



DÍOSPÓIREACHTAÍ PARLAIMINTE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DÁIL ÉIREANN

TUAIRISC OIFIGIÚIL—*Neamhcheartaithe*
(OFFICIAL REPORT—*Unrevised*)

Thursday, 20 November 2008.

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DÁIL ÉIREANN

Déardaoin, 20 Samhain 2008.
Thursday, 20 November 2008.

Chuaigh an Ceann Comhairle i gceannas ar 10.30 a.m.

Paidir.
Prayer.

Requests to move Adjournment of Dáil under Standing Order 32.

An Ceann Comhairle: Anois, iarratais chun tairisceana a dhéanamh an Dáil a chur ar athló faoi Bhuan Ordú 32. Before coming to the Order of Business I propose to deal with a number of notices under Standing Order 32.

Deputy Seymour Crawford: I seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to raise a matter of national and local importance, namely, the urgent need for a debate in the House on the Government pilot project — the winding down and removal of services from Monaghan General Hospital by the beginning of 2009; the fact that no anaesthetists are being appointed for the January to June period; that Cavan General Hospital had 50 patients on trolleys on Tuesday night last; and that recently the other alternative hospital, Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Drogheda, had to be taken off call. The implementation of the Teamwork report will clearly lead to premature deaths and, for those who live, will result in serious problems for families who have to look after the sick at home without a backup service. The issue can no longer be ignored.

Deputy James Bannon: I seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to raise a matter of national importance, which impacts on the health and welfare of the entire population, namely, the disgraceful catalogue of mismanagement, waste and inefficiencies in the Health Service Executive exposed yesterday by the Committee of Public Accounts, which was probing how €12 billion was spent by the HSE and how 111,000 HSE staff perform and revealed a defective accounting system that made complete analysis difficult.

An Ceann Comhairle: Tar éis breithnithe a dhéanamh ar na nitheardaithe, níl siad in ord faoi Bhuan Ordú 32. The matters raised are not in order under Standing Order 32.

Deputy Seán Power: Thanks for the clarification, James.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: There is no time like the present.

Order of Business.

The Tánaiste: It is proposed to take No. 3, the Arbitration Bill 2008 — Second Stage (resumed); No. 28, Nursing Homes Support Scheme Bill 2008 — Second Stage (resumed); No. 24, statements on the report of the joint committee's contribution to the European Commission on its White Paper on Integration of EU Mortgage Credit Markets, COM (2007) 807; and No.

[The Tánaiste.]

23, statements on the special report on new EU legislation, 1 January to 30 June 2008, and the order shall not resume thereafter.

It is proposed, notwithstanding anything in Standing Orders, that the proceedings on No. 24 shall be taken at 12.30 p.m. today and shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion at 1.30 p.m. and the following arrangements shall apply: the opening statement of the Chairman of the Joint Committee on European Affairs and of the main spokespersons for the Government, the Labour Party and Sinn Féin, who shall be called upon in that order, shall not exceed ten minutes in each case, the statements of each other Member called upon shall not exceed ten minutes in each case and Members may share time; and the proceedings on No. 23 shall be taken at 1.30 p.m. and shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion at 3.30 p.m. and the following arrangements shall apply: the opening statement of the Chairman of the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny and of the main spokespersons for the Government, the Labour Party and Sinn Féin, who shall be called upon in that order, shall not exceed ten minutes in each case, the statements of each other Member called upon shall not exceed ten minutes in each case and Members may share time.

An Ceann Comhairle: There are two proposals to put to the House. Is the proposal for dealing with No. 24 agreed to? Agreed. Is the proposal for dealing with No. 23 agreed to?

Deputy Enda Kenny: I do not object to it but I wish to give a pointer to the Tánaiste. This report comes from the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny. The Government elevated what was a sub-committee to full committee status, which I strongly support. This report is one of a series of reports that are absolutely critical to the way this House of Parliament deals with its interaction with Europe on behalf of our citizens.

The people of Ireland voted recently in a referendum on the Lisbon treaty. Many people said they did not understand what was in the treaty. The Joint Committee on European Scrutiny has the potential, if properly resourced and given the space and time in this House and other locations, to be able to explain to people what Europe is about and how it impacts on us. Other reports will come from the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny and I expect they will be given proper time for full discussion and debate in this House because it is so important that we are not isolated, but rather that we are central to that process.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Hear, hear.

The Tánaiste: I believe the Whips have agreed that there will be a monthly debate that will address the issues raised.

An Ceann Comhairle: Is the proposal for dealing with No. 23 agreed? Agreed. I call Deputy Kenny on the Order of Business.

Deputy Enda Kenny: I have a number of questions for the Tánaiste. There are reports in all the media outlets today of the Minister for Finance calling in the heads of the banks for discussions. In the past 24 hours, my office has been contacted by five small businesses that will not be in existence in the next three weeks unless there is some easing of the tightness that exists for credit lines at the moment. Will the Tánaiste indicate when we can expect an announcement from Government, and what form it will take, with a view to the recapitalisation of the banking system in whatever form the Government decides so that business can be conducted and lines of credit can be eased?

The Dáil will sit for 12 days between now and Christmas. During that period, we will see a brutal assault on Irish families through the Finance Bill, the legislation to deal with medical

cards, the Social Welfare Bill, which makes an attack on jobseekers benefit, and the health insurance programme announced yesterday. When will the medical card legislation come before the House? Is the Government running scared of bringing in the legislation or where is it?

An announcement was made yesterday by the Minister for Health and Children about health insurance. We are all aware that risk equalisation was struck down by the Supreme Court earlier this year and that it made recommendations to the Government on how matters should proceed. Will the Tánaiste state when it is proposed to have risk equalisation legislation and outline the preparatory work being done thereon? Yesterday's announcement by the Minister for Health and Children was confusing. In the notes appended to the statement the relief was referred to as a tax credit, but in the statement itself reference was made to a tax relief. Is it a tax credit or tax relief?

It seems the Government, including the Minister for Health and Children, has announced a levy on the health insurers, to be paid for by the customer when the insurers increase their premiums. Is this the case? Has the Government had discussions on this with the VHI, which is dominant in the market and which has high overhead costs? In many cases, there are poor contracts. Has the Government had discussions with the insurers on increases in medical insurance premiums that will be passed on to the customer to pay for the levy the Minister is imposing on the insurers? This is with a view to protecting community rating, which is underpinned by risk equalisation and which has been in evidence for so long.

I saw a report that stated some hope or relief is being offered to the people in that the Taoiseach apparently announced yesterday to the Fianna Fáil Parliamentary Party that he has a plan for the nation.

An Ceann Comhairle: Under Standing orders——

Deputy Enda Kenny: I believed this was announced with the budget.

An Ceann Comhairle: We cannot have a discussion on every item

Deputy Enda Kenny: Ten thousand are being put on the unemployment list per month.

An Ceann Comhairle: I ask the Tánaiste to reply on the matters Deputy Kenny has raised.

Deputy Enda Kenny: The Government tried to take medical cards from the over-70s.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: That is Deputy Richard Bruton's brief.

Deputy Enda Kenny: It imposed a 1% levy and attempted to introduce a change to the categorisation for disability payments.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Tánaiste, on the legislative proposals.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Where is the Taoiseach's plan? Where is the Taoiseach himself?

Deputies: Hear, hear.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Tánaiste, on the legislative proposals.

The Tánaiste: There was a considerable number of questions.

An Ceann Comhairle: I ask the Tánaiste to deal with the legislative proposals.

The Tánaiste: On the financial issues, the Finance Bill will be available at 3 p.m. today.

Deputy Michael Ring: How many mistakes are in it?

The Tánaiste: Those matters can be discussed in the context of the debate.

The health legislation will be ready within the next two weeks.

Deputy Michael Ring: How many mistakes are in it?

The Tánaiste: It has been cleared by the Government so, within the next two weeks——

Deputy Michael Ring: We could be on the road next week.

Deputy Dermot Ahern: We will make sure we will not.

The Tánaiste: It will take some considerable time for the risk equalisation legislation to be brought forward.

Deputy Michael Ring: It will be the first time in a month.

The Tánaiste: It is in that context that the decision was made by the Government on the health insurance initiative. The Leader of the Opposition asked me to clarify whether a credit or relief is proposed. It is a tax relief in the form of credit.

Deputy Enda Kenny: It is both.

Deputy Pádraic McCormack: It is both.

An Ceann Comhairle: We cannot discuss the content of the legislation now.

The Tánaiste: Everybody will get it.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Is it a tax credit or tax relief?

An Ceann Comhairle: We cannot discuss the content of the legislation now.

The Tánaiste: Everyone will get it regardless of whether——

Deputy Enda Kenny: Is it a tax credit, which is worth more than a relief?

The Tánaiste: A tax relief is in itself a tax relief and therefore it is a tax relief in the form of a credit. It will be passed on through the premium——

Deputy James Reilly: They are different.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Kenny is well aware that there are other ways of raising that matter.

(Interruptions).

An Ceann Comhairle: The Tánaiste has offered so the Deputy is entitled to clarification, but we must move on.

Deputy Enda Kenny: There is a difference between a tax credit and a tax relief. Which is it?

Deputy Dermot Ahern: Deputy Kenny should ask Deputy Richard Bruton. He will explain it to the Deputy.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Is it a tax credit or a tax relief?

The Tánaiste: The legal interpretation is that it is a tax relief measure in the form of a tax credit.

Deputy Enda Kenny: So it is a tax credit, which gives the full amount.

The Tánaiste: I can only say——

An Ceann Comhairle: We should not be discussing this.

The Tánaiste: It can be discussed in due course.

Deputy James Reilly: That is not what the Department of Finance says.

Deputy Enda Kenny: The Deputy does not want to be asking the Minister for Health and Children to clarify that. It is a question of tax credits and not of tax relief.

An Ceann Comhairle: We should not be discussing that now. I call Deputy Gilmore.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: With regard to the risk equalisation legislation and the health insurance announcement made yesterday by the Minister for Health and Children, I understood the Tánaiste said the legislation would take some time to prepare. The Minister for Health and Children stated yesterday it would be presented before the end of the year. Will the Tánaiste clarify when we are likely to see it?

If it is to take some time for the legislation to be prepared, when is it likely to take effect? The Minister for Health and Children gave the impression yesterday that it would be effective from the beginning of next year. Families are considering what their health insurance bill is likely to be next year. The proposal is such that the health insurance bill of a couple with three children will increase by approximately €500. Such families will want to know when the legislation is likely to take effect. This should be clarified.

With regard to the meeting the Minister for Finance is having today with the heads of the banks, is it intended that he will inform the House after the meeting of its outcome? Is it anticipated that any developments will arise from that meeting between now and next Tuesday, when the Dáil is due to sit again? Are there plans arising from the meeting to recall the House between now and next Tuesday? Will there be any changes made to the business scheduled for next week arising from the meeting between the Minister and the banks?

Approximately 700 summonses for speeding have been struck down on the grounds that the by-laws were not published in *Iris Oifigiúil*.

An Ceann Comhairle: Is legislation promised in this area?

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: There is. There is a road safety Bill.

Will the Tánaiste clarify whether the summonses were struck down on the grounds that the by-laws were not published in *Iris Oifigiúil*?

Deputy Thomas Byrne: That was not Fianna Fáil councillors. There were plenty of Labour councillors involved.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: What is the position on those with penalty points?

An Ceann Comhairle: That is a matter for Question Time.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: It is not.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy asked about the road safety Bill. I know the Deputy is very creative but there is a limit even to my imagination.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: It has been known that the Ceann Comhairle has been driven fairly fast himself.

An Ceann Comhairle: There is no point in fighting old battles on distant battlefields.

Deputy Michael Ring: The penalty points——

The Tánaiste: To clarify the issue, the Government health insurance initiative will entail legislative proposals, which will be brought to the House. The date of which we speak is 1 January 2009.

The other legislation raised by Deputy Kenny is a new risk equalisation Bill arising from the Supreme Court decision. Our legal advice suggests it will be some considerable time, at least more than two years, before the legislation, which is to be based on a risk equalisation model, will be introduced to the House.

Deputy Emmet Stagg: Kick to touch.

The Tánaiste: I hope this clarifies the matter. We are concerned with two Bills and perhaps we will try to stick to one at a time.

Deputy Pádraic McCormack: Bring a new Government in.

The Tánaiste: With regard to confidential meetings involving the Minister for Finance, if they are confidential there is no intention of discussing them in public.

An Ceann Comhairle: Do not worry about them.

The Tánaiste: There is no intention to recall the House.

It is a matter for Fingal County Council to deal with the matter of the speeding fines. There is no legislation proposed arising therefrom.

Deputy Emmet Stagg: It is needed now.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: With regard to the idea of the Minister for Finance having confidential meetings with the banks, I remind the Tánaiste that it is now our money that is supporting the banks.

An Ceann Comhairle: We cannot talk about the banks this morning.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The Minister for Finance——

An Ceann Comhairle: Unfortunately Standing Orders do not allow Leaders' Questions this morning.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: ——may be having a private meeting with the banks but it is a matter of public of interest and public business.

An Ceann Comhairle: We cannot discuss private functions and meetings this morning. I must move on.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: When will we hear from the Minister for Finance about the outcome of the meeting?

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Gilmore will have to find another way of raising that because it is not in order.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: On the health legislation, the Tánaiste has now clarified there are to be two Bills, the first of which will affect health insurance premiums in the short term. Do I understand correctly from the Tánaiste that this legislation will be before the House and that it will be put through before the end of the year? Is that the position?

An Ceann Comhairle: Is that the position?

The Tánaiste: It will take effect from 1 January. It requires EU approval and it will be a matter for the Government to determine whether we enact that legislation prior to the Commission's approval. That decision has not yet been finalised. There is a methodology by which we can pass legislation and withhold its enactment. One way or another, it will be retrospective to the first day of January 2009. That is the absolute clarity of it. It will take form on that date.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: I will follow that for a little, if I may.

Deputy Pádraic McCormack: It is hard to follow.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: Will the publication of the Bill occur before Christmas?

The Tánaiste: Yes.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: However, the Government does not expect to enact it before Christmas. Is that the case?

The Tánaiste: We could enact it but——

Deputy Charles Flanagan: At least the Government has an intention.

The Tánaiste: We can enact the legislation, but the view is that it would be more appropriate not to commence legislation until such time as the Commission gives clarity on the issues.

Deputy Pádraic McCormack: Keep it for Easter.

The Tánaiste: The Ceann Comhairle will know that it takes some time for the Commission to make such determinations. It takes two months.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: How will it come into effect on 1 January?

An Ceann Comhairle: The enactment of the legislation is not a matter for the Order of Business. The Deputy may put a question concerning when the Bill will be published. The Tánaiste has explained when it will be published and the question of the enactment is for a later date, as the Deputy well knows.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: As I understand it, the issue here is that the Government proposes that health insurance premiums will be changed on 1 January. What the Tánaiste is saying, in effect, is that this apparently will be done without statutory authority. A Bill will be published.

[Deputy Eamon Gilmore.]

Presumably, it will contain a date. It will not necessarily be enacted but the insurance premiums will be changed.

An Ceann Comhairle: The commencement of the legislation is not an issue.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: This concerns an issue that has been before the courts on a number of occasions.

An Ceann Comhairle: Yes.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: We now have this situation and it is reasonable to discuss it because people whose health insurance premiums are going to be changed next year will have a higher health insurance payment. The Government states that they will have to pay it from 1 January next year. It also states, first, that legislation will not be enacted to give authority to that measure, and, second, we may not even know what the view of the European Commission will be on the matter. That is a very unclear situation and we are entitled to get some clarity on it.

An Ceann Comhairle: I will ask the Tánaiste to clarify the situation.

The Tánaiste: I will clarify the situation on the basis that the leader of the Labour Party is now trying to entangle things that have nothing to do with this legislation.

Deputy Joan Burton: That is unfair. Deputy Gilmore is clear. The Tánaiste is not.

The Tánaiste: The matter of a premium is a matter for the companies involved.

Deputy Joan Burton: He is clear.

The Tánaiste: The Government is not dictating the premium that must be paid. We will introduce legislation arising out of the Government health insurance initiative. The European Commission must clarify this, which will take two months. It will be retrospective to 1 January if we decide not to enact prior to the Commission giving its signature. That is possible in this type of legislation — it is similarly so with the Finance Bill. It is not criminal legislation. The Government will decide whether to enact the legislation prior to the Commission's determination. It would probably be sensible to await the outcome of the Commission deliberations, but it is the Government's intention to publish the legislation prior to Christmas

An Ceann Comhairle: Before the House goes any further with this matter——

Deputy Joan Burton: On the same matter, the provision that was outlined——

(Interruptions).

An Ceann Comhairle: I did not call on Deputy Burton.

Deputy Joan Burton: This is——

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Burton was not called at all. I ask her to hold on.

(Interruptions).

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy was not called. I never called her.

Deputy James Bannon: Since the 1980s, some 14,000 farmers have planted over 225,000 hectares of forestry but the current levels of afforestation have fallen considerably.

A Deputy: It is called Christmas.

Deputy James Bannon: There is a significant threat to forestry at present.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Hear, hear.

Deputy James Bannon: Will the Tánaiste fast-track the Forestry (Amendment) Bill to cater for this sector?

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Hear, hear.

The Tánaiste: The forestry legislation will be brought in next year.

A Deputy: When is next year?

Deputy P. J. Sheehan: The Tánaiste cannot see the wood for the trees.

Deputy Seymour Crawford: In light of the fact that area payments were reduced in the budget, and that since last night single payments are to be reduced also, when will there be a full debate on agriculture in the Dáil? Can we use the opportunity of the Animal Health and Welfare Bill to debate this area? We certainly have the welfare of farmers to consider.

In light of the ongoing situation with regard to health structures as a whole, can we find out who is actually eligible for treatment and in which hospital? When will the matter of eligibility of health and personal and social services be brought in?

An Ceann Comhairle: In two minutes.

Deputy Seymour Crawford: Concerning discussions of the VHI, I noticed that the Minister for Health and Children, Deputy Harney, was able to go to Cork to open a private hospital—

An Ceann Comhairle: I cannot take that matter now.

Deputy Seymour Crawford: —last week. Would she come up and see the structures that are there—

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy may speak on the legislative proposals.

Deputy Seymour Crawford: —in Cavan and Monaghan and let us have a public facility to use, rather than go completely private?.

Deputy Mary Harney: The Deputy's colleagues were there. Deputy Deirdre Clune was there.

An Ceann Comhairle: I do not care who was there. We will continue on the legislative proposals.

The Tánaiste: We are not clear as to when that legislation will take place—

Deputy Mary Harney: Is Deputy Bannon against private hospitals?

The Tánaiste: I am taken aback that Deputy Crawford did not take the opportunity to congratulate his constituency colleague on the fine work he did on behalf of the farmers of Ireland in the negotiations.

Deputy Michael Creed: It is an outrage.

Deputy James Reilly: The farmers are not impressed. When will the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Deputy Smith, be brought to the House to account for the pick-pocketing of farmers?

(Interruptions).

A Deputy: We may have been disappointed with the Tánaiste but we now have the weakest link in the Minister, Deputy Smith.

Deputy Michael Creed: The Government is making a skit of the farmers in this country.

The Tánaiste: There will be additional milk quota in the Deputy's constituency.

An Ceann Comhairle: I call on Deputy Kathleen Lynch.

Deputy Michael Creed: An outrage.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Kathleen Lynch is in order.

A Deputy: The Ceann Comhairle has favourites.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy will be quiet.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: Will the Tánaiste confer with the Minister for Health and Children, who is sitting next to her, and ask her to withdraw the increase now being implemented for people with intellectual disability in long-stay care——

An Ceann Comhairle: The question must be in order; otherwise, it must be struck down.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: Their charges have been increased by €30 a week——

An Ceann Comhairle: A parliamentary question from Deputy Lynch——

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: ——when their increase in social welfare payment was €6 a week.

An Ceann Comhairle: ——or a question for the Adjournment debate, or a special notice question — there are several ways to raise this matter, but this is not it.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: Their charges for long-stay care have now been increased by €30.

An Ceann Comhairle: Does Deputy Lynch have a question on the Order of Business?

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: I promise the Ceann Comhairle that I will sit down because I do not intend to disrupt the House. Every morning Deputies stand up here with requests for an Adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32, which are always refused.

An Ceann Comhairle: That is correct.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: There are some issues which are worthy of being granted and this is one of them.

Deputies: Hear, hear.

An Ceann Comhairle: I must definitely move on.

Deputy Jan O’Sullivan: I return to the insurance legislation. It appears that the Government is walking us into a legal minefield. We are to be asked to pass retrospective legislation prior to permission from the EU Commission.

An Ceann Comhairle: That is a matter for Second Stage.

Deputy Jan O’Sullivan: The Government is likely to lose many more backbenchers if we are to be asked to do this——

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy must be in order. It is 11 a.m.

Deputy Jan O’Sullivan: If the legislation already in place was struck down by the courts——

An Ceann Comhairle: Does the Deputy have a question on the legislation?

Deputy Jan O’Sullivan: ——I cannot imagine that this will ever stand up.

An Ceann Comhairle: Does the Deputy have a question on the legislation?

Deputy Jan O’Sullivan: I would like clarity from the Tánaiste as to what is the Government’s intention. Are we to be asked to pass legislation prior to the approval of the EU Commission, without any idea of whether it is going to be enacted?

An Ceann Comhairle: Let us be clear. It is not really fair to look for this type of detail. It is more appropriate for a parliamentary question, as the Deputy knows well. It is not possible to answer all these questions, which are more appropriate to the line Minister. They are not appropriate for the Tánaiste on a Thursday morning during the Order of Business, as Deputy O’Sullivan well knows.

