters, or

(d) matters listed for consideration on the agenda for meetings of the relevant Council (of Ministers) of the European Union and the outcome of such meetings,

the following may be notified accordingly and shall have the right to attend and take part in such consideration without having a right to move motions or amendments or the right to vote:

- (i) members of the European Parliament elected from constituencies in Ireland,
- (ii) members of the Irish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and
- (iii) at the invitation of the Committee, other members of the European Parliament.

(9) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may, in respect of any Ombudsman charged with oversight of public services within the policy remit of the relevant Department consider—

(a) such motions relating to the appointment of an Ombudsman as may be referred to the Committee, and

(b) such Ombudsman reports laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas as the Committee may select: Provided that the provisions of Standing Order 130 apply where the Select Committee has not considered the Ombudsman report, or a portion or portions thereof, within two months (excluding Christmas, Easter or summer recess periods) of the report being laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas.²

² Retained pending review of the Joint Committee on Public Petitions.

Powers of Select Committees.

96. Unless the Dáil shall otherwise order, a Committee appointed pursuant to these Standing Orders shall have the following powers:

(1) power to invite and receive oral and written evidence and to print and publish from time to time—

(a) minutes of such evidence as was heard in public, and

(b) such evidence in writing as the Committee thinks fit; ⁶

(2) power to appoint sub-Committees and to refer to such sub-Committees any matter comprehended by its orders of reference and to delegate any of its powers to such sub-Committees, including power to report directly to the Dáil;

(3) power to draft recommendations for legislative change and for new legislation;

(4) in relation to any statutory instrument, including those laid or laid in draft before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas, power to—

(a) require any Government Department or other instrument-making authority concerned to—

(i) submit a memorandum to the Select Committee explaining the statutory instrument, or

(ii) attend a meeting of the Select Committee to explain any such statutory instrument: Provided that the authority concerned may decline to attend for reasons given in writing to the Select Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil, and

(b) recommend, where it considers that such action is warranted, that the instrument should be annulled or amended;

(5) power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State shall attend before the Select Committee to discuss—

(a) policy, or

(b) proposed primary or secondary legislation (prior to such legislation being published),

for which he or she is officially responsible: Provided that a member of the Government or Minister of State may decline to attend for stated reasons given in writing to the Select Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil: and provided further that a member of the Government or Minister of State may request to attend a meeting of the Select Committee to enable him or her to discuss such policy or proposed legislation;

(6) power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State shall attend before the Select Committee and provide, in private session if so requested by the attendee, oral briefings in advance of meetings of the relevant EC Council (of Ministers) of the European Union to enable the Select Committee to make known its views: Provided that the Committee may also require such attendance following such meetings;

(7) power to require that the Chairperson designate of a body or agency under the aegis of a Department shall, prior to his or her appointment, attend before the Select Committee to discuss his or her strategic priorities for the role;

(8) power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State who is officially responsible for the implementation of an Act shall attend before a Select Committee in relation to the consideration of a report under Standing Order 197; 7

(9) subject to any constraints otherwise prescribed by law, power to require that principal office-holders of a—

(a) State body within the responsibility of a Government Department or

(b) non-State body which is partly funded by the State,

shall attend meetings of the Select Committee, as appropriate, to discuss issues for which they are officially responsible: Provided that such an office-holder may decline to attend for stated reasons given in writing to the Select Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil; and

(10) power to—

(a) engage the services of persons with specialist or technical knowledge, to assist it or any of its sub-Committees in considering particular matters; and

(b) undertake travel;

Provided that the powers under this paragraph are subject to such recommendations as may be made by the Working Group of Committee Chairmen under Standing Order 120(4)(a).