

Ms. Frances Fitzgerald T.D.,
Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality,
51 St. Stephen's Green,
Dublin 2

Third Progress Report of the Implementation Oversight Group to oversee implementation of the recommendations of the Penal Policy Review Group

Dear Tánaiste,

On behalf of the Implementation and Oversight Group which oversees implementation of the recommendations of the Penal Policy Review Group, I am pleased to submit the Group's third progress report. For ease of reference I have also included a copy of the Group's first and second reports submitted to you in November 2015 and June 2016.

In the preparation of this report, the core group met on 9 November, 2016 and I have also met with each member of the group separately as part of this process.

As with our previous report, the group has carried out a further analysis of (1) the timelines expected for the implementation of each recommendation, and (2) the implementation status of each of the recommendations of the Penal Policy Review Group. The group has also reviewed the milestones attached to each recommendation and, where relevant, created new ones to reflect developments since our first and second reports.

As you know, the Penal Policy Review Group made 43 recommendations. Some of these contain multiple elements, and we have identified a total of 51 recommendations arising from the report. Again, the Group has made a qualitative and overall assessment concerning the implementation of each of those recommendations. Of the 51 recommendations, we have determined that 3 recommendations have been completed, 18 are within the 'not complete' category, and 30 are within the 'on track' category.

Since our first report, there has been progress in terms of moving the implementation of the recommendations forward;

- 6 of the recommendations (3, 5, 10, 16, 26 & 41) have moved to the 'on track' category from the 'not complete' category and
- 3 of the recommendations (12, 13, & 18) have moved from the 'not complete' or 'on track' categories to 'complete'.

In our first report, 70 milestones were deemed complete, while in this report 167 milestones have been deemed complete.

Since our last report, I am pleased to note that the Interagency Group on Cooperation for a Fairer and Safer Ireland, chaired by Dr. Ruth Barrington, has met on two occasions over the course of this reporting period. This group will play a very significant role in fulfilling a key objective of the Penal Policy Review Group – that of ensuring efforts to prevent and respond to crime are conducted by means of a 'whole of government' approach.

Another development during this period concerns the increased efforts being made to strengthen the data collection and publication systems within the Department and its agencies. It is clear now that there is a desire to improve the linkages between datasets across the Department and its agencies. While there is a great deal of work to do on the implementation of the Penal Policy Review Group's recommendations in this respect, these efforts are welcome and to be encouraged.

Improving data systems is a key element of ensuring that criminal justice policy is based on evidence, which is another animating concern of the Penal Policy Review Group. A further key recommendation aimed at ensuring that our policy is informed, considered and subject to the input of those with knowledge of the field is recommendation 42, which recommended the establishment of a Consultative Council to advise on issues relating to penal policy. I look forward to being able to report that the Consultative Council has established a schedule of meetings in future reports.

It is also of note that the Fines (Payment and Recovery) Act 2014 is now being implemented. The Implementation and Oversight Group will be monitoring the implementation through their commitment to review the operation of the legislation. As you will be aware, the process of implementation is one which will take place in stages.

We have noted the Government's commitment to establishing an independent Parole Board on a statutory basis (recommendation 31). We continue to await legislation on this, the principles of sentencing and community sanctions.

You will also note that a pilot integrated community service scheme was introduced by the Probation Service in July 2016 (recommendation 11). You will further be aware of the completion of a new build of D Wing in Mountjoy Prisons as well as new workshops (recommendation 15), which will provide the infrastructure for improved rehabilitative regimes. Expressions of interest have also been prepared for the development of a step down facility for women (recommendations 18 and 23). Since the completion of this report, a formal tender process has now been instigated.

The work of the Implementation and Oversight Group will continue to prepare a fourth progress report which it is intended will be presented to you in June 2017. Finally, if it would be of assistance, I would be delighted to meet at a date convenient to you to discuss our report in greater detail.

I look forward to continuing to work with you on the implementation of this report.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary Rogan', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Mary Rogan
Chairperson of the Implementation Oversight Group
10 March 2017