Deputy Jan O’Sullivan: I am asking about promised legislation.

An Ceann Comhairle: I know the Deputy knows this.

Deputy Jan O’Sullivan: The Tánaiste has just promised this, on the Order of Business, and if she could clarify——

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy must tell us when the next station is coming.

Deputy Jan O’Sullivan: ——exactly what we——

An Ceann Comhairle: Tell us one more time.

Deputy Jan O’Sullivan: We are elected public representatives and we will be asked to vote——

An Ceann Comhairle: Tell us one more time, this time with feeling.

Deputy Jan O’Sullivan: ——for or against this legislation.

The Tánaiste: Does the Ceann Comhairle want a warm one or a cold one?

A Deputy: He had his Weetabix this morning.

The Tánaiste: In normal circumstances, I do not like reading out what is going to be said but I shall do it again now, for the fifth or sixth time.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Tánaiste must not be provocative and should just say what she has to say.

The Tánaiste: The measures announced yesterday will require new health legislation. It is our aim to publish and present this to the Oireachtas for enactment before the end of the current session. It is also the case that the implementation of these measures requires the approval of the European Commission competition directorate. A formal notification has been made and in the normal course, the Commission will deliver its decision early in the new year.

Deputy Jan O'Sullivan: In that case, the Government will not receive approval before proceeding with the measures.

Deputy Joan Burton: I wish to raise two points, the first of which is on the announcement made by the Minister for Health and Children in the company — appropriately — of the Minister for Finance that tax allowances would be made available on an ascending scale in respect of additional payments for health insurance by people aged over 50 years.

An Ceann Comhairle: The issue is not in order.

Deputy Joan Burton: It is in order. I want to know when the measure will be legislated for. As a tax measure, will it be included in the Finance Bill or will we, as many of us expect, have another Finance Bill in——

An Ceann Comhairle: Is legislation promised in that area?

The Tánaiste: It is the same legislation.

Deputy Joan Burton: That is not correct.

An Ceann Comhairle: As the Deputy is aware, it is not permitted to be argumentative on the Order of Business.

The Tánaiste: If the Opposition wants to write the legislation that is fine but I have given an answer. The Minister for Health and Children will take questions in the House next week if Deputies want to raise questions.

Deputy Joan Burton: I wish to raise a second point.

An Ceann Comhairle: I have no difficulty with the Deputy raising ten points provided they are in order.

Deputy Joan Burton: The Ceann Comhairle confirmed yesterday, during a discussion with another Deputy, that my second point is in order. Will the Government provide time for a debate on the powerless position in which the banks find themselves and the fact that taxpayers are guaranteeing——

An Ceann Comhairle: That is a matter for the Whips.

Deputy Joan Burton: The Ceann Comhairle indicated yesterday that it was in order to ask for a debate.

An Ceann Comhairle: No, Deputy Stagg said it was in order, which is a different matter.

Deputy Joan Burton: The Minister for Finance is averse to appearing in the House because he is afraid. May we ask other members of his Government to arrange a debate on the banks?

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Burton will, in due course, have ample opportunity to discuss the Finance Bill with the Minister for Finance. I call Deputy Shatter.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: If Deputy Burton had her way, the banks would not be around.

An Ceann Comhairle: I call Deputy Shatter.

Deputy Alan Shatter: I do not wish to shout over my colleagues.

An Ceann Comhairle: I concur. There should be no hurling on the ditch.

Deputy Alan Shatter: In 1999, the Children First child protection guidelines were announced and put in place. These are non-statutory guidelines designed to ensure a uniform approach is taken to dealing with the problems of children at risk and investigation of reports of children at risk. At the end of July, the Office of the Minister for Children published a review which confirmed that our child protection services are totally dysfunctional and the guidelines are not being uniformly applied.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy may not make a Second Stage speech on the Order of Business.

Deputy Alan Shatter: I am coming to the point, Sir. We know there are hundreds of children reported to be at risk whose cases have not been investigated. Does the Government have plans to make the Children First child protection guidelines mandatory, giving them statutory effect and ensuring their uniform application?

In the context of promised legislation, specifically No. 11, the child care Bill, I ask the Tánaiste to ensure that children who are at risk are protected before we have another tragedy. Will she ensure the Children First guidelines are made mandatory to force the Health Service Executive to comply with them?

An Ceann Comhairle: I ask the Minister to confine her remarks to the child care Bill and legislative provisions, if promised, related to the other matter the Deputy raised.

The Tánaiste: As the Deputy is aware, the Ombudsman for Children, having carried out a preliminary examination of the matter, indicated publicly today that she will decide whether further investigation is required. We will await the outcome of that process, after which a decision can be made.

On the child care Bill——

Deputy Alan Shatter: I do not normally interrupt the Tánaiste but she has alluded to my concern. The Ombudsman for Children appears to be re-investigating a matter which has already been confirmed in the Department's review, namely——

An Ceann Comhairle: We cannot discuss content. The Deputy will have to wait until the legislation comes before the House.

Deputy Alan Shatter: ——that the guidelines are not being complied with. I want to ensure the Ombudsman for Children's investigation does not become an excuse for inaction by the Government because children's lives are at risk.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy is out of order. The matter can be raised in another manner.

The Tánaiste: A process is under way. The Ombudsman for Children will make decisions and the matters will be addressed in the child care Bill. It is intended to introduce the child care legislation this session.

Deputy Alan Shatter: Will the Bill make the guidelines mandatory?

An Ceann Comhairle: We cannot discuss the content of the legislation. The Deputy has raised a question, which has been answered, and I will not go further with the matter.

Deputy Alan Shatter: In recent days, we have observed in England circumstances in which a young child lost its life due to the child care system being dysfunctional. Our child care system has been dysfunctional for decades under this Government.

An Ceann Comhairle: I ask Deputy Reilly, who will speak next, to stay in order, if possible.

Deputy James Reilly: I shall do my best with the assistance of the Ceann Comhairle.

I seek clarification on the pending legislation. The Tánaiste indicated that the measure announced yesterday was a tax relief provided in the form of a tax credit. When I telephoned the Department of Finance this morning, I was informed that the tax relief would be provided at the applicable rate, either 20% or 41% of the relevant sum.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy may not raise the issue on the Order of Business.

Deputy James Reilly: Tax credits are given for the full sum and are, therefore, worth more than tax reliefs.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy should ask about an issue that is an order.

Deputy James Reilly: This is important because people are confused. Why is this legislation being introduced? Are we being prepared for a serious hike in premia at a time when the VHI is making profits of more than €100 million and community rating is still in place?

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy will have to raise the issue in another way.

Deputy James Reilly: Given that community rating is still in place, premia cannot be raised solely on the basis of age.

An Ceann Comhairle: We cannot have a Second Stage speech.

Deputy Mary Harney: How many 80 year olds want——

An Ceann Comhairle: Do not mind 80 year olds.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Thankfully, I am much younger than that. At this time of fluctuation on the international financial markets, I was pleased and reassured to note that the Government has a better regulation agenda and has promised legislation to consolidate and modernise financial services legislation. In view of the current international and national financial position, is it not advisable to introduce the legislation as a matter of urgency, with a view to generating debate and giving reassurance as to the Government's intentions in this area?

The Tánaiste: The financial services legislation relates to building societies and will be taken next year. It has not been determined when the consolidation Bill will be brought before the House.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: That is not the Bill to which I referred, which was No. 52.

The Tánaiste: If the Deputy knows the answer, why is he asking the question?

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: It would also help if the Government knew the answer.

The Tánaiste: I answered the question. It has not been determined when the consolidation Bill will be brought before the House.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy knows well that the Tánaiste answered the question.

Deputy Michael Creed: On the CAP health check which was finalised in Brussels last night——

An Ceann Comhairle: This does not sound promising.

Deputy Michael Creed: ——will the Tánaiste arrange for the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Deputy Brendan Smith, to come before the House at the earliest possible date to account for the important decisions made at last night's meeting?

An Ceann Comhairle: That is a matter for the Whips.

Deputy Michael Creed: Will the Government make time available to hold a debate at the earliest possible date?

The Tánaiste: As is always the case, if the Deputy wants a debate, his party Whip can discuss the issue with the Government Whip.

Deputy Kieran O'Donnell: Last Thursday, the Tánaiste stated recapitalisation of the banks was not necessary at this time. The Taoiseach now believes the recapitalisation option needs to be considered. I support Deputy Burton's call for a debate in the House.

An Ceann Comhairle: That is a matter for the Whips.

Deputy Kieran O'Donnell: This is the most serious issue facing business. Has the Tánaiste changed her mind since she spoke in the House last Thursday and, if so, why?

An Ceann Comhairle: We must move on as the issue has been discussed. I have adjudicated on the matter and do not propose to make an exception for the Deputy.

Air Navigation and Transport (Prevention of Extraordinary Rendition) Bill 2008: First Stage.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: I move:

That leave be granted to introduce a Bill entitled an Act to provide for the exercise of powers under the Air Navigation and Transport Acts 1936 to 1998 in accordance with the international legal obligations of the State in respect of secret detention facilities and interstate transport of prisoners; and to provide for related matters.

An Ceann Comhairle: Is the Bill opposed?

The Tánaiste: No.

Question put and agreed to.

An Ceann Comhairle: Since this is a Private Members' Bill, Second Stage must, under Standing Orders, be taken in Private Members' time.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: I move: "That the Bill be taken in Private Members' time."

Question put and agreed to.

Arbitration Bill 2008: Second Stage (Resumed).

Question again proposed: "That the Bill be now read a Second Time."

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I thank all the Deputies who contributed to the debate and for the observations they made. As I said earlier, this Bill is somewhat technical in nature. Members on all sides see the economic potential for this Bill and that is correct. As Deputies will be aware, arbitration is concerned

11 o'clock

with the resolution of disputes outside the ordinary court system. The use of alternative dispute resolution, ADR, has expanded considerably in recent years. Arbitration is particularly popular in the commercial sphere where parties may be involved in long-term business relationships. Solutions which tackle a dispute at the pre-court stage may be helpful in terms of maintaining such relationships. Properly managed arbitration can be much cheaper and quicker than other processes. It reflects an approach that gives flexibility and can be tailored to specialised disputes that sometimes arise in the commercial area. Finally, arbitration is backed up by a guarantee of enforceability in a substantial number of countries. As such, it is a truly global phenomenon.

Notwithstanding its technical nature, the Bill is nonetheless an important element in building the foundation which hopefully will assist in promoting Ireland, as acknowledged on all sides, as an arbitration centre of note. However, it will largely be for those who are practitioners in the field of arbitration to capitalise on the Bill's provisions and develop arbitration business in this jurisdiction. In this regard, we are fortunate in already having very considerable legal and professional expertise available to us in the area of arbitration. Indeed, excellent educational opportunities will flow from this which will allow individuals to build up their skills as arbitration becomes a growth area, particularly in Ireland.

Ireland is a trade dependent country and international commercial arbitration is very much a trade related activity. It is noteworthy that many commercial arbitrations in Europe are conducted under the auspices of the International Court of Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce, ICC. In recent years, the ICC has received approximately 600 requests per year for arbitration. In 2007, ICC arbitration took place in more than 40 countries and involved 66 different nationalities. In more than 50% of the cases, the amount in dispute exceeded US\$1 million. The importance of these statistics is that where parties in dispute agree to abide by the ICC rules, the International Court of Arbitration is often involved in choosing a venue for arbitration that is regarded as compatible with its rules. Ireland already has a large measure of compatibility by virtue of the provisions of the 1998 Act. This new Bill will enhance that compatibility and, by providing a single arbitration regime, facilitate practitioners in building the type of expertise that will help promote Ireland.

As I said at the outset, the legislation was published on 9 June and is largely an exercise in consolidation and modernisation. In general terms, it deals in a comprehensive manner with the model laws and the key issues that arise in the arbitration proceedings. Where necessary, the law has been supplemented by specific provisions in the Bill aimed at ensuring that our arbitration law is both user-friendly and comprehensive.

A number of comments were made and I will touch on them. Deputy D'Arcy sought clarification of the implications of section 11. That section deals with particular types of applications which are made to the court, for example, an application to the High Court to set aside an arbitral award or one for the same court to enforce a foreign award. As matters stand, all determinations by the High Court could be the subject of appeals to the Supreme Court. The effect of section 11 is to ensure that the determination at High Court level is final and no longer capable of being appealed. This will reduce the potential for costly, long-drawn out litigation and is fully supportive of the arbitral process in keeping with good international practice.

Deputy Rabbitte made a number of suggestions for possible amendments which I am sure we will have an opportunity to consider on Committee Stage. He referred in particular to the fact that certain provisions had been drawn directly from the 1954 Act and that some revisiting of these provisions might be in order. It is, perhaps, not surprising that this should be the case, given that the Bill is largely a consolidating measure which inevitably reflects existing legislative provisions. However, I can empathise with the call for an examination of some of the provisions now in the Bill as it stands. Perhaps there will be an opportunity to make some amendments on Committee Stage. In any event, I will bring forward amendments in this regard.

I have some doubt about whether this will be the case in relation to the exclusion of arbitrations that arise under the Industrial Relations Acts, as the Deputy mentioned. Industrial relations in Ireland involves very specific and efficient machinery which has worked very well over the years and it would be imprudent to overthrow it. However, I am prepared to examine provisions such as those contained in Part 3 of the Bill, which refer to arbitration under a court order. At the very least, some modernisation of language may be called for, given the fact that this language emanated in 1954. Without making any final commitment, I am open to the idea that this part could be deleted altogether.

I am also aware that some confusion has surrounded the aim of the provision that deals with small claims. The policy aim was to ensure that consumers would benefit from the Small Claims Court, which operates under the aegis of the District Court, even if the terms of an agreement to which they had entered required them to seek arbitration. However, it is not the intention to preclude consumers from using the various arbitration schemes that are available and which are tailored for various sectors, should they so wish. I want to ensure that consumer choice is available in this area and I accept that the provision in the Bill, as published, is not wholly free of ambiguity. Therefore, I will look on Committee Stage at this aspect of the Small Claims Court and the option somebody might have, under the €2,000 limit of the District Court's small claims issue, regarding arbitration.

Reference was also made to the fact that, under the model law, it is possible to make an application under Article 34 to have an arbitral award set aside and that, on virtually the same grounds under Article 36, it is possible to make an application to have recognition of enforcement refused. This apparent duality springs from the fact that the model law treats all awards rendered in international commercial arbitration in a uniform manner, irrespective of where they are made. There is a practical difference, however, in that a set aside application may only be made to a court in the state where the award was rendered, whereas an application for enforcement may be made to a court in any state. Nonetheless, I believe it is possible to streamline the procedure further for awards made in this jurisdiction in so far as the recognition and enforcement provisions are concerned. This is also an area in which I will possibly table an amendment in due course.

[Deputy Dermot Ahern.]

Again, I thank the Deputies for their remarks about this fairly complex and technical Bill. However, I believe we need to consolidate our legislation, particularly in the context of selling Ireland as a centre of excellence for arbitration.

Question put and agreed to.

Arbitration Bill 2008: Referral to Select Committee.

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I move:

That the Bill be referred to the Select Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women's Rights, in accordance with Standing Order 122(1) and paragraph 1(a)(i) of the Orders of Reference of that committee.

Question put and agreed to.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Bill 2008: Second Stage (Resumed).

Question again proposed: "That the Bill be now read a Second Time."

Deputy Arthur Morgan: I welcome the opportunity to complete the slot commenced by my colleague, Deputy Caoimhín Ó Caoláin. A number of questions remain to be answered. How long a delay can we expect in the commencement of the Bill? Will we see the creation of a massive waiting list for nursing home care? Thousands of people may be assessed as being in need of such care, but will the places be available for them. Age Action Ireland has asked how a waiting list might work. Would it be on the basis of first come first served, or on grounds of need, with those most urgently requiring care being accommodated first? Has this actually been worked out yet?

Another key question asked by Age Action Ireland is if the Bill is enacted, whether this means an older person assessed as being in need of full-time medical and nursing care who refuses to sign up to the new charging arrangement, whereby he or she will pay up to 80% of the valuation of the home and up to 15% of his or her estate, will be refused essential care by the State. Other concerns include the fact the Bill does not recognise the situation of siblings who share the same house although it does recognise married, cohabiting and same sex couples.

People could be charged twice in their lifetime. A person could pay a 7.5% share of the home on behalf of a partner who is in care and if he or she sold the home and later needed nursing home care himself or herself, he or she could face a 15% charge on the new home. Another vital issue is the need for a draft national quality standard for residential care settings to be approved and in place before the scheme commences. There are many more serious issues and questions raised by the detail of the Bill which need to be teased out on Committee Stage.

Sinn Féin cannot support this Bill. It is a move from universal entitlement and is not rights-based or comprehensive in providing the wide range of care older people require.

Deputy Joanna Tuffy: This legislation is called a fair deal but it is the opposite of fair. By saying something is fair, everyone accepts it is so even when it is not. There has been little analysis, particularly by the media to whom the public will look, as to whether the scheme is fair. Our duty as politicians is to hold the Government to account and convey the information to those affected so they can make a judgment on whether the legislation is fair. I will set out why I think this legislation is fundamentally unfair.

The operation of this legislation in terms of people's payments involves a redistribution of wealth from the less well-off to the better off. That is how it is being funded. Money is taken from the less well-off so that people who are better-off can come out better under the new scheme. The better-off will pay less under the scheme while those who are less well-off have to pay more. Another reason the scheme is unfair is that it involves a transfer of State subsidy currently paid to public nursing homes to private sector nursing homes. It privatises public nursing home care and long-term care for the elderly. It discriminates against older people, a point made by many Deputies, including Deputy O'Sullivan, Labour Party spokesperson on health.

On the redistribution of wealth, when the scheme was announced in 2006 the Minister for Health and Children, Deputy Mary Harney published a guide to the scheme in which she gave an example of how payments would work. She published examples of before and after scenarios; she set out what people might pay under the current provisions and what they would pay under the so-called fair deal scheme. One example is of a "Mrs. Fitzgerald" who pays a maximum of €120 per week towards the cost of her care, and under the new scheme as a new entrant to a nursing home she would pay a combination of €145.60 and a deferred contribution of €157.69, which is more than €300 per week. She would pay almost €200 more per month under the proposed scheme than she was paying previously.

When the Minister published the details some months ago she gave examples of co-payments under the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Bill 2008 but she did not give before and after examples, and only published what people would pay under the new scheme. I did my own calculations of the figures for before and after. I am making the same assumptions as the Department of Health and Children and the Minister in the document "Examples of Co-Payment under the Nursing Home Support Scheme October 2008" that the cost of a private nursing home bed is €800 and the current maximum payment in a public nursing home is €120.

One fictional example which represents many people in nursing home beds is "Mr. Doyle". He is a widower who lives alone in his home in Kildare and has a house valued at €200,000 which he may have bought from the council under the tenant purchase scheme. His sole income is the contributory pension of €230 per week. If he went to a public nursing home today all he would pay is €120 per week to HSE.

Under the new scheme, if it is passed, if he were to go to a public nursing home, he will pay €341.69 per week, which is €221.69 more than under the current system. The figure of €341.69 is made up of €184 which is 80% of his assessable income which is his pension, and €157.69 which is 5% of relevant assets and is made up of the value of his home minus a €36,000 disregard and divided by 52 weeks. He can pay it now or it can be taken out of this estate after his death, but he will pay €341.69 under the new scheme compared to €120 under the current system. He will pay €221.69 per week more. How is that system fair for him?

People who currently enter a private nursing home bed and receive no subvention from the HSE are treated unfairly under the present system and they will benefit under the fair deal scheme. One example is "Mrs. Smith", a widower who lives alone in a house in Dublin with a market value of €400,000 and has savings of €42,000 and an income of €260 per week. If she went to a private nursing home now she would pay €800 per week, and if she went to one when the new legislation is passed she would pay €598.39, coming out approximately €200 better off under the new scheme. She is much better off than Mr. Doyle. She has a house with a value of €200,000 more, savings of €42,000 and receives €30 per week in income more than him. She benefits under this scheme at his expense and he is subsidising her under the new scheme.

[Deputy Joanna Tuffy.]

The scheme benefits those in the middle who have a fairly good value on their house and a modest income, but they are benefiting because money is taken from the less well-off who have no other income than the State pension and a modestly valued house. Many people like Mr. Doyle are currently in public nursing homes. According to statistics from the Department of Health and Children from 2006, 40% of nursing home beds are public. Therefore, there will be a substantial redistribution of wealth because many of those people own their houses. They are not well off and have only a State pension, but they will now have to pay much more and that money will go to pay for people in private nursing homes.

This brings me to another issue. The scheme provides for a transfer of State subsidy from the public to the private sector. When the Minister drew up the provisions in 2006, she gave examples of both private and public nursing homes. Her example of co-payments under the nursing homes support scheme October 2008 basically assumes that everybody will go into a private nursing home, including a Mr. Jones mentioned in her document. Mr. Jones is single with no assets who lives in a local authority house on an income of €212 per week. He pays rent to the local authority and does not own his house. The assumption is that he will go into a private nursing home where he will pay €49.60 more under the new scheme.

The scheme is unfair. It is a redistribution of wealth. It cost the State €34 million to provide tax relief for the development of private nursing homes from the year 2004 to 2006. Substantial amounts of money have been provided to private nursing homes and this will provide more. The Bill will bankroll private nursing homes that the Government has allowed under the tax reliefs to private nursing home builders and developers. The provisions in the Bill will give them a secure income. It does this at the expense of those who are less well off. The Bill privatises nursing home care and discriminates against older people because it assumes their nursing home care is a luxury that should be paid for and provided by the private sector. That is wrong and unfair.

