

Vote 40

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)

Select Committee Supplementary Estimate 2023

Opening Remarks by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Chairman,

I want to thank the Committee for making time available today to consider the Supplementary Estimate for the Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Vote.

The need for a supplementary at this point occurs principally due to the expectation that the Vote will breach its total allocation before the end of October 2023.

The Supplementary Estimate is being sought in respect of two Subheads on the Vote, namely E4 (IPAS) and E5 (Ukraine). Additional funding is required principally to meet the cost pressures occurring due to the extraordinary demands placed on my Department in the discharge of its role in the humanitarian response to the Ukraine crisis and in relation to its response to the exponential growth in the numbers of International Protection applicants continuing to arrive in the State over the course of 2023.

I would note to the Committee that officials from my Department and DPENDR have been monitoring the expenditure and allocation to the Department by way of fortnightly meetings since the start of the year. It is acknowledged that there was a challenging allocation established for both subheads and a contingency fund was held in reserve as part of the Budget 2023 process.

The primary cost driver for both subheads is the cost of accommodation for both existing and new arrivals. In relation to the humanitarian response to the Ukraine crisis, an additional 22,033 temporary protection orders had been granted to the end of August in 2023. This brings the total number of temporary protection orders granted since the start of the war to 92,554.

Some 70,000 Ukrainian people are now being accommodated in State funded/supported accommodation.

The Government has committed to continue to provide safe shelter for those fleeing the war in Ukraine and as a result, these costs have to be borne by the State and specifically, on my department's Vote.

The other area of the Vote experiencing pressures at this time is the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS). The service provides accommodation and associated services to international protection applicants and is a demand led process. The additional funding required in 2023 is due to the cost of accommodation for the hugely increased number of new International Protection arrivals.

Current expenditure on this subhead is running ahead of profile by 53%. In the main, expenditure relates to costs of accommodation. The profiles from May onwards reflected the impact of the use of a number of levers intended to facilitate a reduction in the demand for accommodation. IPAS is working intensively to support persons with status to move out of IPAS accommodation; however, the number of International Protection Applicants (IPAs) being accommodated in August remains higher than factored into the allocation (+50%). The cost at which applicants are accommodated is adding to this challenge, as we become more reliant on more costly emergency accommodation places.

In recent years, there have been record increases in the number of new arrivals seeking international protection accommodation in Ireland with total numbers accommodated increasing from 7,244 in Dec 2021 to 18,534 in Dec 2022. It is projected that this figure will have reached over 25,000 by Dec 2023. Over twenty-three thousand applicants were being accommodated as of August this year.

My Department will continue to work with DPEDNR to monitor expenditure on the Vote.

In conclusion, I recommend the supplementary estimate for the Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Vote to the Committee and I am happy to address any questions you may have.