

Legislative Monthly Newsletter

May 2020

Irish Political Developments



COVID-19 Government announcements

- Changes made to the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme to [accommodate those returning from maternity or adoptive leave](#)
- Decision taken by the Registrar of Companies to [extend current Annual Returns arrangement](#)
- Expansion of [Microfinance Ireland COVID-19 Loan Fund and SBCI Future Growth Scheme](#)
- Extension of Emergency Legislation relating to [certain redundancy provisions](#) until 10th August
- [Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business](#):
 - [Phase 1 – 18 May](#)
 - [Phase 2 – 8 June](#)
 - [Phase 3 – 29 June](#)
 - [Phase 4 – 20 July](#)
 - [Phase 5 – 10 August](#)

Chambers Ireland and COVID-19

- See [here](#) for all of our latest press releases
- To add your signature to our open letter calling for a National Taskforce to revive our town centres in a new post-pandemic world, please see [here](#)

Special Oireachtas Committee on COVID-19 Response

At its meeting on the 5th May 2020 the Dáil Business Committee agreed to the establishment of a Special Covid-19 Committee.

The Committee has [19 members](#) (4 FF, 4 FG, 4 SF and 1 for each other party/group) and meets only once a week and does so in the Dáil chamber in order to comply with social distancing requirements.

The Committee was established in response to growing frustration in the Oireachtas at the lack of accountability and oversight of the actions of the caretaker government and public health officials who are making decisions with far-reaching effects on the lives of people. The committee met for the first time on the 12th May and Independent T.D. Michael McNamara was elected as Chair of the Committee defeating Sinn Féin T.D. David Cullinane by 12 votes to 6.

The Special Covid-19 Committee has the immense task of bringing some form of “normal” parliamentary scrutiny and accountability to Ministers and public officials in these truly abnormal times.

All of the Special Committee’s debates can be accessed [here](#).



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European Political Developments



European Commission Recovery Package

Ursula von der Leyen released details of the Commission's [recovery package](#) on 27 May, described as an “unprecedented stimulus” of €750 billion, mostly thorough non-refundable grants. The fund will include a total of €500bn of grants, while the rest will be offered to governments via loans on favourable terms. This recovery fund is part of an updated Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) – the EU's long-term budget – which is set to mobilise an additional €1.1 trillion between 2021 and 2027.

The recovery instrument, which is envisaged as a short-term measure to benefit the most affected regions and sectors, would be frontloaded on the first few years of recovery. The President made it abundantly clear that the package will result in increased debt, but to make this worthwhile, she argued that the EU can use this opportunity to “build a modern, clean and health economy”.

The recovery instrument is to focus spending on three priority areas, keeping in mind that Commission's new triple objective of promoting the green and digital transformations, and strengthening Europe's resilience. These three areas are:

- 1. European Recovery and Resilience Facility:** €560 billion fund to offer financial support for investments and reforms, including in relation to the green and digital transitions and the resilience of national economies, linking these to the EU priorities.
- 2. Recovery assistance for cohesion and the territories of Europe:** A €55 billion top-up of the current cohesion policy programmes between now and 2022 under the new REACT-EU initiative to be allocated based on the severity of the socio-economic impacts of the crisis, including the level of youth unemployment and the relative prosperity of Member States.
- 3. Supporting the green transition to a climate-neutral economy via funds from Next Generation EU:** A proposal to strengthen the Just Transition Fund up to €40 billion, to assist Member States in accelerating the transition towards climate neutrality.

EU ‘Farm to Fork’ Strategy

The European Commission has published its new [Farm to Fork Strategy](#), a strategy to guide future policy on food production and consumption.

The Strategy, which is part of the larger European Green Deal, highlights the need to implement a circular bio-economy and reduce food loss and food waste.

Brexit

The [third round](#) of negotiations between EU and UK negotiators took place from 11-15 May after the UK shared its full [negotiating texts](#) with the EU's team. They include a draft FTA, in addition to a series of sectoral agreements on issues such as fisheries, law enforcement, aviation and energy. However, both chief negotiators Frost and Barnier could only agree on the point that “very little progress” had been made to date. Mr. Barnier has [warned](#) that the next round of negotiations, due to begin on 1 June, “must bring a new dynamism in order to avoid a stalemate”.

In other news...

- Commission issues [recommendation](#) on the 2020 National Programme of Ireland and delivering a Council opinion on the 2020 Stability Programme of Ireland
- EU Council adopts [temporary support](#) to mitigate unemployment risks in an emergency (SURE)

For all EU public consultations, please consult this [webpage](#) as some of these may be of interest to you and your members.