Deputy Chris Andrews: I am pleased to get the opportunity to speak on the Bill which is a milestone in terms of how older people are dealt with by the State and will have a significant impact on them.

As we get older, our health becomes more important to us and we begin to appreciate what we had. I notice a group of young people in the Visitors Gallery today. Many of us look enviously at the health and fitness of those younger than us. Health is important to everybody, but as one gets older it becomes more important and it is a concern when the body starts to fray and health deteriorates. This does not always happen gradually, but can occur quickly and can cause deep anxiety. This happens at a time when the older person's children have grown up and are now setting up their own families and living their own lives, but with their own stresses, concerns and challenges about their children. Older people may be concerned they see their children less because they are so engaged with their own children. This increases their anxiety.

This Bill will have an impact on this. The current system is unclear and in many ways unfair. The measures taken by the Government in the Bill will help to make things more fair. Fairness is what people want. As well as deteriorating health, older people often face increased social isolation. Although we have become more prosperous, notwithstanding the current downturn, people have become more isolated from mainstream society, particularly older people who feel cut off.

This is particularly true for older men. Older men do not seem to engage as much as women with community facilities and activities. I have noticed when active retirement associations have visited the Houses that they usually contain only approximately two out of 50 are men

and they are inclined to remain quiet. The women are significantly more active. The sense of isolation among older people is particularly acute among older men. This must be addressed. There are attempts being made to address it, but there is no magic wand. Older women deal better with ageing than older men and engage with community groups and activities to a larger extent.

Growing old is a traumatic and terrifying experience for many, particularly if they have no family or if, for whatever reasons, they find themselves isolated in a community in which they were not brought up. It is very difficult for these people to re-engage and become involved unless they have a strong personality. It is difficult to muster the strength needed to become involved at this time of life.

Many elderly people do not have families on which they can rely. Various circumstances have led to them finding themselves isolated without family. When people have families, the family usually does everything it can to lessen the difficulties of the older person. However, there often comes a point when there is no option but to say the family can no longer deal with the older person. I heard of the sad experience of a family, where the mother was experiencing some form of dementia. The family was concerned about her, but given the family circumstances they were not able to stay with her as much as they would like. It was when it came to the point of having to lock her into a room one night that they realised the situation was unacceptable and they could not carry on any longer. In the interest of the mother, whom they loved deeply, they had to give in and decide to let her go into a home. Such people feel a sense of failure when they have to let their mother or father or relative leave their home and their roots and put them into a nursing home.

Most experiences in public nursing homes are positive and families speak highly of the care provided. The difficulties that have been highlighted have been mainly in private nursing homes. This Bill will address such difficulties and ensure an equitable standard in these homes. It will ensure that what has been unclear will be clear. People will be able to understand and see how the system will work and how they will fit into it. They will understand how they will be able to care for their parents for the long term.

Given our economic difficulties, the simplest thing for the Government would have been to put this legislation on the long finger. While that could have been done, this Bill demonstrates the commitment of the Government to older people. The manner in which the issue pertaining to medical cards was communicated and handled was disappointing. Nonetheless, older people subsequently have told me that over the past 11 years, Fianna Fáil and the Government in many ways have acted as the trade union for older people. This legislation will reinforce such a view, will demonstrate the Government's commitment to protecting the elderly, who are the most vulnerable people in society, and will clarify matters that were unclear.

Furthermore, it will bring about change by allowing people to plan for and predict the future to a degree. Older people and families with older people who are reaching the age at which they will be obliged to enter nursing homes seek such an opportunity. They consider it to be comforting to know they can plan and predict what will happen into the future. It has been and continues to be unfair that assessments and financial supports vary so markedly across health board areas. It gives rise to scenarios in which close neighbours, who could be living across the road from each other, each must comply with different assessments, guidelines and payments. This is difficult to understand for the person who perceives him or herself to have been treated more harshly by a particular health board and is highly frustrating for the families concerned.

The pressure to secure adequate nursing home facilities is such that families may have no other option but to sell their family home. Moreover, this can take place although a child or

[Deputy Chris Andrews.]

son still lives there. The cost of meeting such charges is such that even large or well-off families find it a huge strain on their financial resources to be able to pay for nursing home care. Consequently, they find themselves being obliged to sell their home. Deciding that one's parent or loved one must enter a nursing home is one matter. However, when it is reinforced by being obliged to sell that home, it gives rise a great sense of failure, disappointment and sadness among family members. This also can vary, depending on the health board area in which one is living.

I refer to the doubt and lack of clarity on how one pays for public nursing home places, when one will be obliged to pay for it and who qualifies to get into them. Given the current economic climate, a great deal of uncertainty exists and this Bill will provide a degree of certainty to families, inasmuch as the State can. While the State will do whatever it can, ultimate responsibility comes down to families, which must take responsibility for their aging loved ones and members.

As for the proposals, I found a newspaper report to be interesting. It stated the new proposals offer to take the value of the resident's home at the time of his or her application to enter nursing home care and to link this value to the consumer price index, not the housing market, which has changed. However, if the house prices should fall, as they clearly are at present, the resident or his or her care representative can apply to have the resident's financial assessment reassessed. This is a very positive measure.

Over the years there has been a blurring of the lines between the public and private sectors, which has had a great impact on the manner in which patients take their places in particular homes. A major difficulty has arisen in respect of the number of nursing homes and hopefully this Bill will clear the ground to ensure there are more nursing homes, particularly in the Dublin area. Recent reports have demonstrated that the number of nursing homes in south Dublin does not meet the demand. In effect, people living in south Dublin are obliged to travel significant distances to access public or private nursing homes. This gives rise to considerable inconvenience. For example, when one lives in the inner city or in Terenure, Rathgar or Rathmines and one's loved one, be it a mother, father, aunt or grandmother, is in a home in counties Wicklow or Kildare, visits will entail considerable journeys. Moreover, such distance will give rise to a sense of isolation and unhappiness with the service provided, irrespective of the micro-delivery of the service in the nursing home in question.

It is traumatic for families who are obliged to travel down the country to visit relatives. The family member may be notified of the visit but will then have to wait if there are delays, or even if the visit has to be cancelled due to traffic or other factors. The consequent sense of disappointment felt by person affected is hard for the family to take.

More nursing homes are required in the south Dublin area. While its population is both aging and changing, a significant number of older people live there. I recently visited a service provider for older people in Rathmines, which two or three years ago used to cater for approximately 20 clients in the form of older people who visited for lunch, dinner and daytime activities. That number has more than doubled. While the general population is aging, south Dublin is aging significantly.

The infrastructure for older people is insufficient and this Bill will bring clarity, consistency and reassurance to them. It will allow people to plan and to predict what will happen. Moreover, it will enable them to plan their finances, which must be a good thing. The measure is designed to make the service provision for older people in nursing homes much more sustainable. The State will continue to meet almost 70% of the total cost of long-term care for the population. I welcome the Government's introduction of this measure during a difficult

economic downturn. A recent NESC report on the developmental welfare state claimed the Bill will be tailored universalism. In the past few months, universal payments and their long-term impact during downturns have been debated. The Bill will not leave other people picking up the tab. Rather, recipients will pay for services on delivery. They will not be thrown out of their homes onto the streets, which would be traumatic, and they will get better care in public—

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy has one minute remaining.

Deputy Chris Andrews: The Minister, Deputy Harney, stated:

We are making fair what has been unfair. We are making consistent what has been haphazard. We are making sure what has been in doubt. What has been unsettling will be reassuring. What has been unclear will be clear.

I commend the Bill to the Dáil.

Deputy Denis Naughten: I welcome the opportunity to discuss the Bill. The majority of Deputies will contribute, as we all must address the issue daily. Each of us has familial and constituency experience of it. As valuable contributions are being made, I hope the Minister of State and her colleagues and officials will take note of points made by all sides of the House.

In December 2006, the Minister for Health and Children, Deputy Harney, announced this proposal. It was just before an election. However, the proposals will not be in place until at least 2010. It is complex legislation and a number of issues must be addressed. The assessment of need and financial assessments are of concern.

As a public representative, I am galled by something flagged by Deputy Chris Andrews, namely, the theory that the HSE is responsible for the entire country. There are greater discrepancies in terms of entitlements than there ever were under the old health board system. The HSE has been an unmitigated disaster and the Ministers in charge should put their heads on the block for their incompetent implementation of the HSE's establishment.

I will cite two examples of care of the elderly, one of which concerns two sides of the same road in south County Roscommon. In Athlone, a white line in the middle of a road marks the county and provincial boundaries and the boundary between HSE, western area, and HSE, Dublin-north Leinster area. The eligibility for an enhanced subvention differs depending on what side of the white line one lives on. At the edge of Ballinasloe ten miles away in HSE, western area, there is a discrepancy between sides of the road despite being in the same region. An elderly person from the County Roscommon side attending hospital is not entitled to step-down care in a nursing home after his or her release, but an elderly person from the other side of the road is entitled to that care because he or she lives in County Galway.

The same pertains to access to the Alzheimer's disease unit in Ballinasloe, which is a stone's throw from my constituents in County Roscommon. However, since they have addresses in that county and live on the wrong side of the road, they are not entitled to admission to the facility whereas patients from 50 or 60 miles away in County Galway are entitled. Greater discrepancies have come about since the HSE's establishment.

To be eligible for a bed, one must need care for a 12-month period. However, the Department of Social and Family Affairs, which is ruthless in its assessment of need, requires that someone seeking a respite care grant must be providing care for a six-month period. There is a discrepancy between the interpretations made by the Departments of Health and Children and Social and Family Affairs. The assessments will be carried out by the HSE and, according to legislation, provisions will depend on available funding. As the year progresses and demand

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for nursing home beds increases, the HSE will need to curtail its provision by increasing the medical thresholds for eligibility. Someone applying on 1 January will need to meet a lower threshold than someone applying on 31 December. This is what the HSE does. It is dependent on the level of funding, but there is no commitment to long-term funding to meet demand. This provision in the Bill is a significant problem.

The Bill is unclear in respect of the assessment of social need. In my constituency, isolation is a considerable issue because families, relatives, friends and even neighbours may not be available to provide support and care. The most galling provisions relate to assessments of community and home care supports. In County Roscommon, eligibility for home help support requires someone to be, according to the HSE, “actively dying”. People who are “actively dying” have their families and friends around them. Likewise, people are not entitled to community supports unless they are “actively dying”. Unless someone requires full-time care for a period of at least 12 months, he or she will not be eligible for nursing home care.

The Bill has some winners, namely, those with large capital assets in the form of houses and who may not have been eligible for public beds. The cap has been placed at 15% of a home’s value. Nursing homes running on a low cost model will also benefit. However, a significant number of people will lose out. In my constituency, elderly brothers and sisters who have resided in family homes for generations will be rendered more vulnerable. They could have spent 70 or 75 years together. In many cases, one brother owns a farm while another brother maintains the house. The Bill does not make adequate provision for them. They are not considered a married couple for the means assessment because they are not having sex. Were they having sex, they would be eligible for assessment. In many cases of two brothers, a brother and sister, two sisters or so on residing in family homes, one is dependent on the other and does not have his or her own income or has a limited income. Such people will be penalised by the legislation.

The legislation’s provision on clawback in respect of property handed over during the previous five years will put another group under serious pressure.

There is a major loophole in the legislation in respect of family-run businesses and family farms. The capital assets relating to such concerns are excluded from the cap set down under the Bill. As a result of this loophole, young family members will hound their elderly parents to sign over property or land well in advance of the age at which they will require care. These individuals will inform their parents that if they do not transfer ownership now or if they contract Alzheimer’s or dementia, the property, land or whatever will go to the HSE or the highest bidder, namely, a neighbour, the bank or someone else. Major pressure will be placed on elderly couples throughout the country to sign over their property to younger relatives at a much earlier stage. This will have a damaging effect in many areas, including my constituency.

Part 7 deals with reviews and appeals. I hope the HSE makes a better fist of these matters than it did of those relating to medical cards. When a decision is made in respect of a medical card at present, the HSE does not believe it worthwhile to explain to the applicant how it arrived at a particular calculation. I have been approached by such applicants and I have been obliged to apply to the HSE on their behalf for a breakdown in respect of said calculation. This increases the level of bureaucracy and paperwork involved. When assessments are carried out under the terms of the Bill before us, I hope applicants will be provided with all the relevant details regarding the result of their assessments. They will then at least be in a position to make an appeal rather than being obliged to approach the HSE in search of information regarding how a calculation was arrived at before doing so.

An applicant's means will be assessed at 50% of a couple's combined income and assets. While that is fine in many cases, it does not take into account the real costs incurred by couples on low incomes. The cost of running a house will not be reduced by 50% because one member of a couple goes into a nursing home. While I accept that the costs relating to food will decrease, those for heating and electricity will remain the same. The figure of 50% in this regard is not accurate.

A significant number of people will lose out as a result of the implementation of the provisions of this legislation. At present, those in public nursing homes only pay 80% of their assessable income. These people will lose out under the new scheme.

Would it be possible for someone to investigate what I believe to be a financial scandal, namely, the lack of accountability and transparency regarding the massive nest egg relating to patient accounts that is being stored in Tullamore, County Offaly, by the HSE? For the next of kin or families of, for example, Alzheimer's or dementia patients, trying to discover how much money is stored in one of these accounts is similar to attempting to uncover the third secret of Fatima. It is not possible to access such information. It would be an improvement if statements were issued to families or next of kin regarding the amount held in patient accounts by the HSE at present. Everyone is aware that a new stealth tax is being introduced in the context of the service charge. However, there must be transparency regarding the contents of patients' accounts.

Among those who will also lose out are people who enter nursing homes but who may not be regarded as being highly dependent in medical terms. These individuals will lose out in respect of the tax relief available to them. The average cost to stay in a nursing home is approximately €50,000 per annum. This means that the tax relief proposed in the budget — I presume it will be underpinned by the provisions in the Finance Bill to be published later today — will be slashed from €20,000 to €10,000. For many families, €10,000 is a significant amount of money.

Nursing homes with a higher cost base will also lose out under the Bill because the resources available to fund this scheme will be capped. The National Treatment Purchase Fund, NTPF, will negotiate on behalf of the State in respect of the new contract beds and will seek the cheapest possible beds. The standards relating to nursing homes have still not been placed on a statutory footing. I refer here to the standards for residential care settings that were drafted by HIQA. We must ensure that such standards are put in place. If proper standards in respect of the care of the elderly are put in place, we can then proceed to examine the position with regard to the costs relating to nursing homes. Some nursing homes will not be able to continue to charge the rates they are charging at present and meet the standards laid down by HIQA. If the NTPF is exerting pressure in that direction, standards will drop and there will be a race to the bottom. In such circumstances, it will not be a case of trying to obtain quality care for the elderly in facilities that are as close as possible to their own homes.

There are those who provide care on a private basis in the community. I refer to facilities that are not funded by the HSE but rather by the fund-raising efforts of local community organisations. Such facilities are excluded from the legislation. The fair deal does not refer to care in the community. There is a gaping hole in the legislation in this regard. While there will be assessments in respect of the care that is available, the reality is that care in the community varies from month to month and year to year and is dependent on the level of funding that can be accessed.

As soon as the HSE begins to tighten its belt, care in the community will be the first area to be affected. As a result, elderly people will become ill and will be obliged to enter hospital. They will then not be able to re-enter the community because resources will not be available

[Deputy Denis Naughten.]

to allow for the provision of home-care packages. As stated earlier, they will not be able to access home help services either. Funding will not be available for these individuals to enter private nursing homes, except in circumstances where they require care for 12 months.

Let us consider the case of an elderly person who has a hip replacement operation and who, with intensive support, can return to his or her home and live independently. Due to the fact that there are no community physiotherapy services — posts have been created but appointments have not been made as a result of the ban on recruitment — and because home-care packages and the necessary home help structures are not in place, persons such as the individual to whom I refer are obliged to remain in acute hospital settings or enter nursing homes.

What happens to elderly patients who only require care for a number of weeks in order to recuperate and who do not require it for a 12-month period? At present, they can apply for a nursing home subvention and if they are eligible under the thresholds, they will receive it. Under the new scheme, however, they will not be eligible for the fair deal. As a result, there will be a significant increase in pressure on acute hospital settings.

There is an extremely high dependency ratio in my constituency because of the large elderly population living there. The county hospital in the area is the only facility of its kind between Roscommon and Galway which does not have a step-down facility to allow patients to move from acute hospital settings to nursing homes. I refer here to the beds provided under the winter initiative. A person admitted to Portiuncula Hospital or to University College Hospital Galway will receive two to three weeks' extra care. It is in the interests of family members not to send their elderly relatives to the local hospital, namely, the Roscommon County Hospital, but to send him or her to one of the most congested hospitals in the country, namely, University College Hospital, Galway, because a person admitted to that hospital can avail of up to one month's care in a private nursing home following their release from hospital. A person admitted to the local hospital will not get even one hour of respite care once they leave that setting. This causes an incentive to be put in place that will put further pressures on the acute hospitals setting.

The theory behind this legislation is good. I welcome we are at last having this debate on the fair deal. While I acknowledge many will gain from it, there will also be many who will lose as a result. In the future, vulnerable elderly people and siblings in family homes will be left high and dry as a result of this legislation. Also, elderly people will be brow-beaten into signing over their assets at a much earlier stage than they intended.

What chance will an elderly person willing to sign over, say, a corner store, to a son or daughter wishing to expand or develop the business, have of raising loans with the banks if the State has a claw-back on that asset for five years? Banks will not release money and this will cause stagnation in regard to the development of small businesses in rural communities.

Deputy Peter Kelly: This Bill seeks to put first and above all else the best interests of each person needing care. We should not lose sight of this. Foremost in everybody's mind must be our duty and responsibility to care for elderly and vulnerable people who require nursing home care. We must remember that above all else, each person needing care must receive priority. It is the interests of these people we should be looking after.

I am pleased to speak on this Bill which provides the legislative base for the new nursing homes support scheme, a fair deal. Going into a nursing home or long term care facility can be a source of anxiety and upset for older people and their families. This legislation includes comprehensive, clear and coherent measures in regard to the provision of financial support for people who need long term care.

Under the current nursing home subvention scheme, many older people and their families suffer real financial hardship in meeting the cost of care, including having to sell or remortgage their homes. It has also put families under huge financial and emotional strain as they seek the funds to pay for an elderly person's care. Under the new fair deal people will be asked to contribute to the cost of their care according to their means. This system is right and equitable. Furthermore, no one will be disadvantaged, whether in public or private nursing homes.

Under the new arrangements, people requiring residential care will be assessed in regard to their ability to contribute to care. People who require long term residential care will contribute 80% of their assessable income, for example, their pensions, whether for public or private nursing home care. Where a person's assessable income is deemed insufficient to meet the cost of care, he-she may be required to contribute up to 5% of his-her assets.

The system allows for flexibility as payment can be deferred until after settlement of the person's estate. This system is equitable as no one will pay more than the cost of their care. Furthermore, people will have the freedom to choose from any approved private or public nursing home. A national campaign was held a few weeks ago to highlight elder abuse. Age Action Ireland informed us that this often goes unnoticed and that, to my surprise, it is often relatives who abuse elderly people. It appears the care of older people cannot be easily policed when they are living independently or with family members.

There is no excuse for poor standards of care in our nursing homes. While the HSE inspects private nursing homes on the basis of current standards, public homes are not inspected. The Health Act 2007 provides for the registration and inspection of all nursing homes, public, private and voluntary. Further inspections will be carried out by the Office of the Chief Inspector of Social Services which is part of the Health Information and Quality Authority, HIQA.

I am pleased to note that existing inspection and registration systems for residential services will be replaced by a strengthened and expanded scheme. We were all horrified a couple of years ago by the "Prime Time Investigates" programme which showed older people living in appalling conditions. This derogation of our duty can never be allowed to happen again.

Deputy Seymour Crawford: It is still happening.

Deputy Peter Kelly: I accept that HIQA is still in the process of recruiting staff and building up its operational capacity. I have been informed that it will be well resourced with a budget of €16.8 million in 2008 to meet the estimated cost of its planned worked programme, including the commencement of nursing home inspections. Budget 2009 provides €55 million for the implementation of the fair deal scheme next year. This brings to €900 million total funding for long-term residential care.

I commend the Minister for Health and Children and her officials on the introduction of this complex legislation. The introduction of the scheme will mean that all but those with the highest incomes should receive financial support from the State towards nursing home care. Furthermore, no one currently in a nursing home, public or private, will be disadvantaged by the introduction of the fair deal.

In my constituency, I commend two nursing homes, one private and one public, in the town of Longford. The facilities in the St. Joseph's-Mount Carmel Care Centre, a public nursing home on the Dublin Road in Longford, are as good as anything one would find in the world. Anybody who visited friends or relatives in the home would agree the matron and staff provide a caring service that is second to none. The patients are well cared for, and deservedly so. It is heartening for elderly people to know that such a facility is available. The Laurel Lodge on the Ballinalee Road in Longford is a magnificent state-of-the-art private nursing home staffed by tremendous and caring people who provide a 24-hour, seven day per week service. It

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operates to the highest standards. People have nothing but the height of praise for these facilities. It is great to know that conscientious and compassionate people work in the private nursing home sector. They are not just in it for the money. I have heard about outrageous charges being imposed in private nursing homes but that does not happen in County Longford. These people are certainly not in the business to become wealthy because the services they provide and the standards they adhere to indicate they do not run a money making operation. One could not make money by providing the best of everything for everybody in this home.

The HSE receives a lot of criticism, some of which is justified, but who is the HSE? In my county, I deal with the staff who work on the ground. I defy anybody to tell me the people who work in the county clinic and the health centre on the Dublin Road in Longford are not doing a good job. They are more than helpful in terms of assessing entitlements and facilities for patients. At present, they are diligently seeking nursing home places for people. The help is available and those who work in this profession are caring people. When commentators are critical of the HSE in the future, I ask that they be more specific in regard to whether they are criticising the administrators or the people at the top. One cannot be critical of the staff who are working on the ground to the best of their abilities. They are humans who do what they can to the highest standard.

It is important we look after older people. In recent times, we have experienced an unprecedented expansion of services for older people. Prior to the introduction of home care packages, very few older people received nursing or therapeutic care at home. This year, more than 10,000 people will benefit from the package. People want peace of mind rather than worrying where they will sleep tomorrow night. This Bill is fair from the point of view of short and long-term care for the elderly. In addition to home care packages, we have expanded home help by more than 500,000 hours. In 2007, 53,000 people received home help services and more than 11.75 million home help hours were provided. The Minister for Health and Children, Deputy Harney, introduced home care packages to provide nursing and therapy at home. This year, 11,000 people will benefit. Approximately 2,500 additional places in day and respite centres have been created since 2005. Since 2004, the Government has increased the budget for services for older people by €540 million. In this year's budget, €55 million is being provided to implement the fair deal, while home help and home care services have been protected.

Life expectancy in Ireland is now above the EU average, having exceeded it for the first time in 2002. The rapid increase in life expectancy we have experienced since 1999 is unmatched by any other EU country. At 79.6 years, Ireland's life expectancy is now more than one year longer than the EU average. Since 1996, life expectancy has increased by approximately four years. The fact that our life expectancy is nearly 80 years must say something for the people, the country and the Government. People have a will to live and, by living a happy and healthy life, they will last longer.

More than 50,000 elderly people were removed from the tax net between 2003 and 2007. Income exemptions for those aged 65 and older currently stand at €20,000 for single people and €40,000 for married couples. This is more than double the 1997 level. These were not increased in the budget. The social welfare pension has been increased from €147.30 per week in 2002 to €223 per week in 2008 and the weekly non-contributory pension has increased from €134 to €212 over the same period.

People will not have a problem with the 5% levy on property over three years. I commend the Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children, Deputy Hootor, on her caring approach to looking after the elderly. She is the right person for the job because she does her best and means well. Elderly people have a friend in the Minister of State.

Debate adjourned.

Report of the Joint Committee on European Affairs: Statements.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: I thank the Whips and the Government for facilitating this debate. This report is one of four that the Oireachtas Joint Committee on European Affairs has produced in the current year. Given the importance of being at the coalface of discussions of European-related issues, the committee felt this was an area in which it had a worthwhile submission to make.

The White Paper on Integration of EU Mortgage Credit Markets summarises the conclusions of a comprehensive review of the functioning and the level of integration of EU mortgage credit markets. It presents a package of measures to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of EU residential mortgage markets. The Commission believes that EU action is warranted in this area and that the treaty provides the basis for the creation of a single market. Evidence shows that the single market for residential mortgages is far from integrated. Obstacles exist that restrict the level of cross-border activity on the supply and demand sides, thus reducing competition and choice in the market.

The Commission recognises that consumers predominantly shop locally for mortgage credit and that the majority will probably continue to do so for the foreseeable future. The integration of EU mortgage markets will therefore be essentially supply-driven, in particular through various forms of establishment in the member state of the consumer. The Commission has also duly taken account of the lessons that can already be drawn from the recent events in financial markets. However, this White Paper is not as such a response to the current financial turmoil that originated from problems in the US sub-prime market.

When the committee first debated this issue in July the full extent of the mortgage and financial services turmoil that we now see had not emerged. However, the committee is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that we in the Houses of the Oireachtas have an input into what the EU institutions propose. We were invited by the Commission to make a submission, which we did. The objectives of the White Paper are to facilitate the cross-border supply and funding of mortgage credit, increase product diversity, improve consumer confidence and facilitate customer mobility.

I wish to thank the Commission for its invitation to national parliaments to submit their views and comments on Commission proposals received under the Barroso initiative, including Green and White Papers. As part of this welcome initiative, the committee has considered in great detail the Commission's White Paper on the Integration of EU Mortgage Credit Markets. As part of this consideration, the committee invited and received submissions from the key stakeholders in the Irish mortgage market, namely the Financial Regulator, the Department of Finance, the Irish Bankers Federation and Financial Services Ireland. The committee also held in-depth discussions with these stakeholders at two of its public meetings on 23 July and 29 July 2008. The committee would like to thank these groups for their co-operation and worthwhile inputs.

The committee supports the White Paper's objective to further enhance the competitiveness and efficiency of the residential mortgage market in Europe by facilitating market integration. The committee agrees that the integration of the retail mortgage markets will be supply driven as consumers predominantly shop locally for mortgage credit. In this context, the committee underlines the vital importance that any further actions in this area, whether legislative or otherwise, should be consumer focused. It does not agree with integrating mortgage markets for the sake of achieving a pure internal market. Any future measures proposed in this area on foot of the White Paper must demonstrate clear and tangible benefits to European consumers. This is further underlined by the recent financial turmoil brought about by the credit crunch and, some would argue, irresponsible lending by financial institutions. A great deal of

[Deputy Bernard J. Durkan.]

debate time during the committee's perusal of this document was taken up with what the committee members regarded as irresponsible lending and the possible consequences for the consumer. Not only were there consequences, as there now appears, for the consumer, but there were also consequences for the banking system and the lending agencies in general.

The committee makes the following specific comments which it would ask the Commission to take into account in its further work on the White Paper. Any proposed measures aimed at integrating Europe's retail mortgage markets must have at their core consumer protection. The committee welcomes, therefore, the White Paper's proposals on enhancing the rights of consumers such as better and more comparable pre-contractual information, improved access to credit data and a ban on product tying and restrictive practices.

The White Paper singles out early repayment as one of the most important issues for integrating EU mortgage markets. Irish law at present gives some consumers considerable rights when they want to pay off their loans early. The committee is anxious that these rights are not diminished in any way by EU proposals. Any effort at harmonisation should not undermine the Irish consumers' advantages in this area.

The committee welcomes the White Paper's call for member states to improve the efficiency of land registration procedures. The committee supports calls that land registers be available on-line and would welcome a move to e-conveyancing in Ireland which would lead to greater transparency, efficiency, consistency and speed in terms of property transactions. This would benefit consumers both directly in terms of their basic transactions and indirectly through potentially attracting more lenders to the market.

As regards improving the efficiency of forced sales procedures, the committee is concerned that any Commission proposal aimed at shortening or quickening these procedures would have unwelcome consequences for the Irish system. Ireland has one of the slower foreclosure and forced sales procedures in the EU. However, this has the unintended positive effect of encouraging creditors to seek mediation and renegotiation of loans rather than pursuing costly and long drawn out legal procedures. In addition, the difficulty in securing repossession of properties is an incentive for mortgage lenders to consider carefully whether the consumer has the initial capacity to repay a loan, a key practice for responsible lending. The committee spent considerable time discussing this aspect of the market, particularly since members felt that irresponsible lending by financial institutions should not be rewarded by early foreclosure.

The committee believes the current problems in the world economy brought on by the credit crunch and the crisis in the banking sector are due, in part, to irresponsible lending by financial institutions that has left them exposed to unnecessary risk and placed consumers in very vulnerable positions. The committee, therefore, welcomes the White Paper's focus on the issue of responsible lending and recommends that future work on foot of the White Paper should seek to tackle the issue as a matter of urgency.

Recognising that events have moved on significantly since the publication of the White Paper and given the current crisis in the financial markets, and in particular the banking sector, the committee recommends that the Commission re-evaluate the economic benefits of the White Paper's objectives. The committee welcomes that the Commission has entered into extensive consultations with all relevant stakeholders on the issues raised and proposals made by the White Paper. However, given the scale and importance of the mortgage sector to every part of the EU economy and the worldwide economy, a point underlined by the current crisis and its impact on businesses and consumers alike, the committee believes it is vital that any proposals be fully considered, robust impact assessments undertaken and cost-benefit implications rigorously analysed.

It was agreed on 24 September 2008 that this report of the joint committee be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas, published and put on the Oireachtas website and copies forwarded to the European Commission and the Department of Finance for their consideration and to those who contributed to the exchange of views, the Joint Committee on Finance and Public Service, and all Irish Members of the European Parliament for information. The committee studied the White Paper and gave its views without reservation. Its views were based purely and simply on national and international experiences and particularly the experiences at local level in the present financial and economic environment.

The committee was particularly emphatic in insisting that we, being very much committed to the European project, should have full access to whatever benefits accrue and become available throughout the European Union. It is vital that in any future discussions any opt-outs that we might feel it necessary to indulge in should not become part of a cherry-picking exercise which might ultimately lead to this country being disadvantaged in any aspect of our entitlements under EU law either proposed or existing. I commend the report to the House and welcome the Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach with responsibility for European affairs, who is in the House to give his response.

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Dick Roche): The first point which should be made is that the proposals for improved efficiency and competitiveness in residential mortgage markets are, as Deputy Durkan mentioned, in a general sense very welcome because consumers will benefit. The manner in which these proposals are being handled demonstrates that the mythology propagated by Libertas and a number of other europhobic organisations in this country about how European law is made, and the particular suggestion that European lawmaking is a closed shop, is absolutely false. Nothing could demonstrate more objectively just how false those assertions are.

Another point which should be made is that the extraordinary step-by-step approach adopted by the European Commission in the matter gives lie to the suggestion that somehow or another European laws are rammed through without any kind of discussion, consideration or democratic input. Nothing could be more democratic than the approaches being adopted here.

Deputy Durkan and his committee have made a very valuable contribution and not just in terms of the national discussion on this matter. They have used the Barroso initiative to make a specific input into European-wide consideration of this issue particularly welcome. This must be put on the record of this House because we have had more mendacious and inaccurate statements about the process of European lawmaking than we have had on just about any other issue.

The White Paper on the integration of EU mortgage credit markets summarises the conclusions of a very comprehensive review on the functioning of the level of integration of EU mortgage markets. It presents a package of measures to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of EU residential mortgage markets. This packet of measures, when finally operational — we are some time before that date — will be of tremendous benefit to consumers and will increase and enhance consumers' rights.

The objectives of the White Paper are to facilitate cross-border supply and funding of mortgage credit. I agree with the well-made point by Deputy Durkan that this is not an end in itself but it should be part of a step to improve competitiveness and consumer choice. It will increase product diversity, improve consumer confidence and facilitate consumer mobility, which are the objectives of the proposition.

The White Paper states that in 2008 the Commission is to investigate the following issues and assess the costs and benefits of different policy options available to it in its efforts to tackle

[Deputy Dick Roche.]

each issue. The point must be made that the European Commission has broken down all the different elements and is stress-testing them. It is putting each of them before committees made up of representatives of member state governments, interested parties and national parliaments. It gives lie to the suggestion often made in this State that, somehow or other, European law is plucked from the atmosphere and imposed on member states. Nothing is further from the truth, and it is time we began to nail those particular lies in this country. The issues are inimical to our interest and run counter to the facts. The public in a democracy is always entitled to unadorned facts.

I compliment Deputy Durkan and his committee, which has struggled long and hard with this White Paper, which is difficult to read. They have put much time into it and their effort has been largely ignored. I hope that in particular the national broadcaster will tonight put some effort into redressing the balance of these issues and give the committee and its extraordinary work some airtime.

The White Paper will consider a series of complex issues, such as the point touched on by Deputy Durkan, namely, early repayment. The Department of Finance is keeping a very close eye on that because, as the Deputy pointed out very well, we have a particular set of circumstances here which are *caveat emptor* not to for buyer but the lender. The issue of improving quality and comparability of information is also being dealt with in this. It is a critical area because it is urgent that those who receive mortgages are fully aware of the implications. It will also promote responsible lending and borrowing. What in the name of goodness could be more relevant to the current economic climate than responsible lending and borrowing? As Deputy Durkan has illustrated, we have all become painfully aware of the effects of irresponsibility in the area.

It illustrates the perverse nature of the debate sometimes undertaken in this country. How can anybody argue these steps are not called for when they must be? How can anybody argue that doing all this work on a pan-European basis is not the most efficient and effective way of dealing with the matter?

The Commission has established a series of expert and study groups, one of which is dealing with financial histories to examine ways to improve accessibility, comparability and a completeness of credit ideas. Ireland is represented on that by a member of the Irish Credit Bureau. The White Paper also notes the efforts of the Commission and the member states on financial education and improving financial awareness within the general public. This will be a very powerful tool to help customers choose the right products and services to meet individual needs.

Another area of focus for the Commission is the follow-up of earlier work on securitisation and it may establish a working or expert group in this area. This could be nothing but beneficial. Further research is to be undertaken in areas such as the role of the regulation of non-credit institutions in EU mortgage markets. For example, the Commission has also published draft recommendations on land registration, foreclosure and property valuation. The Department of Finance has consulted with the relevant stakeholders on the draft recommendations and responded to the Commission on this issue. This illustrates again, as if it is required, the reality that nothing happens out of the air at European level. Each individual stage, line, paragraph, full stop and comma is examined at national level.

A study began earlier this year on the equity release products in EU markets and a study on tying-in and other unfair practices has recently commenced. Tying is unfair because people are exposed to additional costs over and above their mortgage payment. A further study on

the use of interest rate restrictions in member states is set to follow up on this at the end of the year.

I mention all these points to illustrate the extraordinary detail in which the European Commission, member state governments, national parliaments and the people who care about progress not just in this country but in Europe take to ensure measures we are intending to take are not only timely but appropriate.

Ireland supports the moves towards a single European mortgage market. The programme for Government specifically refers to this issue and indicates particular priority should be given to the retail and financial services area. Many of the initiatives discussed in the White Paper are already in place in this country, such as regulation of non-credit institutions, which includes sub-prime lenders, and a ban on the linking of services.

We agree with the Commission's position on stressing the importance of mortgage credit for European Union citizens, the citizens of Ireland and the economy as a whole. We also agree with the tackling of barriers in order to achieve greater integration of mortgage credit markets. As Deputy Durkan has said so succinctly, it is not just to create some wide market but rather a market where the consumer is king and well-informed.

The approach used by the Commission, which relies on the rigorous impact assessment for various policy options for all issues, is very welcome. Each issue is being examined in an open, transparent, democratic and very thorough way. That is as it should be. Notwithstanding the need to protect further and empower consumers, we recognise the potential for integration is determined by a range of factors which includes, for example, culture, language and customer preferences, and further integration is likely to be supply-driven rather than demand-driven.

Deputy Durkan's point in this area was apposite. Ireland shares the Commission's view that further work is needed to develop the European policy framework for integration of mortgage credit in Europe and assess the need for legislation. In particular, Ireland is concentrating efforts on two key areas.

Early repayment is one of the most important issues for the integrated EU mortgage market. The Consumer Credit Act 1995 already provides consumers with considerable rights in cases where they want to pay off loans earlier and we are anxious that these rights will not be diminished in any way. We will ensure that is the case in this area. Most other member states have a preponderance of long-term, fixed rate and-or bond financed loans, redemption of which may involve a substantial cost and hence, a redemption fee, which itself can be substantial. We are concerned that any effort at harmonisation could adversely affect the consumer protections we enjoy in this area. We will make certain that does not happen.

Deputy Durkan has made a wise point in saying that any proposal at shortening or quickening of forced sales procedures should be examined with the utmost care. As he indicated, the slow procedures that operate in Ireland have the unintended but positive consequence of encouraging creditors to seek mediation and to renegotiate loans in the first place rather than the pursuit of costly and drawn out legal proceedings. It is correct that lenders be aware that their recklessness is something that should be visited on their heads not on the heads of unfortunate mortgage borrowers.

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on European Affairs has produced its report on the White Paper and that report has been submitted to Europe and is now part of the process of European policy formulation. That is the exemplar of the way European policy will develop, and that will happen to a greater extent if the Lisbon treaty is put into effect because then each and every national parliament will play a much more active, open and democratic part in Europe.

[Deputy Dick Roche.]

I put on record my personal appreciation of Deputy Durkan and the members of the committee. I wish the media, especially the national broadcaster, which receives huge support by way of licence fee would play its part and highlight the work that is being done, and let the Irish people see that we have a democratic law making process at European level, as we have at national level.

Deputy Joe Costello: I am delighted to have an opportunity to speak today. The debate is important for two reasons, first because we are having it in the Chamber. The Minister of State, Deputy Roche, and Deputy Durkan are great champions of bringing as much European Union business to the Chamber as possible. I hope in the future that this will become a feature of how we conduct our business in the House.

A great deal of work has been done by the Joint Committee on European Affairs. It is extremely important that when its work is done that it sees the full light of day in plenary session in this Chamber. European affairs impact to an ever greater extent on this country, the economy and our lives.

We are discussing an extremely important issue. As both previous speakers indicated, this is entirely about the consumer; getting a better deal for the consumer and on a broader plane than is available domestically. In many ways that is the template of the European Union, namely, where areas of competence can be extended, that is done. We should extend our business across borders as far as possible, and if we can get a better deal for the consumer throughout any of the 27 member states of the European Union, then that should be pursued. The free movement of capital as well as labour are essential pillars of how the European Union conducts its business. That is the case for the small operator just as much as for the big one. As long as we put sufficient regulations and supports in place, there should not be any borders and I welcome that very much.

I echo what the Minister said in his closing remarks, that the national broadcaster, RTE, should be more cognisant of European Union matters dealt with in this House. It should recognise that those matters that we have been debating in recent months are not unrelated to the referendum we had on the Lisbon treaty. The dialogue that is taking place must get to the broadest possible audience because we have to engage the public in European affairs. If we do not engage the public there is a danger that the perception of the so-called democratic deficit and a sense of isolation will increase. There is also a danger that it will lead to hostility towards some of the institutions of the European Union. We would like to see European affairs presented in an attractive fashion. There is no reason we should not have an appealing programme that does not take place at midnight or 1 o'clock in the morning, which is the slot generally available for Oireachtas proceedings. The business of Europe should be dealt with by means of a more attractive package.

The committee conducted its proceedings in an appropriate manner. All the stakeholders were invited, including the Department of Finance and the Financial Regulator, the Irish Banking Federation and Financial Services Ireland. All delegations presented their views on the measures before us to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of the European residential mortgage market. The four objectives, as indicated in the White Paper prepared by the European Commission, are extremely important. They include the facilitation of the cross-border supply and funding of mortgage credit, an increase in product diversity, an improvement in consumer confidence and the facilitation of customer mobility.

The first objective, namely, to facilitate the cross-border supply and funding of mortgage credit, encapsulates the other objectives. That is an eminently desirable objective because we are talking about making available to the consumer a line of credit that may not be available

otherwise. It is the case that 47% of European Union GDP is residential mortgage credit, which is a colossal amount. Ireland is top of the list in that respect. We seek more residential mortgage credit to purchase homes than any country in Europe.

Credit has dried up in this country. We can talk as much as we like about the over-extension of the construction industry, the housing market in terms of loans and the lack of self-regulation by some financial institutions. Those are important matters that we must examine, however, the nub of the situation is that the consumer who wants to purchase a residential property must have access to the market to get a loan. If the domestic market is not able to supply it, then every avenue should be open to people to make the credit available. There is no reason the European market should not be available to us.

If the Acting Chairman were a big time operator in the city or in financial services in Dublin and he wanted to transfer large quantities of capital he would have no problem accessing any market in the European Union. However, if he were a poor punter who wanted to buy a house he could not get a mortgage in Germany, France or Italy. Is that not outrageous?
I o'clock Surely the European Union should be about the free movement of capital, as much for the small operator or citizen as the large-scale financial manager. This is the nub of what we are discussing today. Once this principle is recognised, it is only a matter of getting the formula right to ensure it is realised. We must ensure this is done correctly. Our committee has been working on getting it right for the Irish consumer and, I hope, consumers in each other member state. It is crucial to put together a package that fulfils the aims of the White Paper of the European Commission.

I was a little disappointed with the delegates from the Irish Banking Federation and Financial Services Ireland, but not with the Financial Regulator, who was very positive. The Chairman of the Joint Committee on European Affairs, Deputy Durkan, will remember that members had quite a *tête-à-tête* in respect of why eminent bodies such as the Irish Banking Federation and Financial Services Ireland were reluctant to engage in this process. A statement was made that the Irish consumer likes to shop in Irish shops. That is new to me as I believed the consumer likes to shop where he or she will get the best bargain. Some of the delegates before the committee attempted to put forward many arguments as to why we should not embark on our present course rather than embrace it positively and ensure the consumer is king. The arguments were, to some extent, anti-competitive. The delegates were certainly very cautious. The committee members took this on board and reflected very strongly on the fact that their present course is the best way forward.

I hope that, before long, the final package that will enable us to open up the market will be put together. There are obviously key issues to be addressed at the same time. Regulation is extremely important. To date, we have not been able to regulate our domestic residential property market properly and we have witnessed the consequent fallout. We need EU regulations and regulations that will apply effectively in this country. The idea of a lightly regulated, self-regulated or unregulated market is just not on because no protection is afforded to the consumer. As I stated, the consumer must be king in all circumstances.

Let me outline a very interesting aspect of the proposals. In many member states, mortgage insurance is not required when one takes out a mortgage. This means mortgages are much cheaper in other member states. There are sufficient legal protections in place, including the banks holding the deeds, such that the extra financial burden Irish mortgage lenders impose on purchasers is not required. It is quite expensive to obtain insurance for every property for which one receives a loan in Ireland. I would like a legal and regulatory mechanism put in place to lower or dispense with this cost.

Deputy Mary O'Rourke: I am glad of the opportunity to contribute to this debate as a member of the Joint Committee on European Affairs, which is chaired by Deputy Durkan. I commend him and the other members on their work on bringing the White Paper to its current stage. I am quite sure many matters remain to be resolved in its final compilation. The work is very good and contributes to the overall belief that what happens in EU headquarters is of the utmost importance in Ireland. That is what we are all trying to convey, irrespective of whether we are members of the Joint Committee on European Affairs or the Sub-Committee on Ireland's Future in the European Union. We are all doing the one job, that is, to make the EU more palatable and understandable. I do not know if we will all succeed in this regard.

Before I entered the Chamber, I noted an e-mail stating the sub-committee is meeting eminent communicators today, including Professor Richard Aldous, Mr. Eamon Dunphy and Mr. George Hook. Members of the sub-committee will be asking such people how they believe the EU can be made more understandable. Fresh from Limerick, Mr. Hook is here to tell us how to go about it. It is a very good idea to invite eminent communicators to appear before the sub-committee to determine what they can contribute to the debate.

With regard to the European project and strategy generally, we all noted last Monday's *The Irish Times*/TNS mrbi poll, which seemed to indicate there has been a softening of attitudes among the middle classes and farmers, who are now in the "Yes" camp in respect of the Lisbon treaty. I urge great caution in examining those findings. I am reminded somewhat of the rural saying "whistling past the graveyard", which will perhaps delight the eminent communicators invited to appear before the sub-committee. I am sure they would understand what it means. It is exactly a question of whistling past the graveyard because we were doing so right up to a month before we all voted in the referendum. We know the result. To rely on polls is precisely to whistle past the graveyard.

Be that as it may, both committees are working very hard to make the Irish realise "to be at the heart of Europe" is not just a trite saying but a phrase of considerable importance to everyone. I wonder where idealism is gone — I do not wonder; it is "with O'Leary in the grave" in a big way — in that the very idea that we are part of the European project, which is of enormous significance in so many people's minds and hearts, is not emphasised sufficiently.

Over the past two weeks, very interesting reminiscences and memorial services were held to mark 90 years since the First World War, which war was to end all wars. Of course it did not end all wars because, some 20 years later, it was followed by an equally vicious and divisive war to end all wars. Be that as it may, I felt very moved looking at very old people who could still remember what it was like to be in the France and Belgium during that period.

The European project was established so there would never again be a need for a war such as the Second World War. This point is not emphasised sufficiently, be it at meetings of the Joint Committee on European Affairs, chaired by Deputy Durkan, or the Sub-Committee on Ireland's Future in the European Union, chaired by Senator Donohoe. These chairmen are eminent politicians. The belief that so many people of different nations could live together in harmony should surely strike a chord with many people. The broadcasting of memorial services in recent weeks emphasised the numbers who died in various battles. In one particular battle — Verdun, I believe — there were 50,000 casualties in one day alone. When one considers this, one must ask what was it all for. It was surely so we would learn to live in peace. I hope we have done so and that the European project has achieved this.

We do not place sufficient emphasis on the fact that we are all in the one ideological bind. Could we not emphasise this further, particularly to young people? That would be along the ideological lines of looking at what happened in the past and referencing it to what is happening now.

Europe has been of considerable benefit to us. People say that we are only as good as the last trick, that the last handout from Europe is the one that must be followed and that if we cannot better that we should stay at home. That is not the case. When I was in the Department of Education, I saw the significant benefits that came to Ireland through our participation at the Council of Ministers. In particular, I single out the Erasmus programme which continues to be of great benefit. Young students travel abroad and other students come here, to learn and taste of life in other countries and to continue their formal education in the process. The Leargas programme has also been of considerable benefit. The institutes of technology would not have survived had it not been for the significant input into their budgets from Europe.

There are the farmers who, sadly, let us down in the vote on the Lisbon treaty last June. In the latest MRBI poll it appears they are swinging around but for how long will they swing in that way? I had hoped that Deputy Costello would be present when I spoke. I looked into the committee chamber on Tuesday when he was speaking to Mr. Ganley. I do not wish to talk about Mr. Ganley because the more one talks to or about him the more notice he gets and the bigger his head grows. Deputy Costello was remarkable. He put to Mr. Ganley the issue he had raised concerning children being taken away from their parents. Last night TV3 showed Mr. Ganley saying the things he denied he had said. We saw a clip of him being interviewed by Deputy Eamon Gilmore during the course of the referendum campaign. Mr. Ganley was seen to say that young people would be taken from their parents.

We can talk for ever about financial institutions and what the eminent work of the Joint Committee on European Affairs will mean. None the less, there are terraces and roads full of people who are firmly of the belief that all children under the age of three years were to be snatched from their parents, and that if somehow the children were hidden under the beds and escaped being snatched, then when they were 16 years of age they would be drafted into the European army. Whatever the outcome, parents would not have their children and would have no rights over them. This belief was due to the work and the utterances of a group, C oir, a very hardline right-wing group, with which that protagonist who appeared on Tuesday is strongly allied, as the TV3 interview with Deputy Eamon Gilmore showed. It was riveting to see him telling the lie, or the untruth, if the Acting Chairman, Deputy Kirk, believes I should not use the other word, at the committee on Tuesday. People of that kind are to be very much avoided but they are a fact of life.

I do not know how we are going to debunk every similar matter. The Chairman of the Joint Committee on European Affairs is present in the Chamber. There is talk of having different codicils which would address taxation, sovereignty and other issues. They will not address fear. Fear was the predominant sentiment of the Lisbon treaty debate. People had utter fear that their lives would be disrupted and that everything would happen to turn their lives inside out.

I strongly recommend what the Chairman has done in gaining time for this debate today. It is about mortgages. Can there be anything more matter of fact than mortgages? They permeate the lives of all of us. I hope the debate will go as far as the White Paper and further. We are to be followed by the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny, chaired by Deputy John Perry. He will show that committee's work in scrutinising impenetrable EU directives, putting them into plain language and somehow trying desperately to bring back the connection between Europe and the people of this country.

I was very put out by a magazine, *Alive!*, that was distributed through churches during the campaign. It told the most horrendous untruths——

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Hear, hear.

Deputy Mary O'Rourke: —about what was proposed in the Lisbon treaty. I was equally affronted by the espousal of *Alive!* by many of the clergy from the altars of their churches. Surely, they above all, should know what Europe gave Ireland and what we gave Europe. If one goes to cities such as Salzburg, Paris or Bruges, one sees streets and churches named after Irish saints. They went there to spread the message and in return those cities provided a haven for young students who, during the penal times in this country, could not practise or promulgate their religion.

This may appear as if from the mists of time but it is not. I strongly rebut the articles published in *Alive!* at the time of the Lisbon treaty referendum and I am glad of the opportunity to speak. The Acting Chairman may say that I have strayed from the point. I have not. This is a European debate and I commend the Chairman of our committee, Deputy Bernard Durkan, who has given great commitment to the European cause.

Deputy Dan Neville: I welcome the opportunity to discuss the White Paper on the integration of EU mortgage credit markets. I also commend the Oireachtas Joint Committee on European Affairs for its work, in particular its Chairman, Deputy Bernard Durkan, for the work he is doing.

The White Paper we are discussing summarises the conclusions of a comprehensive review of the functioning and the level of integration of the European Union mortgage credit markets. It presents a package of measures to improve the efficiency and the competitiveness of European Union residential mortgage markets. The Commission believes EU action is warranted in this area as the Treaty on the European Union, TEU, provides the basis for the creation of a single market. Evidence shows that the single market for residential mortgages is far from integrated. Obstacles exist that restrict the level of cross-border activity on the supply and demand sides, thus reducing competition and choice in the market. The Commission recognises that consumers predominantly shop locally for mortgage credit and that the majority would probably continue to do so, at least for the foreseeable future.

The integration of EU mortgage markets will therefore be essentially supply driven, in particular through forms of establishment in the member states of the consumer. The Commission has duly taken account of the lessons that can already be drawn from the recent events in financial markets. However, the White Paper under discussion is not a response, as such, to the financial turmoil that originated with problems in the United States subprime market.

The objectives of the White Paper are to facilitate the cross-border supply and funding of mortgage credit, to increase product diversity, to improve customer confidence and to facilitate customer mobility. The Commission aims to achieve these objectives through a number of different ways, including the encouragement of early payment, improving the quality and comparability of information and promoting responsible lending and borrowing.

With regard to the latter, an expert group on financial histories is to be established to examine ways to improve the accessibility, comparability and completeness of credit data. The White Paper does not announce any legislative measures. However, the Commission does not rule out proposing further legislative measures, such as extending the consumer credit directive to include mortgage credit and banning the use of tying practices. These oblige the consumer to open a current account with the mortgage provider. Until rigorous impact assessment, including a quantitative cost benefit analysis, has been undertaken, and further consultation with all stakeholders has been concluded, the Commission considers it would be premature to decide on whether a legislative approach would, at this stage, deliver the necessary added value. That said, non-legislative measures have been announced, in particular in the field of land registration, property valuation, and forced sales-foreclosure procedures.

What is Ireland's position? The Department of Finance has indicated that until the extent of legislative proposals required in this area is known, it will not be possible to accurately assess the implications for Ireland of the White Paper. Much will depend on whether the Commission is able to move forward the objectives of the White Paper without extensive recourse to EU legislative initiatives. The programme for Government states that moves towards a single European mortgage market should be a particular priority in the retail financial services area. Ireland's mortgage market is already well developed and many of the initiatives discussed in the White Paper, for example, regulation of non-deposit taking lenders and a ban on linking of services, are in place.

What further action is proposed? The White Paper is considered by the Commission to be a major initiative and has resulted from its detailed review of the Single Market. While the implications of the initiatives announced and discussed in the White Paper are difficult to assess at this stage, if legislative proposals emerge following continuing consultations with the stakeholders, it could have a significant impact for mortgage providers and consumers in Ireland. For this reason, it was recommended that the Joint Committee on European Affairs consider this White Paper further, with a view to offering its views to the Commission and Minister. To assist this consideration it was proposed that the joint committee invite a representative of the European Commission to brief it in detail on the content of the White Paper and answer any specific questions members have. It was also proposed that the joint committee write to key stakeholders inviting them to submit their assessment of the White Paper.

The following organisations were invited to submit their views — the Financial Regulator, the regulator of credit providers which is tasked with ensuring sufficient protection is afforded to consumers; Financial Services Ireland and the Irish Bankers Federation, the main representative bodies for financial service providers in Ireland; the Consumers Association of Ireland, the independent watchdog for the protection of consumer rights; and the Department of Finance.

As to the objectives of the White Paper, competitive and efficient EU mortgage credit markets can be achieved by measures which facilitate the cross-border supply and funding of mortgage credit, increase the diversity of products, improve consumer confidence and promote customer mobility. Financial services providers can supply mortgages across borders in several ways — through local presence, for example, branches, subsidiaries, mergers and acquisitions; through direct distribution channels, for example, via telephone or the Internet; or through local intermediaries, for example, brokers. Financial services providers can also engage in cross-border activity by purchasing a mortgage portfolio from a mortgage lender in another member state.

The existence of differing legal and consumer protection frameworks and fragmented infrastructures such as credit registers as well as the lack of appropriate legal frameworks in some instances, for example, for mortgage funding, create legal and economic barriers which restrict cross-border lending and prevent the development of cost-efficient, pan-European Union funding strategies. The Commission, therefore, seeks to remove disproportionate obstacles, thus reducing the costs of selling mortgage products across the European Union.

The Commission believes the different mortgage funding instruments are complementary rather than substitutable. The aim should be to facilitate rather than restrict the development of a wide range of mortgage funding instruments. The use of funding techniques which transfer the risk of mortgage loans from the originating mortgage lenders to the capital markets provides benefits in terms of risk diversification and funding costs. However, recent experiences have highlighted the need to ensure such techniques are used in a way that is not detrimental to financial stability.

[Deputy Dan Neville.]

Although a wide range of products is available across the European Union, no single domestic market can be considered as having a complete range of mortgage products in terms of either product characteristics or borrowers served. This is due, to some extent, to factors such as consumer preferences or different business strategies adopted by mortgage lenders. However, economic and legal barriers also exist which prevent mortgage lenders from offering certain products in certain markets or opting for a given funding strategy. In this respect, barriers to product diversity are closely related to other barriers inhibiting cross-border activity by mortgage lenders.

An increase in product diversity has been identified by a number of studies as the crucial element for achieving most of the benefits of mortgage market integration. One study estimates that removing the barriers to product availability alone would increase EU consumption by 0.4% and GDP by 0.6% over the next ten years, compared to an estimated overall increase in EU consumption by 0.5% and in GDP by 0.7%. Another study suggests that improved product diversity would lead to a 10% expansion in the market size by enabling new borrowers to access mortgage credit and a quarter of existing borrowers to find more suitable products, bringing annual benefits of between 0.15% and 0.3% of residential mortgage balances.

The Commission seeks to increase the diversity of products that could meet consumers' needs by removing barriers to the distribution and sale of products, particularly new and innovative mortgage products. The Commission recognises that many of the rules which restrict the offering of certain products on a cross-border basis have been designed to protect consumers and-or preserve financial stability. The problems which occurred recently on the US sub-prime market serve as useful reminders of the importance of not taking undue risks with these crucial public policy objectives. The Commission wishes, nevertheless, to explore ways through which greater product diversity can be combined with strong consumer protection and adequate financial stability.

Taking out a mortgage credit is an important decision for any consumer. The Commission believes there can be no efficient market without confident and empowered consumers, who are able to seek out and choose the best mortgage product for their needs, regardless of the location of the mortgage lender. To make an appropriate choice consumers require clear, correct, complete and comparable information on different mortgage products.

The Commission considers it essential that mortgage lenders lend responsibly, in particular by thoroughly assessing the borrowers' ability to pay instalments in the context of the transaction envisaged. They can do such an assessment in a variety of ways, for example, by consulting a database. Irresponsible lending and misselling of mortgage loans by mortgage lenders or unscrupulous credit intermediaries can, as illustrated by the current sub-prime turmoil, have a negative impact on the economy at large.

Good advice, including legal advice, is an important element in enhancing consumer confidence. It is distinct from information, which is merely a description of the product. The Commission wishes to promote high level mortgage advice standards, while recognising that not all consumers need the same level of advice.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: I acknowledge the worthwhile and useful contributions made by the Minister of State and other speakers.

Special Report on New EU Legislation: Statements.

Deputy John Perry: I compliment Deputy Durkan on the outstanding work he is doing in European affairs. On behalf of the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny I am pleased to

present our second special report which deals with new EU legislative proposals. I thank the Whips for scheduling this debate today, and for their commitment to schedule further debates at least once a month. This point was well made earlier on the Order of Business by the Fine Gael leader, Deputy Enda Kenny. We have to connect our work directly with the issues that matter to people.

It is clear from the committee's work that there is an enormous amount of material to be scrutinised in considering the legal framework of the EU. Already, more than 9,000 EU legislative measures are in place, and since 1973 Ireland has transposed 1,732 directives into Irish law out of a total of 1,751, equivalent to a transposition rate of 98.9%. More than 400 European legislative proposals per annum are laid before the Oireachtas and considered by the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny. The volume of EU legislation and the significance of its impact on domestic policy in all areas mean that it is essential for the Oireachtas to have effective, robust and accessible procedures for scrutinising EU business.

When Ireland joined the EEC in 1973, section 4 of the European Communities Act provided specifically for the Government to report twice yearly to the Oireachtas on European developments. Section 2(5) of the European Scrutiny Act 2002 strengthened this by providing that each Minister must individually report twice yearly in relation to EU legislation and other developments within their remit. This provision was meant to strengthen the ability of the Oireachtas to hold the Government to account for its role in agreeing new EU laws on Ireland's behalf in the Council of Ministers.

Going back to 1973, the six month reports have never been actively considered or debated in the Dáil. That has drawn much critical comment from outside commentators. It implies a lack of interest by the Dáil in the detail of new EU laws. This is regrettable because EU laws have a major effect on the daily lives of our citizens. Surveys and polls since the Lisbon treaty have highlighted the public's concerns about the level of public information and consultation on important EU proposals. It is against that backdrop that the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny Committee sought this debate. The report, which is very detailed, contains separate reports from each of the 15 Departments. Those reports reflect the considerable work done by the Government in connection with Ireland's membership of the EU. They also reveal the wide variety of policy areas involved.

Chapter 1 describes the work of the committee. In Chapter 2 we draw particular attention to 11 major policy areas we identified where important EU legislation is being progressed — climate change, labour laws, energy, environmental protection, financial policy, Internal Market, aviation, telecommunications, justice and home affairs, CAP reform and the Common Fisheries Policy. That is a broad spectrum of directives that have a direct impact on Irish citizens. In this and future debates, I believe, we can hold the Government to account, and the people of Ireland will know well in advance of any new directive in future, which will be well debated. That will reduce the lack of concern among the public as regards lack of awareness on EU issues. I shall briefly deal with some of them.

Section 2.5 deals with financial policy. In the current economic climate, the public is looking for stability and reassurance that Ireland can manage its way through the current extreme downturn. Our membership of the EU has been vital in protecting us to some extent from the type of shocks that Iceland has faced.

Section 2.1 deals with climate change proposals. The EU has set ambitious targets for reducing emissions. We sent those proposals to the Joint Committee on Climate Change which recently published a major report on the matter.

Section 2.7 deals with aviation proposals. This is an industry that enjoyed a boom period of growth but is being seriously hit now by the economic downturn. Other areas we highlight

[Deputy John Perry.]

include changes in the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy. This is very significant, when one considers the role played by the IFA, regrettably I believe, in the loss of the Lisbon vote. It led thousands of farmers up the mountain but was unable to bring them down, because of the lack of clarity on issues that affected so many people in terms of the enormous benefits the farming community has derived from Europe.

There was also a major policy report on the Common Fisheries Policy. This is a very detailed report and has been scrutinised and debated by the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny. We have invited submissions from vested interests, all the NGOs and top civil servants and the report deals concisely with opinion within the Houses of the Oireachtas.

A table on page 12 of the report gives a good overview of the type of proposals the committee looked at. In the last six months we received 274 separate legislative proposals. This included 46 draft directives. Directives tend to be used for major legislation and offer each member state some room as to how precisely to transpose the law at national level. The report deals with subsidiarity and the role of national parliaments — the latter being completely lost sight of during the debate on the Lisbon treaty. If the treaty had been ratified our scrutiny committee would have far more power. As matters stand, without the ratification, we are still proceeding to scrutinise every debate. However, when one considers the increased powers the treaty was to confer on national parliaments and their entitlement to cross-examine and hold the EU to account, I have no doubt this is the model for the future.

Chapter 3 gives details of the 16 reports the committee did on individual legislative proposals in the first half of 2008. They represent an interesting cross section of policy areas across a number of Departments.

In Chapter 4 we have made three recommendations on how to improve the scrutiny process. The report has been circulated to each Minister and departmental Secretary General. It has also been sent to the Chairman of each sectoral committee. I hope that it encourages a wider debate in other committees and in the public domain. We recently had a meeting with the Secretary General of the Department of Transport on her Department's recent report. We intend to invite other Secretaries General to our meetings and this should raise the profile of the reports. We shall hold Departments to account as regards the transposition of EU directives.

There is general acceptance in this House that we need to up our game with regard to how we deal with important new EU directives. It is essential that the Oireachtas fully assesses these proposals and fine-tunes them before they are fully implemented. The Oireachtas cannot change EU directives once they have been transposed. There is no second chance so we must ensure we get it right the first time.

There have been numerous examples where major public concerns have arisen about EU directives, particularly with regard to how they were negotiated. I am pleased the Minister of State, Deputy Roche, is in the House, because he is dealing decisively with this. The nitrates directive, charges for school water and criminal sanctions for fishery offences have shown up massive inadequacies in terms of how we deal with these matters.

We are also discussing this report at a very important time in Ireland's membership of the EU. It is essential that we do not get it wrong again. The Sub-Committee on Ireland's Future in Europe is currently taking a detailed look at the role of the Oireachtas in EU affairs. When addressing the Minister of State I am speaking to the converted. We look forward to the report from the sub-committee next week and will carefully consider the recommendations it makes.

The committee appreciates the regular assistance it receives from all Departments in its consideration of EU legislative proposals. I thank my colleagues on the committee for their

assistance in carrying out their important remit on behalf of the Irish people. There is little public awareness or media coverage of the work done in the Oireachtas and Departments to meet the obligations of Ireland's membership of the EU. The committee is currently developing its own communications strategy and as a part of that sees the six-monthly reports as a major element of the accountability process. These reports have a wealth of information that can be used to show how important EU issues are in an Irish context and how much the Oireachtas and Government commit to representing Ireland's interests in Europe.

The committee is strongly of the view that their reports on important EU matters need to be debated in plenary session and this is a very good start. I am pleased the Minister of State is present and I passionately believe in the involvement of Oireachtas Members in plenary session in the Dáil and Seanad to discuss critical issue in these reports. This report contains directives that will have an impact and the directives themselves should be discussed here. I have agreement from the Whips' office that on occasion special reports dealing with a specific issue that impacts on Irish citizens can be considered here.

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs (Deputy Dick Roche): I thank Deputy Perry and I have already put on the record my appreciation for the patriotic work done by him and by Deputy Durkan and his committee. The manner in which the work of these committees is ignored, particularly by the national broadcaster, is scandalous. It is a matter of deep and grave public concern that an organisation supported by taxes to an extraordinary degree has completely ignored these committees.

I note the Press Gallery is empty. I hope someone in Ireland still cares about truth, accuracy and the right of the Irish people to know the facts. Deputy Perry and the committee have struggled long and hard, which I fully appreciate because before I became a politician I worked on scrutinising EU legislation in the Department of Finance. It is detailed and difficult work which is largely ignored by our national broadcaster. The national broadcaster claims the right to all of the broadcast tax on the basis that it fulfils a public service obligation.

I ask any fair-minded person in broadcasting, the print media or politics to compile the amount of air time given in recent weeks by RTE to the unelected leader of the Libertas organisation, who has no democratic mandate and little knowledge of EU law or processes, to either of the two committee chairmen present who are members of parties other than my own. I admire the efforts of the committees and in particular those of Deputy Perry. It is a national scandal that those efforts have been frustrated because the Irish people have a right to the truth, the facts and that an immense amount of good work is being done here. That right is being denied to them by a broadcaster that is refusing to fulfil its responsibility.

I thank the Members and the members of the Joint Committee on European Affairs for their work. The Oireachtas is playing an increasingly important role in the process of scrutinising EU legislation. It is important to have plenary sessions and to bring this issue into the open and discuss it. The people of Ireland should see the democratic oversight built into the process. I am pleased the report is being debated today and the failure to do so in the past is something for which we all bear collective responsibility.

There is a strong consensus in the Dáil and Seanad that greater scrutiny of EU measures and decisions is central to addressing the concerns of the Irish people about the EU. The people would be concerned if they were told by someone, courtesy of our national broadcaster, who demonstrated last week that he does not have a clue about the legislative process, that the processes at work are undemocratic. They believe it because there is no counter point being put to them.

[Deputy Dick Roche.]

This report demonstrates that the Oireachtas has taken on new responsibilities and taken them to heart. Since these responsibilities have been taken on board there has been a step change in accountability and review in this House. The report demonstrates that the work of the committee is varied, wide and covers the spectrum of EU legislation. I welcome the manner in which the committee has sought to highlight and prioritise legislative developments, and the critical appraisal of myself and other Ministers because that is healthy. We live in a democracy which we should value and elevate. We should value those who work to ensure the democracy works.

The overview of the report outlines succinctly the developments of key national priorities such as energy policy, climate change, the Common Agricultural Policy and aviation industry. These are all areas where the European Union operates to the benefit of each and every citizen in the country. We are a small nation and can do little, despite our best efforts, on climate change but as part of, and at the heart of, the European team we can make a difference and change attitudes for which future generations will thank us. Energy security represents a major challenge for Ireland and is an area where the European Union can be helpful. Its work will only be improved by the work of Deputy Perry and the committee.

I commend the committee on the way in which the report highlights the manner in which the European Union negotiation and legislative process is carried out. It is incredible that people who have never sat at a European Council meeting, a meeting of the Council of Ministers or been part of the negotiation process and would not know a permanent representative if it fell on them can get away with the mendacious statements and perversion of truth we have seen recently. There is nothing more open and transparent than the process of public servants, Ministers and ambassadors from each member state going through the process and having to come before an Oireachtas committee or its counterpart in another member state to review and scrutinise their work.

In Ireland the views of the Oireachtas have become central to the way we negotiate, deal with and interact with Europe and that can only be a good thing. Irish officials, public representatives and Ministers operating as a team can only improve matters for the country, yet all of this work is ignored or dismissed.

I listened recently to a person who proclaims himself to be Ireland's next billionaire — God help us when one considers the business activities in which he has been involved — speaking against the elites. I am not part of an elite. I am an ordinary working class individual who worked and was elected by my constituents, and so are all 166 of us. None of us has a view of ourselves as part of an elite and if we did we would be cut down to measure by our constituents who have little time for the kind of aggression, bombast and nonsense we have seen in recent days, including today when one unelected individual decided to insult the Members of the Oireachtas and then walk out of a committee. In any country other than this that would be news and would be dealt with as it should be by the public being allowed to visit the opprobrium on the case that is well deserved.

The committee has produced 16 scrutiny reports. Perhaps I am unusual or have a sad life, but I have read them and they are models of clarity. With regard to the special report produced by Deputy Perry some time ago on how we should move forward with regard to scrutiny, I urge those who have not had the opportunity to read it to do so. It too is a model of clarity and shows how we can deal with the work of the Union.

The report is excellent in every regard. The initiatives underline the essential democracy and inclusive nature of our system of European scrutiny. It is vital now that we develop a better approach of communicating this. If we care about Ireland and its future within Europe —

anybody careful of Ireland's future must see that it is within the heart of Europe — we must learn to communicate better. The fault lies with all of us in that regard.

I am particularly anxious that there be increased public awareness of the role of the Oireachtas in EU legislation. If the channels of mass communication decide to ignore this House, they do a grave disservice not just to the House, but to democracy and the people. We should also make information more easily available and show how important are EU developments.

The main reason given for abstaining in the recent referendum was the lack of understanding or knowledge. This was also the main reason given for voting “No”. Can anybody blame the people for this? There is a letter published in today's edition of *The Irish Times* and anybody who has not had the opportunity to read it should do so. The editor of a powerful newspaper based in the United Kingdom admits he was part of a campaign for a “No” vote. He is entitled to his views as is every citizen living in a democracy. However, there should be some sort of balance and fair play. Clearly, in that situation there was an instruction from head office this should not be the case.

We are working intensively to identify ways in which we can improve European issues and how they are communicated. We must get more co-operation, particularly from the national broadcaster. The idea that we can, as Deputy Rabbitte famously said some years ago, consign the discussion of democratic debate and consideration to beyond the witching hour, when only insomniacs and those who have rolled in from the pub are available, must be changed. It speaks volumes for where we stand and how dear we hold democracy that “Oireachtas Report” is on a par with or slightly behind “The Podge and Rodge Show”.

There is a place in democracy for informing the people and there is a need for the people of this country to be properly, honestly and truthfully informed. There is reason to drag us before the public and be critical of us when we fail. However, when we see, as we have seen today, two Oireachtas committees that worked long and hard to serve the country and ensure the Government is kept on line and that public interests are kept to the fore, get only a fraction of the time that unelected wealthy people who have the benefit of big PR budgets get, there is something fundamentally wrong. Our democracy is under threat if we do not have greater debate.

I compliment all the Members from all parties who worked so hard in this committee on this work. They have done significant service for the people and that service demands recognition.

Deputy John Perry: I thank the Minister.

Deputy Joe Costello: I wish to echo the remarks made by the Minister on the importance of European affairs, both in the House and in the manner in which this is broadcast to the rest of the country. One of the complaints regularly thrown up is that there is a democratic deficit and we are failing to engage with citizens. In that regard, we must ensure that we debate the issues in this House in full plenary session so that the public is aware of what we are doing. We must also ensure that our national broadcaster treats the House and the European Parliament seriously.

Deputy Roche mentioned insomniacs with regard to the time “Oireachtas Report” is broadcast. Reports on the European Parliament are broadcast even later. The gamut of political broadcasting provided by our national broadcaster is relegated to after midnight, often after 1 a.m. We cannot stand over that. It is no good for the national broadcaster to come back, as it did in the sub-committee yesterday when its representatives came in to explain how it dealt with the Lisbon treaty, and say that it is not the most sexy material. The national broadcaster can package material and present it in a manner that makes it attractive.

[Deputy Joe Costello.]

We are aware of many programmes that have been made on politicians and politics and there is no reason we cannot have more attractive packaging of “Oireachtas Report” or of any reports coming through from the European Union. The national broadcaster should not simply say that it is fulfilling its national broadcasting remit when putting on something at a time when nobody will watch it. This is not good enough. It must examine its practice and statutory remit in this regard.

Today is almost European Union day in the House because besides having two committee reports being debated in the House, we have the Sub-Committee on Ireland’s Future in Europe going on. I have been hopping in and out between the House and the committee. What is happening in the sub-committee currently is very enjoyable as George Hook, Bill Cullen, Professor Aldous and Eamon Dunphy are providing us with both information and entertainment. This compares well with what we had the other day when Mr. Ganley came in and arrogantly described us all as “elite bureaucrats”, despite the fact we were the only ones there who were elected by the people to represent them. We were presented in the propagandist, untruthful mechanism used by Mr. Ganley as being elite bureaucrats.

This morning, it was very unhelpful to see an organisation that had been invited to the sub-committee come in and grandstand. It came in not for the purpose of engaging with the committee but to say that what the committee was engaged in was an act of treason and that the committee was undermining the Constitution. Then the representative flounced out of the meeting and refused to engage. That is not democracy; it is elitism. How does that organisation represent the people who support its views if it is not prepared to put forward its arguments or the reasons for holding those views and campaigning on them? How does this represent the 2,000 volunteers it had working on the Lisbon treaty? What will they think about an organisation that is unwilling to engage in dialogue and debate the important issues relating to a referendum to amend and deal with the matters that concern the entire remit of how we live.

That said, I commend Deputy Perry on the good work he has done. He has been an excellent Chairman of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on European Scrutiny and has kept us focused on the work. We have produced a number of excellent reports, besides the one to which the Minister referred, on how we move forward with regard to an enhanced role for Parliament and parliamentary activity in the House and in the broader context of the European Union.

Our function as a committee is to scrutinise all matters that take place in the European Union on behalf of the people. As part of that process we scrutinise the activities of the institutions of the European Union and of our Government.

It is extremely important for the Council of Ministers, which is one of the most important formal institutions of the European Union, to be held accountable by Parliament as it conducts its business in the broader European context and that is the joint committee’s role. It is

extremely important that it does so thoroughly, in a manner that is beneficial and which holds the Council to account. As a result, the joint committee put forward further proposals to enhance such parliamentary accountability. I have been pleased to learn its proposal to the effect that this House should give over at least one day per month to European Union matters has been improved upon by the Whips, who have agreed, as the Chairman of the joint committee pointed out earlier, that Dáil time should be made available on a two to three week basis, where possible, for EU motions or reports to be discussed in the House.

Deputy John Perry: This is very good.

Deputy Joe Costello: This measure also should be replicated in the Seanad and could flower into a full engagement between the joint committee and the Houses on the matters that are so important to Ireland.

At present, although no one appears to be able to put a precise figure on it, the majority of legislation originates in the European Union with the Commission and one must come to terms with this fact. Domestically, this House is the legislative body and its function is both to scrutinise and to transpose. Consequently, Members must be engaged at every level as legislation comes through from the Commission and as it is presented to the various institutions and to this House for examination, scrutiny and finally, for transposition into law. Members' task is to conduct their business in a thorough and democratic fashion on behalf of those who elected them.

I wish to take up a couple of the issues that came up in the six-month report on the Slovenian Presidency from 1 January to 30 June last. The Slovenian Presidency had two major objectives, the first of which was to get the Lisbon treaty enacted, passed and ratified in order that by the time the Presidency concluded, it would be part and parcel of the treaties of the European Union. Unfortunately, that has not been successful.

However, another priority of the Slovenian Presidency was to try to ensure it would deal comprehensively with the issue of workers' rights before its conclusion. This was particularly true in respect of the temporary agency workers directive and the Slovenes succeeded in this regard. No countries still object to the directive, which has been discussed by Members many times. It pertains to a proposal presented by the Commission in 2000 that has been opposed by a certain number of countries. Such opposition came from a minority group of countries, of which Ireland was one. Although this issue eventually was ironed out during the Slovenian Presidency, unfortunately it proved to be a difficult backdrop to many of the debates that took place on the Lisbon treaty. It would have been preferable to have had ironed it out long before then. In the context of Towards 2016, it now will be transposed into law in whatever manner the social partners deem to be most appropriate.

However, the dragging of heels in this regard meant that Members had difficulty in arguing the case. The Millward Brown report demonstrates the largest single reason given for voting "No", apart from those who did so because they did not know, was the issue of workers' rights. I refer to concern in the public arena that there was a race to the bottom, that the Commission was neo-liberal and that there was no adequate protection for workers' rights. Such concern was seen in an EU context, even though the European Union had compiled the directive and the Irish Government was delaying its implementation.

The same point can be made in respect of climate change. A journalist who reports on Brussels appeared before the joint committee and told members that in respect of environmental issues, which are held dear at present given the Green Party's presence in government, Ireland has the second highest number of cases for infringement of environmental legislation in the European Union. My point is that the joint committee and this House must exercise an accountability role that will both scrutinise proposed draft legislation and amend it. However, the joint committee and the House also must ensure its proper transposition into legislation and subsequent implementation. Unless implemented, it is no use, just as one can produce legislation pertaining to crime which is not much use unless the Garda implements it.

I commend this report to the House and welcome the opportunity to discuss it.

Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh: Tá sé tráthúil go bhfuil an deis seo againn labhairt faoin tuairisc seo. Tá sé ríthábhachtach go mbogfaimid i dtreo níos mó de reachtaíocht na hEorpa a phlé sa Teach seo, in ionad thíos sa phlúais ina shuíonn na gcoistí. Ní fhaigheann obair na gcoistí aon

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phoiblíocht. Ní dhíríonn na meáin istach ar an obair sin. Thugann na Teachtaí eile neamhaird ar, sa chuid is mó. Glacann siad leis go bhfuil gach rud i gceart thíos sna coistí. Tá siad sásta go bhfuil jab maith á dhéanamh thíos ann. Is breá liom an muinín atá acu ionainn. Measaim gur chóir go mbeadh níos mó plé sa Seomra seo sula gcuirtear reachtaíocht go díreach os comhair na gcoistí. Dúirt mé é sin go minic sa Teach seo cheana. Muna féidir é sin a dhéanamh i dtús báire, ba cheart é a dhéanamh nuair atá an choiste críochnaithe lena chuid cainte. Tá sé tábhachtach go bhfuil athrú éigin, ar a laghad, ag tarlú sa chóras sin.

Tá sé deacair do Sinn Féin, mar phairtí bheag, a ról iomlán a chomhlíonadh i gceart sna coistí. Déanann na coistí déileáil le raon mór reachtaíochta, as gach rannóg den Aontas Eorpach agus gach rannóg den Teach seo. Cé go bhfuil sé deacair dúinn oibriú mar saoithe ar gach ábhar, déanfaimid iarracht é sin a dhéanamh. Is é sin an fáth go mbíonn an oiread sin cruinnithe ann agus go dtagann an méid sin finnítithe os comhair na gcoistí. Sa deireadh thiar thall, ní féidir linn déileáil le gach uile cheist. Tá an iomarca ábhair ag teacht os comhair na gcoistí. Bíonn orainn brath ar na Státseirbhísigh agus ar an eolas a chuireann siad faoin ár bhráid. Tá muinín againn go bhfuil siad ag tabhairt an treoir agus an míniú ceart dúinn. Is orainn atá an locht má déantar botún. Measaim go bhfuil botúin déanta againn, mar thír. Mar shampla, ghlacamar le roinnt tograí dona a tháinig os comhair na gcoistí. Ní tharlaíonn sé sin mar gheall ar easpa eolais, uaireanta — tharlaíonn sé de bharr easpa toil polaitiúil.

Measaim go bhfuil sé go maith go bhfuil an díospóireacht seo ag tarlú. Lorg mé a leithéid de dhíospóireacht ar ceist na Gaeilge freisin. Tá súil agam go mbeidh na bpáirtithe éagsúla sásta lá na Gaeilge a eagrú amach anseo, uair sa bhliain ar a laghad. Is léir gur féidir leis an Teach seo moltaí, chun an slí ina déanfaimid ár chuid gnó a athrú, a ghlacadh nuair is gá. B'fhéidir go mbeimid in ann é sin a dhéanamh amach anseo.

The volume of EU legislation is so great that I do not believe the joint committee has adequate time to devote to each of the proposals. Anyone who attended the Joint Committee on European Affairs last term or the new Joint Committee on European Scrutiny understands this point. I urge other Deputies to examine the amount of documentation placed before us and the range of issues being addressed. While many of the matters are important, they get little or no consideration in the Dáil due to time constraints.

Given that committee members sometimes struggle with the various concepts being conveyed, we depend on advice. Without it, we would be swamped. Important decisions can be made without proper consideration or debate. Previously, by the time a matter was considered by the committee, the relevant date had passed. Thankfully, this has not been the situation recently and the committee is on top of its work. My contribution is probably not as great as possible, but I represent a small party and am trying to cover a number of areas. Sometimes, it is difficult to be in two places at once, but I have succeeded.

Deputy Dick Roche: The Deputy has no reason to be apologetic. He makes good contributions. No one could——

Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh: I am apologising for being unable to be in two places at once.

Deputy Dick Roche: The Deputy is sometimes in two places at once. I apologise for interrupting.

Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh: That is fine.

Deputy Dick Roche: There should be no false modesty in the Chamber.

Deputy John Perry: Deputy Ó Snodaigh is doing a good job.

Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh: From a democratic point of view, the amount of material before the committee is problematic. Like others, I urge that more resources be given to it and its members to address the range of issues and technical legislation with which it must deal. Most members can only give some of the topics a cursory glance, yet we are subsequently criticised if something slips through. While that is right in some ways, we cannot do everything.

In certain respects, the report is a box ticking exercise and does not genuinely analyse the full impact of EU legislation. Hopefully, that situation will change. While this is the first report under consideration by the House, we will analyse more bit by bit. The report does not outline a procedure for rejecting proposals. Once a proposal has been made, it seems inevitable that it will be adopted. It frustrates committee members that what we say and the points raised by many good delegations essentially constitute whistling in the wind, as decisions have already been made. The EU needs to strengthen itself in this regard so that, when the likes of our committee meets, we are confident that our deliberations and points will be taken on board. In one or two years time, perhaps the committee will examine whether our points concerning legislation have been taken on board in the final parliamentary process.

The EU was supposed to add to the well-being of citizens. Indeed, it has done so with legislation in the field of workers' rights, equal opportunities, the environment and so on. However, even where the EU has been progressive, it is now rowing back on such legislation. The question of workers' rights is one of the most worrying. Historically, the EU has had a positive impact in this field, but it now seems determined to drive down workers' pay and conditions because of the new regime. The new buzz word "flexicurity" underpins the new approach of the Commission and informs the decisions being made in the Council of Ministers. Theoretically, the approach provides flexibility for employers while providing security for employees. In reality, it is being used to provide ideological justification for the attack on pay and conditions.

A number of other issues must be tackled. The report praises the temporary workers directive. While it is positive that agency workers are, in principle, entitled to enjoy the same pay and conditions as permanent employees from the first day of employment, what is not stated is that the directive is riddled with exceptions and loopholes. Nor is it stated that member states no longer have the right to regulate or limit the use of agency workers in different sectors. On balance, it is better that the directive enter into force, but it would be better if the report was more honest about the directive's flaws. On this issue, it is up to the trade unions to insist on a correct and thorough implementation of the directive.

Also in the report is the throwaway remark about agreement being reached "to allow a working week of over 48 hours" in respect of the working time directive. This was the length of time called for by the International Labour Organisation in 1911. We have not come far, as the EU claims that 48 hours is not good enough.

Much work went into compiling the report. I welcome it and hope for other reports with deeper analyses and greater participation by Deputies.

Deputy Seán Connick: As Vice Chairman of the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny, I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this timely and interesting debate. The report, which our committee has laid before the House, is an outline of the work we undertook from 1 January to 30 June of this year, a period coinciding with the Slovenian Presidency of the European Council.

I commend the Chairman of the European scrutiny committee, Deputy Perry, and the other committee members on the diligence and dedication they showed in their work over that period. As a newly elected Deputy, I was shocked and awed when I first received briefing

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documents for a meeting of the committee last year. The depth of paper waded through was an ecologist's nightmare and I was unsure about whether to invest in a roof rack or a trailer for my wheelchair to transport it all. However, once we got stuck into the issues, we found that they were all interesting and had significant impacts on the daily life of every Irish person. Our work was important.

I also thank the Minister of State, Deputy Roche, whom I welcome to this debate, and the various departmental officials who supplied the committee with comprehensive reports on the various developments at a European level that would have affected their Departments during the first six months of this year. The summary of each departmental report is contained in the report of the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny, which has been presented to the House.

This debate is important to the workings of the scrutiny committee and the Oireachtas's working relationship with the European Union. New European legislation has a considerable impact on everyday life and the power given to the Oireachtas to scrutinise that legislation under the European Union (Scrutiny) Act 2002 is a substantial safeguard to ensure that Ireland's interests are not adversely effected by any directives or regulations adopted at European level. Therefore, it is vital that the Oireachtas uses its full power to scrutinise legislation fully and to protect Ireland's interests.

The Joint Committee on European Scrutiny has been given the responsibility by the Oireachtas to scrutinise legislation on its behalf, but our work cannot exist in a vacuum. Unless the Oireachtas is fully involved in examining the reports we produce and in debating the issues raised therein, we will be failing in our responsibilities to people to safeguard their interests in Europe. That is why I would attach so much importance to this debate.

As a committee, we were surprised by the public's lack of knowledge about the role that the Oireachtas plays in protecting Ireland's interests when adopting new European regulations and directives. This lack of knowledge and understanding became particularly clear during the many public discussions and debates that occurred before the referendum on the Lisbon treaty. The public would not have been as reluctant to adopt the treaty if they had known about the role of the Oireachtas in scrutinising European legislation, which would actually be strengthened by the treaty. As a committee we feel that strong efforts must be made to ensure the public are aware of this role. It is possible that the Oireachtas television channel, which is proposed as part of the Broadcasting Bill, will be one of the mechanisms that can be used to explain to the public the relationship between the Oireachtas and the European institutions.

Our colleagues on the Sub-Committee on Ireland's Future in the European Union are examining this lack of public awareness and many other related issues. I look forward to hearing the outcome of the sub-committee's deliberations and to the opportunity to debate them in this House at some future date. I compliment the members of the sub-committee on the work they are doing. They have engaged in some of the most interesting debates I have ever seen. We are lucky in that we can watch proceedings on the internal Oireachtas television system. I do not know how anyone could state that those proceedings have been boring. The sub-committee's work has been extremely interesting.

The work we do has an impact across all sectors of society. In my constituency of Wexford, the fishing, agricultural and small business sectors have been impacted upon by the various directives and regulations that are imposed and followed through upon by the agencies responsible for their implementation. Members of the public and business people are of the view that there is a great deal of over-regulation and that directives are over-policed. By publicising the work of the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny and that of the Houses in general and also

by highlighting the relationship that exists between the Oireachtas and the European Union, we can move some way towards addressing the issues to which I refer.

I thank the Minister of State, Deputy Roche, for his endorsement of the work of the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny. I also thank him for his attack on the lack of coverage by the national media of the committee's proceedings. "Oireachtas Report" and "European Parliament Report" are broadcast late at night and are probably only watched by insomniacs rather than those who might be interested in the matters with which they deal. It should be possible to repeat these important programmes, which are only 30 minutes in duration, on Saturday or Sunday mornings. As already stated, it is a pity members of the public are missing out on the important and interesting work being carried out by the Sub-Committee on Ireland's Future in the European Union.

As well as its scheduled work of scrutinising European legislation, the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny is also studying a number of ways of making its own proceedings more effective and of making the process of examining proposals from Europe a more central part of the workings of the Oireachtas. Among these initiatives are examining the operations of the European Union Scrutiny Act to see if measures can be taken within the terms of that Act to make its implementation more effective, seeking to have the Standing Orders of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann amended to allow debates on European matters — including those relating to the reports of the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny — to take place at least once a month and studying the best practice of scrutinising legislation in other national parliaments to see if we can learn from the experience and methods used in other countries.

It is worth reminding ourselves that during the six-month period under review in the report before the House, the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny published a special report on the enhanced role national parliaments would have had in scrutinising European legislation if the Lisbon treaty had been passed. That special report was debated in the House in early June and showed that national parliaments would be given a strengthened and clearly defined role in the European decision-making process after the adoption of the Lisbon treaty. I do not wish to revisit the referendum campaign, but I am of the view that the failure to obtain a "Yes" vote in that referendum represents a lost opportunity to strengthen Ireland's hand in Europe.

One general recommendation the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny made — this is highlighted in our report — is worth mentioning. The reports it receives from Departments on a six-monthly basis give the committee a good starting point to examine recent developments in Europe and to scrutinise the effects these legislative changes will have for Ireland. However, we are of the view that these reports could also give us the opportunity to forward plan and anticipate likely developments which could impact on Ireland. We feel that a section of each report should be devoted to outlining the priorities of the forthcoming six-month EU Presidency and the likely announcements of legislation that could be expected during that Presidency. The inclusion of information relating to future legislation would allow the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny to be more proactive in its work. It would also allow it to be quicker in its response to European legislation which could impact on Ireland.

The primary role of the joint committee is to scrutinise European legislation. During the six months of the Slovenian Presidency, which is the period covered by the report before the House, we examined no fewer than 274 separate items of legislation. The joint committee also compiled 16 individual reports in that time. These were presented to the relevant Ministers in order to guide them during the negotiations on these particular items of legislation.

I wish to refer briefly to one of the reports in question in the hope that it will give some indication of how the work of the joint committee examines the possible impact of proposed regulations on Ireland. Since my election to the House last year, I have been particularly

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involved with coastal communities in south Wexford. I am aware of the challenges that are facing these communities and their traditional industry — fishing. Earlier this year the European Commission published a draft regulation to amend the existing 2004 cod recovery plan. This draft regulation could have a significant impact on Irish fishermen because for the first time stocks in the Celtic Sea are to be included in that plan. This would have imposed strict days-at-sea limitations on Irish fishermen who catch cod in the Celtic Sea. The proposal in question is due to be finalised this month and is of great concern to those in the fishing industry in County Wexford and elsewhere. The joint committee published a report in respect of this matter last month.

The various reports compiled by the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny during the first six months of this year cover a wide range of areas, including terrorism, airport charges, VAT, food hygiene and telecommunications. Each of these areas has the potential to affect the lives of all the citizens of Ireland. The reports published by the joint committee were submitted to various Ministers and were used in their negotiations on these proposals.

I hope that in the coming years the general public will become more aware of the work of the joint committee and will begin to realise the role the Oireachtas plays in reviewing European legislation. If this happens, the fear of Europe that has developed in this country in recent years will evaporate and Ireland will return to playing a central role in the European project.

Deputy Billy Timmins: I commend the Chairman of the joint committee, Deputy Perry, and his Vice Chairman, Deputy Connick, on this report. I do not envy those who serve on the committee their membership of it. The language, terminology and abbreviations and sheer bulk of information in EU directives are extremely offputting.

I commend the Minister of State, Deputy Roche, on his excellent work in the area of European affairs. His efforts often go unheralded.

The Joint Committee on European Scrutiny, along with the Committee of Public Accounts, is probably the most important committee in the Houses of the Oireachtas. In my view we will soon be obliged to examine how the committee system is organised. I challenge any Member to list the 25 or so committees that are in existence. I looked at the list of committees in recent days and there are some which I never knew existed. The system must be reformed. Part of any such reform should include a reallocation of a major level of resources to the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny. The European affairs committee in Denmark has a support staff of 25. If we are to take seriously the issue of our involvement in European and that of trying to connect with the public, the joint committee must be afforded the status it deserves. The members of the joint committee are slaving away on behalf of the Oireachtas and it will probably be some time before the public realises the work they do.

Irish people's perception of Europe during the past two to three decades was that it was more or less similar to a bank. However, all we ever did was withdraw money from it. With the exception of what we surrendered in respect of the fishing industry, we never made lodgments. Until recently, we continued to have a subconscious post-colonial attachment to Britain. It did not dawn on us until recently that Ireland is a sovereign and independent State. In any village, town or city, one will come across fans of Manchester United or other teams and those who watch "Coronation Street" and the "X Factor".

It is time we looked into our hearts and decided the direction in which we wish to go. We must realise that there is a rich and diverse culture throughout Europe to which we can contribute and from which we can learn. Notwithstanding the fact that it will be bogged down by dealing with a great deal of administrative and technical material, I hope the joint committee will have the time to explore that aspect of our involvement in Europe. Irrespective of what

happens with regard to the deliberations of the Sub-Committee on Ireland's Future in the European Union or the Lisbon treaty, I plead with the Minister of State and the Government to afford to the joint committee the staff complement and status it deserves. I believe this can be done from within internal resources through the amalgamation of other committees which, relative to this committee, do little work. I say that hand on my heart.

The report deals with issues close to my heart, including issues relating to justice and home affairs. While I cannot read the Minister's mind, I am sure he shares my view that we should not have opted out of this under the Lisbon treaty. It would have been a strong selling point, notwithstanding we have an opt-in facility.

Crime does not recognise boundaries. Criminals can drive at speed from the greater Dublin area to Athlone to carry out a smash and grab. Also, crime crosses from the Continent of Europe to Britain and Ireland. There are no barriers to crime and as such we must ensure there are no barriers to the mechanisms we put in place to deal with it. I welcome that we will provide assistance in regard to the development of Europol. Our system must facilitate co-operation in civil and criminal matters.

It was mentioned earlier that one of the directives relates to the visa waiver programme with the United States. Ireland has a special relationship with the United States which may confuse our identity with Europe for historical reasons, in particular along the western sea board. I believe this was a factor in the Lisbon referendum in that it was the first time we noted a regional trend. It is within Europe we have the best opportunity of securing a visa arrangement with the United States.

I spoke earlier with Deputy Perry on the role of the committee. While it was established following the last general election, it had virtually no input into the Lisbon treaty, which is a weakness in our system. Also, this House had little input into that treaty. I accept that post-referendum the matter was discussed in the House. We are all aware of the weaknesses. While yesterday there was a reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, CAP, we do not yet know the details in this regard. We must rely on the media or on websites to find out what is happening as there is no mechanism in this House which provides us with an opportunity for real input into policy.

I have previously referred to the power of the Executive in Ireland. It is a weakness in our democratic system that the Legislature has greater power than the Executive. Members on the Government side have little input into policy. If the Executive did not have the power it has, and if it were required to come into this House and debate issues, the Government would not have run into the trouble it ran into in regard to the medical card issue and so on. I am not suggesting Ministers are cocooned, far from it, but they can, in particular after ten or 11 years in office, operate in a rarefied atmosphere. The time is coming when they will be relieved of that burden.

Deputy John Perry: The Minister, Deputy Roche, need not worry as we are in no rush to get there.

Deputy Billy Timmins: The Joint Committee on European Scrutiny must be empowered to require that the Minister take on board a formal opinion from the committee. I would not go so far as to suggest the Minister should be bound by such requirement as I do not agree with a mandated system. However, I believe he/she should return to the committee, if he/she chooses not to take on board such opinion, and explain the reasons in that regard. The yellow-red card system of the Lisbon treaty could be used in this regard.

We blame Europe for everything. I am sure other speakers referred to the fact that we blame Europe for our difficulties and take the credit for all that is good. The "we" in this regard is

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the Government, irrespective of hue. The water charges for schools is a classic example. I would like if a mechanism could be provided — this could be done through the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny or the Sub-Committee on Ireland's Future in the European Union — that would allow us to revisit directives that slipped through the net or to examine whether we had signed up to inappropriate proposals and perhaps to amend those decisions. We may opt not to amend them but we should at least take responsibility for our own actions. I call this the crooked carrot syndrome.

I was contacted earlier in the week by a person who told me — I do not know if this is correct — that he had received a document outlining how wool is to be treated as offal. In other words, people, when dealing with wool, must put on white gloves and other relevant garments. I am trying to get a copy of the directive concerned. This is the type of matter, if true, that is beyond comprehension and causes a great deal of difficulty. I recall when examining the inspections of the food and veterinary office that they frequently referred to a lack of implementation of measures on the part of some countries. In the case of dear old Róisín Dubh, directives were being over-implemented. We must address this issue which is of concern to many people.

When in France for the weekend or on holidays during the summer, one can eat brown bread and use the communal toilets. However, in Ireland when in business one has so many sinks one has no room for anything else, which is crazy. I acknowledge the role of the committee and its members. There is no political thanks for one's work on a committee. I do not know if one could refer to it as a labour of love. Perhaps Deputy Connick was being punished when he was appointed to the committee.

Deputy Seán Connick: No.

Deputy Billy Timmins: I am sure the Minister will agree that we need to consider re-allocating resources and amending the legislation to provide a greater role for the EU scrutiny committee. I am calling, not for the appointment of additional public servants, but for a rebalancing of the staff that support committees by way of a radical overhaul of the committee system.

Deputy Michael Mulcahy: I welcome the debate on this excellent report, which I will come back to in due course.

It is worth remembering the genesis of this committee. Credit should go to all parties concerned. If I recall correctly, it was Deputy Ruairí Quinn who originally proposed the establishment of the scrutiny committee. The Labour Party introduced legislation in regard to the European Union (Scrutiny) Act which, in fairness, we had no problem accepting.

Also, I pay tribute to former Deputy Gay Mitchell, the first chairman of the sub-committee on EU scrutiny who laboured in the basement very early in the morning for many years and did an excellent job getting this started. I pay tribute to the current chairman of the committee, Deputy John Perry, who without question has given a new lease of life and new impetus to its work. While paying tribute to these people, I join with other speakers who have praised the effervescent Minister with responsibility for European Affairs, Deputy Dick Roche, who has made Europe his métier. As other speakers mentioned, he works much of the time on the sidelines doing valuable work in this area.

I am sure my colleagues will agree that what is contained in this report is of extreme importance to Ireland. We must remember that EU legislation has a direct effect in Ireland. People seem to forget this. Not only has it a direct effect here but, legally, European law is superior to Irish law where a conflict arises, providing always that the European law is consistent and

is part of the *acquis* of the various treaties. What is contained in this report is of exceptional interest and concern to the Irish people. It is, therefore, a good day for this Oireachtas that we are taking time out to examine and debate this report and to bring it to the attention of the Irish people.

Obviously, in the time available to me, it is not possible to go through the report in its entirety. However, I commend the chairman, Deputy Perry and the officials of the committee on putting together this report. I agree the committee should be augmented and have made that point publicly on many occasions.

I recommend sending the report to all civil society organisations because they would find it interesting and useful. It deserves a wider circulation than Members of the Houses.

This report would have been more relevant if we had voted for the Lisbon treaty because the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality would have given an impetus to our work. For the first time, national parliaments would have been able to engage directly in the legislative process of the European Union.

The people have made their decision and I genuinely respect it. However, it is my duty as a member of the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny to report to this House on the attitudes and feelings of our colleagues from other parliaments across Europe. Some weeks ago, I accompanied Deputy Perry and the Chairman of the Joint Committee on European Affairs, Deputy Durkan, to a meeting in Paris of COSAC, which comprises six parliamentarians from every parliament in Europe. The other delegates were polite and understanding about Ireland's position but, beneath that layer, I sensed a growing impatience that the Lisbon process has not been allowed to progress. It is analogous to a train station from which 25 out of 27 carriages have departed. The remaining two carriages are asking the 25 which have commenced their journey to return. The majority of the Irish people have decided not to join the European journey. It is true that treaties cannot be changed other than by unanimity. However, while Lisbon cannot proceed without the agreement of all 27 member states, some other form of enhanced co-operation could be decided by the 25 which have ratified the treaty. That will leave Ireland in the shadow of a eurosceptic Britain while the rest of Europe moves on. We would thereby undo all the good work done from the 1970s to the 1990s. Alarm bells should be ringing to alert us to that prospect.

Some have argued that a second referendum would be undemocratic. How can a referendum be undemocratic? A second referendum will never take place without the agreement of this House, the Members of which are democratically elected. It is, of course, a matter for the Government to decide after negotiations whether such a course of action is necessary.

It is claimed that the project is being led by political elites. I do not consider the parliamentarians of France, Germany, Spain, Denmark and England as political elites. Like ourselves, they are ordinary people who represent their electorates. The argument that Lisbon is an elitist project is either dishonest or ill-informed.

In regard to the argument that Ireland got a bad deal, we got exactly the same deal as everybody else. Nobody has said we were proportionately worse off than others. It is bad enough that a country with a population of 4 million people will not have a Commissioner for five out of 15 years but it is a bigger deal when the same rule applies to a country of 80 million. We have to compare our sacrifice with that of other countries.

The Joint Committee on European Scrutiny plays an important role. Under the chairmanship of former Deputy Gay Mitchell, we used to meet in the basement at 8 a.m. Our deliberations were not well reported but our profile has increased since we became a full committee under Deputy Perry. I concur with Deputy Costello that the coverage of EU legislation and the committee's work by the national broadcaster is a scandal. I estimate that RTE spends more

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on Podge and Rodge than on informing the people of Ireland about important issues. It argues that our work is not interesting to the average punter but, as Deputy Costello correctly pointed out, it is the job of the broadcaster to package these matters to make them interesting. Every issue outlined in this report is of considerable importance to Irish people. It may not be wrapped in interesting packaging but it covers everything from transport and public health to security and the Third World. The director of RTE is failing in his job of properly and proportionately covering the European Union. I challenge him to come before the Joint Committee on Communications, Energy and Natural Resources to justify his station's abysmal coverage of European matters.

I commend the Joint Committee on European Committee and its Chairman, and welcome the debate on this report.

Deputy Willie Penrose: I compliment Deputy Perry and the other members of the Joint Committee on European Affairs on this important and comprehensive report. It makes proposals on improving our work. I have always been an advocate of this process. As Chairman of the Joint Committee on Social and Family Affairs I was concerned that we had insufficient resources to scrutinise and interpret the legislation with which we were charged. I feared that something might slip under the radar which would have an adverse impact further down the line. We would then be vulnerable to the charge that we were too lazy or incompetent to investigate matters properly. The Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Roche, has a deep knowledge of this area and a drive to ensure it gets the respect and deliberation it deserves.

I concur with other speakers who have argued that committees do not receive sufficient publicity. We operate from the basement and start our work early in the morning. Sometimes we even miss votes in the Dáil, which probably leads observers to think we are missing and must be doing something else. We do important work but we get little credit for it. We are not looking for credit because we are paid for what we do but people do not even realise we are down in the bunker.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Recognition.

Deputy Willie Penrose: This report is important in terms of ensuring legislation originating from the European Commission or the Council is examined from a critical perspective. It would also help to eliminate the democratic deficit of which we all speak. This will happen where there is a detailed connection with the public. We cannot go out roaring from the rooftops. People would probably regard that as self-promotion. We have means, including the national broadcast media and local radio. We have all those vehicles that should ensure people are fully and acutely aware of the work that is going on here. There should not be this great level of perceived disconnection with the public. After all we are not Einsteins, philosophers or anything else. We are in here trying to deal with the legislation, doing the best we can, getting into the intricate details of proposed legislation and how it might impact on parallel legislation that might be in the House.

Some of it is directly effective and we need to take it as it is. However, with some of it, we can propose amendments to coincide with some of our legislation and minimise or mitigate some of the impacts on our citizens, companies, farmers and others, including people involved in the fishing industry who need to put up with such legislation. We try to ensure that Ireland's interests are ultimately protected as best we can and not adversely impacted by the thrust of the legislation. I have always been a strong advocate of additional resources for this committee. I compliment Deputies Perry and Connick and their colleagues on their work in this area.

I will cite the example of the Chemicals Act — mother of God, the language is arcane. The Act is complex, difficult to understand and highly technical. It sometimes lacks co-ordination and it makes significant references to originating legislation. I am lucky I am a barrister. Without the help of the Oireachtas Library and research service, which is an excellent advance in the House, we would be left behind altogether.

The Oireachtas Joint Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment examined a proposal for a Council regulation on the statute of a European private company. We examined the purpose and ambition of the proposal and the possibility that it might lead to a reduction in compliance with domestic legislation concerning companies and undermine national legislation by creating a two-tier approach. We also examined the possible benefits, the expected uptake level of its provisions and the estimated reductions in compliance cost that would result. We also examined the consequences of the possibility that the proposal would lead to increased foreign competition and facilitate European companies establishing themselves in Ireland. We also examined the consequences of the proposal for consumers and workers, and how the proposal fitted in with the work of the company law review group. We examined it in a holistic way.

We proposed a number of recommendations as best we could. I thank the officials from various Departments who always make themselves readily available and have a fair degree of expertise in the area, dealing with people like ourselves. I have always had a strong interest in the temporary workers directive and I was glad to see the progress made during the Slovenian Presidency. I had introduced a Bill on behalf of the Labour Party because it is an issue that is very fundamental and dear to us. We do not want any diminution of workers' rights. It is important to tell the public that this advance has been made. It is up to the trade union movement to ensure that, in partnership with the Government, it is included in the Towards 2016 agreement and becomes workable.

Sometimes issues slip under the radar regardless of how well we examine them. This may have happened prior to the establishment of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on European Scrutiny. I have some expertise in agriculture and if I refer to it, I apologise. I should not need to apologise because I represent an agricultural constituency. Nevertheless, in the agricultural area, hundreds of small farmers across the country had a most difficult harvest owing to the prevailing poor weather conditions, as most of us know. However, they were further harassed by the ploughing regulations introduced under the nitrates directive. I have written a book on agriculture and the law, in which I included a chapter on the nitrates directive.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Well done.

Deputy Willie Penrose: Here was something that slipped under everyone's radar. It is a matter we need to re-address and revisit very quickly. There is a requirement that the ground ploughed must have a green cover within six weeks of ploughing. In bad weather, one does not need to be Einstein, the youngest trainee farmer or the greatest agricultural scientist in the world to know that such a proposition causes extreme difficulties for a tillage farmer. How can a grower who has ploughed ground in the very wet conditions we have experienced with compaction or obvious consequences of using heavy machinery — something about which I know a bit — be expected to go back in and sow crops to get a green cover? Failure to do so will result in possible penalties.

Such madness in proposals reminds me about not being allowed to sell the eggs off the farm or — something I used to love to buy when travelling to Wexford — strawberries or potatoes on the side of the road. Sometimes we have things that are very precious and sacred. Those

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are the types of things that may well contribute to people being turned off and advocating or even registering a “No” vote in a referendum. They may well have no logical reason other than seeing something like this which they regard as completely illogical. We should be able to get across to them. We should cut out the nonsense. We know the reason for the rule, to which we would all subscribe, that the early establishment of a crop reduces the mineralization of nitrogen and the leaching from the soil that could well arise. However, in seriously inclement weather, how can farmers create a proper seed bed? If that cannot be done, how can they obtain a proper crop establishment as there will be a poor uptake of the nutrients and trace elements, which in my view would lead to greater levels of leachate, the very problem we are trying to eradicate, and, of course, poor yields.

The question that must arise in this debate is how we arrived at this point. The question needs to be posed in a European context as to why a more lenient regime operates in the UK than pertains here. This should be subject to detailed scrutiny by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on European Scrutiny and I ask Deputy Perry to take it up, even on a retrospective basis.

Deputy John Perry: We can investigate the interpretation.

Deputy Willie Penrose: Under UK rules, a green cover is not required over the winter period, which is eminently sensible. Likewise, there is no closed period for ploughing. On the contrary, the UK environmental agency appears to promote winter ploughing and sub-soiling especially where compaction is a problem. Furthermore, the nitrogen recommendation for the main crops is significantly higher under the UK legislation. The system that operates in the UK appears to adopt a more flexible approach, which clearly takes cognisance of the practical situation that applies on the ground.

Surely in the very inclement weather of the past two summers and autumns we have experienced and which pertained during the harvest period, it is clear that there was significant compaction which necessitates sub-soiling and early ploughing. Late ploughing in such circumstances results in poor establishment, less efficient use of nitrates, deficiencies and reduced yields, and increased risk of disease from carry-over from volunteer cereals. There is a question of equality of treatment, which is an essential element that is supposed to underpin the application of EU legislation. Are the rules which are environmental in nature not being consistently applied across the EU? Why should Irish growers be more constrained, punished and disadvantaged as a result?

That is the type of thing that leads to people adopting a negative tone when they should not. I compliment all the members of the committee on the work they have put in. I advocate more resources for the Oireachtas Joint Committee on European Scrutiny, which has an enormous workload. I thank the committee members for the work they have done.

Deputy John Perry: I thank the Deputy.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: I wish to take up where my respected colleague, Deputy Penrose, left off. The interpretation of regulations is something we have at our own behest. For example, the French have a very healthy attitude to a proposal that affects them primarily. They laugh at it. They take an uproarious fit of laughter at something like the regulation mentioned by Deputy Penrose. If it affects them negatively, they do not do it and they are quite right. Provision is made within the European institutions to accommodate all that and because it is a matter of our own interpretation, nobody forces us to do it at all. We cannot force the European

Union to go our way and it cannot force us to go its way against each other's will. That is as it should be. That is democracy and it is important.

I compliment Deputy Perry on his work as Chairman of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on European Scrutiny. It is a very important and responsible role. I have been a member of EU-associated committees for a long time, longer than most other Members of the House I am sad to say, for my sins. It becomes more important as time goes on that the parliamentary system is used to scrutinise, test and challenge European legislation and Ministers on the policy they pursue at EU level and when they return. I compliment my colleague, the Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach with responsibility for European affairs, Deputy Dick Roche, and his colleague, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, for making themselves available to the committees, and the European affairs committee in particular, on a regular basis before the GAERC meetings. That has been very important.

It is vital we anticipate legislation before it is put in place and that we provide input, exerting Irish influence at centre stage before discussion takes place in the Commission or at the Council. It is important that when Council discussions take place, the Minister or Ministers negotiating are fully aware of the thinking in home parliaments.

I am amused at some of the excuses which have been put forward by people who were supposed to know about these matters in the recent debate on the Lisbon treaty. Some suggested they voted against the Lisbon treaty because it was invasive and undermined our sovereignty, and it did not allow us to become masters in our own house. It was meant to be colonisation, among other things. These views are all wrong and the people putting forward such views were reading the wrong treaty. They must have been reading earlier treaties.

If these people had read the Lisbon treaty carefully and understood it, they would know that more than other treaty negotiated since Ireland's accession to the European Union, or the EEC as it was then, the Lisbon treaty returns to national parliaments more power, initiative, control and command than at any time since this State's foundation. It is totally erroneous and misleading for anybody to suggest we have lost power or are likely to lose it through the Lisbon treaty.

The Lisbon treaty is a two-edged sword. It could be a vehicle whereby unprogressive parliaments could roll back and immobilise the European project. Problems existed prior to the Lisbon treaty, even the days before the Nice treaty, and the Lisbon treaty is responding to that issue. I am amazed that some of the so-called articulate observers have been unable to discern that. It is simple and logical. In the run up to the first and second Nice treaty referendums we were all arguing for a return of some recognition of national parliaments, their importance and input. For people to suggest it was all right to vote in favour of the Nice treaty in either the first or second referendum — it is immaterial at this stage — and vote against Lisbon is absolutely ridiculous and flies in the face of facts.

The role of the committee system is very important. There is a problem in that if one is involved with a committee, as those of us involved for a number of years will know, nobody wants to know about them. A person could be dead on a committee for weeks and nobody would want to know of it unless they read about it on the back of a newspaper the following day. It is appalling that in a democratic Parliament, nobody wants to know what goes on. I have often said the only way to deal with the problem is to have live broadcasting of the proceedings of the Houses of the Oireachtas.

There are good reasons for this. It would enable a Member of either House to display what he or she does here. The general media perception of what we do here is usually cynical and this perception is being presented on a regular basis to undermine the credibility of the Houses of the Oireachtas. It is alleged this is done for very good reasons, as the public has a right to

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know. The public has a right to know the facts rather than a perception created by some people with a hidden agenda. The quicker we recognise this, the better it will be for ourselves. We must assert our authority in the area.

I compliment the Members who have spoken today on this subject and on the European scrutiny committee. They all have a clear knowledge of the subject matter. It is a pity that does not extend outside the House, and we should ask how we can best convey that important message outside. How do we ensure, for example, that the economic fortunes of this country are not hijacked by people outside this House who may well have an ambition to get in here or to some other parliament where they can exert influence?

How is it that some people put forward their version of democracy rather than the established version? Why should their version be better than ours? For example, why do some people see a version of democracy which is centralised with a particular figurehead, possibly elected by an electorate of all people of the European Union — in which we do not have a majority? That is an interesting supposition. What would it mean for Irish sovereignty? Where would it go under those guidelines?

If we in public life have something to say, we should say it whether it is critical or laudatory. We should not say something for the wrong reasons but we should state the reasons quite clearly. Many people use the political arena to conceal an agenda of their own or withhold vital information on where they are coming from, which would in turn give the general public some idea of what can be expected of them.

The notion of “people power” will always be put forward, which is important even in football and hurling nowadays. I wonder if there is merit in it. One should remember that history is well laced with examples where people power went wrong. Any historian will readily recognise that one does not need to go back too many centuries to find such examples; one does not have to go back a century at all to learn how people power has gone wrong. People power can often be confused with democracy.

It is important to remember that when people use their vote in a democracy, it is important they have the right information. It is also important that they are discerning in the sources of information, where the information comes from and how it is backed up. For example, it is not sufficient for somebody to make spurious and groundless allegations on what the European Union, the European scrutiny committee or the European affairs committee and the Minister for Foreign Affairs or the Minister of State with responsibility for European Affairs is about. They should spell out the source and nature of any allegation and indicate the people they consort with on a regular basis. Who are their friends and with whom do they liaise or speak? What is the agenda of such people?

Their agenda is to dismantle the European Union as it is now and reduce it to a short and simple open-ended economic adventure, where the greatest and fittest would survive. Those who are smaller and weaker, politically and economically, would go to the wall.

Deputy Damien English: It is good to have a chance to say a few words on this issue. I should comment on the notion of Deputy Durkan going missing from this House for a week or two. If he was not heard for a day, a search warrant would be put out for him because his voice runs through committees and walls; nothing can block him.

It is good to see the Minister of State in the House for this important topic. As a member of the European scrutiny committee, I welcome the opportunity to speak. The Vice Chairman is here and the Chairman was here earlier. I will not comment specifically on the various

reports but rather on the importance of the work we do and the ongoing importance in bringing it to the plenary sessions for discussion. We should encourage such a process.

I have been on the committee for over a year and found the work very interesting and informative. On the first day or two, when one gets the folders of material, one could cry but we got through the backlog in the first couple of months. The depression stopped and we got back to effective scrutiny.

Deputy Dick Roche: Deputy English should be in my chair.

Deputy Damien English: I well believe that. I expect the Minister of State gets folders. I understand why Members might not wish to be on the committee or would run away from it because there is not a direct link to how it is important to constituents. I have learned that the committee does unbelievable work and it is important. One learns about what is coming down the line and one has a chance to work with Ministers and public bodies on the issues. One has a chance to influence things and point out potential problems. If the Lisbon treaty was introduced we would have more of an opportunity to do that, but as things stand it is possible to do something.

Committee members must highlight the work we do to other Members of the House so they realise it is worth getting involved in European Union legislation, to keep an eye on it and to have a say on it. During the campaign on the Lisbon treaty it was apparent that the majority of people do not realise that we scrutinise EU legislation. They believe it is forced on us by Europe. They do not know our Ministers are involved in drawing it up, and that it is agreed to at Commission level and in the Oireachtas also. There is a poor perception about how Dáil Éireann handles EU legislation. It is only through the work of the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny, the Joint Committee on European Affairs, the Sub-Committee on the Future of Europe, and the debate we are having today and once a month from now on, that we might get through to the public that Europe does not lecture us or tell us what to do but that we have a major say in what happens in Europe. We have a role and we can debate matters and try to change them if we wish. We should let people know we are keeping an eye on what is going on and scrutinising proposed legislation from Europe.

The Minister of State might agree with the view that emerged from a committee discussion that part of the fault for the public's ignorance lies with the Government and previous Governments that did not focus on the benefits of Europe but used it as a convenient scapegoat when unpopular measures were required. Likewise, at council level the blame is attributed to the national Government and An Bord Pleanála gets the blame for planning issues. It suits the body politic and officials to pass the buck when a tough decision is required. We have a duty to tell people we have a say when it comes to decisions from Europe and that we can make changes.

The committee has to deal with in excess of 500 legislative measures a year. As the report outlines, in the first six months of 2008 we dealt with 274 items. That is indicative of the amount of work that goes on in Europe and the number of directives that are enacted, which have a serious impact on people's lives. It is unfortunate that the effects of some measures that are debated this year might not be felt until 2010 or even 2012. For that reason it is difficult to explain the cause and effect to people. It is a bit like a criminal committing a crime today but not getting punished for three years. That does not work and it is not proper justice. The same is true of EU legislation. That is one reason fewer people understand the process or get involved in it. I include fellow Members in that regard. I hope we can do more to address that.

Part of the job of the committee is to recommend change with a view to increasing interest in Europe. No doubt the Acting Chairman, Deputy Wall, will want to join us at next week's

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meeting. We are trying to encourage people to get involved and part of the process is a discussion of the issues in plenary session. I urge members of other committees to go through legislation that we send them. I have attended other committee meetings and when the information arrives from the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny it does not always get the scrutiny it deserves and very often gets left to one side. That day is gone. People elect us and they expect us to do a proper job and to fully scrutinise everything. No doubt the Chairman of my committee has communicated to other committee Chairs that if they do not wish to scrutinise particular measures they should send it back for us to do it. Even though we are busy, we would prefer that rather than allow an issue to be signed off without proper scrutiny. That is not much use to the system and people expect more.

I hope that when we next debate the Lisbon treaty more attention will be devoted to the work of the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny, and how its powers will be greatly improved if the Lisbon treaty is passed. Opposition Members would also have a greater say in how Europe works, yet the majority of those who were opposed to the Lisbon treaty claimed it was undemocratic and was taking powers away from us. The direct opposite was the case. Currently, my only hope for having a say in Europe is to influence Ministers through the reports of the committee, whereas if the Lisbon treaty is passed we would have a greater chance of doing that with the yellow, orange and red card system. We have to sell that point. It was only towards the end of the Lisbon debate that we managed to have a good discussion at our committee, for which we got some publicity. An opportunity was missed and that was a contributory factor to why the referendum was not passed. People were not convinced about the work we do and how well it is done. We must change that perception.

The report includes 16 or 18 scrutiny reports. Last year we drew up reports on food directives and organic food, which are most interesting. The delegations that came before the committee were happy they got to have a say. When we discussed airport charges we had delegations from Ryanair, Aer Arann, Aer Lingus and Aer Rianta. In the food area we had Taste Ireland and many other groups. Without the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny those groups would not feel empowered to influence legislation coming from Europe.

Many regulations and directives can have a serious impact on businesses in this country, which can affect jobs in the long run. The majority of directives appear to be practical and based on common sense. Previously, European legislation was somewhat harsh on small businesses, which put them under pressure. I foresee changes that recognise smaller companies need leeway when it comes to red tape. I welcome the commitment to reduce red tape in the European Union by up to 25% by 2012. We already see the impact of that coming through the committee in terms of proposed legislation and that is to be welcomed. We need to talk about that, praise it, and make it known to the public.

I am disappointed with the lack of interest in Europe among colleagues. We must encourage people in general to take a greater interest in Europe. We cannot expect them to dissect a referendum every couple of years and get their heads around how Europe works in two or three weeks. Europe has a complicated structure with various bodies such as the Commission and the Parliament. People are required to take on board a lot of information once every five years. We must have an ongoing process and discussion must take place so people learn about Europe. Perhaps we can do that through libraries, post offices or some other way to reach communities. We should have a European office that deals with how Europe works because people want to know.

In carrying on that debate we will probably have to educate people about our own political system, both local government and national government. People do not know about it. Most young people at school are lucky, whether they realise it or not, because they get an opportunity

to learn about the political system and how it works. They are very well informed. I received no education about the political system at school. I had one teacher who was personally interested in politics and that probably had an influence on me but there was no structure in place. That is why I am here.

Deputy Dick Roche: Power is politics.

Deputy Damien English: The Minister can figure that one out for himself. Many others have not had a chance to learn about the political system and they are at a disadvantage. That makes our job more difficult in terms of explaining why decisions are made or why money is taken away from a certain sector. I accept efforts have been made by the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission to go to schools, and that is excellent work, but many people are not being reached with explanations of how politics works and we have a duty to inform them. That will be of great benefit.

People are interested in politics. When party conferences such as the Fianna Fáil Ard-Fheis or the Fine Gael Ard-Fheis take place telephone calls to the office are reduced because people know from listening to the radio that we are away. When the banking crisis occurred my telephone messages decreased by up to 70% because people knew we were doing other things. People are interested and they are aware and we have a duty to formulate the information in an interesting way on radio, television or by other means.

Reference was made to the Oireachtas television channel. That will be of great benefit to the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny and other committees because people will be able to see what is happening. From what the Minister, Deputy Eamon Ryan, said, he hopes it will be exciting and that an editor can show different parts of committees and make things look action packed rather than just the same old boring stuff. I hope that will help. Oireachtas television is a couple of years away but we must try to work on it. In the meantime, we must discuss with RTE and other television stations how we can have more and better coverage of politics.

If we had proper media coverage of debates, especially on EU legislation, the Lisbon treaty would be passed. In this regard, we failed to have sufficiently knowledgeable people on radio programmes. I do not include the Minister of State in this because he is well up to speed. Those who spoke on radio programmes were not convincing enough for us to win the argument. People repeatedly make decisions on the basis of what they hear in the media. We need to exploit the media as much as possible in the shorter and longer term. People will be interested in what we have to say.

Many of the subjects we discussed in the House were very interesting to ordinary urban and rural Members and the debates were very informative. When I brought information back to my constituents, they found it very interesting. Many of the debates with Ryanair are interesting because that company throws the cat among the pigeons, but that is what is needed. The same applies in the area of food.

Many interesting discussions have taken place, including one on the safety of toys, which is relevant at this time. Since 500 EU legislative measures are dealt with each year, one can conclude there is a lot more happening than occurs in this House. We are lucky if we see 15 or 20 legislative measures from the European Union pass through the House in a year. There is much action at EU level and we need to sell this to the people. The process should begin with our own colleagues, who should be in the House contributing to this debate. I hope that, in a month, there will be greater interest in these matters and that it will be worth people's while getting involved.

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs (Deputy Dick Roche): I thank all the Members who contributed. This was one of the most refreshing discussions we have had on how we handle this country's interests in the context of the European Union. For years I have made the point that wisdom does not reside on any one side of the House regarding this issue. The Government may be better informed but the reality is that there is considerable talent and information in this House. For example, the contribution of Deputy Penrose was very striking. He covered a matter we considered a number of years ago at an Oireachtas committee on the strategic management initiative. We were pointing out that there is almost a perverse, certainly a pedantic, tendency among public administrators in Ireland to tick all the boxes. As Deputy Penrose stated, and as those of us who travel throughout the European Union know, while EU law is observed across the Union, it is not observed in a way that is oppressive.

I represent a constituency with many more urban than rural families, yet I know there is an oppressiveness associated with the way in which farmers, particularly small farmers, and craft and artisan food producers must deal with EU regulations. This is the case in my constituency and nationally. It is good and proper that we should address this issue. It is only by having a proper public debate thereon that we will deal with it. That is not to say our public officials deliberately try to make people's lives difficult, but there is a national propensity, particularly associated with the administrative tradition, to tick every box. That comes with a high price.

I compliment the Members who questioned our direction in the European Union and asked how our nation can fulfil its destiny. Everybody in the country knows of my personal commitment to the European Union. It does not emerge from any glowing view that it is a project of perfection. No human project has ever been perfect, yet there is something extraordinary about the European Union. I stated previously in the House that when I enter my office every day I look at a photograph on the wall depicting a young boy walking to his death simply because of his religion. We should all remember this. The event depicted took place 65 years ago in Europe. This type of horror is unimaginable now because of the European Union and the European project.

Last week I stood on the battleground at Verdun and looked across the extraordinary valley where hundreds of thousands of young men laid down their lives for nothing, all because of the imbecility of political leadership and betrayal by the military leadership. They died for nothing, their bones are still in the earth and are still being found. The remains that are found are interred in an ossuary that stands on a nearby hill. The deaths were all for nothing, all due to a perverse application of excessive national fervour.

The European Union has made such warfare not just morally repugnant, just as every Christian must regard mass warfare as morally repugnant, but also physically impossible to repeat. I do not know the view of anyone else but I become passionate about this subject. I have three boys and one girl and never want to see them or their peers, or their children, exposed to the perversity of war. The European Union is about peace and not about militarisation.

I was impressed by Deputy Ó Snodaigh's contribution. I do not always agree with him but he did make a workmanlike contribution to point out that an effort is being made by Oireachtas Members to make the system work, although we may have different views on the Union.

A number of contributors spoke about the lost opportunity to bring EU parliamentary democracy to the heart of the Union. A few months ago, Mr. Hans-Gert Pöttering, the President of the European Parliament, stood in Seanad Éireann and stated he was first elected as a Member of the European Parliament in 1979. He contrasted the powers of the European Parliament then with its powers now. It had virtually no powers in 1979. He also contrasted the powers it will have under the Lisbon treaty with those it has now.

We have laid good foundations. The hard work done by Members must, in all justice, be covered in the media, particularly by the national broadcaster. I do not want to be involved in shooting the messenger as it is not a question doing so. It is only if the messenger gets lost or decides to change the message that there is a problem. The job of the messenger, particularly in public service broadcasting, is to broadcast a truthful, accurate and informed account of what occurs in this House.

Deputy Perry stated it is necessary to have further discussions on these issues during plenary session. I will support him strongly and accurately in that regard because I believe it is the way forward. Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas will have to take on the challenge of addressing how proceedings therein are reported. The editor of a newspaper I read every Sunday wrote a letter in one of the national newspapers today stating it is his duty to conduct a campaign to say “No” in respect of the Lisbon treaty. I always believed newspapers were to provide news and that politicians carried out political campaigns.

I thank Members and look forward to continuing my work with Deputy Perry and his committee.

Deputy John Perry: I thank the Minister of State for his very positive contribution. He is a totally committed European and does an outstanding job in regard to all EU issues. His role in the coming months will be critical. I thank the Vice Chairman of the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny, Deputy Connick, and all those who contributed today.

This is the first occasion on which we have had a debate on the six-monthly report. I acknowledge the work of the Oireachtas communications unit, which launched a very effective report last week on the PNR database of the aviation industry. It received very good coverage in the national press and all the broadsheets carried the story very effectively. This week, a very important and detailed report is being launched on food labelling and the traceability of food. The vested interests were involved in the relevant debate, thus addressing the democratic deficit so evident in respect of EU issues.

I acknowledge the work of all my colleagues who have debated the issues and the role of the secretariat, which does outstanding work. I also thank the legal advisors. While the staff of the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny are stretched, the work they do is quite outstanding. I am quite certain the issue of the Lisbon treaty will be resolved and that we will, in the forthcoming debate, produce a very clear roadmap on what can be done. Once again, I acknowledge the Vice Chairman, who has been very supportive. Cross-party support is very effective. I thank the Minister of State for being here, for staying through the debate and for responding to it with a very positive contribution. He acknowledged the importance of having further scrutiny in the plenary session. I am delighted to note that he has given it his full endorsement. I very much look forward to having an intense debate in the coming period on directives that would have an impact. I thank the Acting Chairman, Deputy O'Connor, for giving me the discretionary time to respond.

Ceisteanna — Questions.

Priority Questions.

FÁS Investigation.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Charlie O'Connor): I wish to point out that 30 minutes are allowed today for Priority Questions, with six minutes given to each question as follows: two minutes

[Deputy Charlie O'Connor.]

for the Minister's initial reply and four minutes overall for supplementary questions and replies. I am looking for the co-operation of all Members in this regard.

1. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she has requested that the investigation by the Comptroller and Auditor General into FÁS be a comprehensive audit of the FÁS budget or that it be limited to the aspects raised in the internal audit reports; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41984/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Acting Chairman is a very hard taskmaster.

The Comptroller and Auditor General in his report on non-commercial semi-State bodies, published in May 2008, reviewed the issues raised in one specific FÁS internal audit report.

Following discussions with the chairman and the director general of FÁS, I decided that there should be an external investigation into the effectiveness of the financial management and control systems that are generally in place in FÁS, rather than have it limited to aspects raised in the internal audit report which gave rise to the earlier special report. Accordingly, I requested the Comptroller and Auditor General to consider doing such a review and he acceded to that request. My intentions in requesting this review are to ensure that appropriate public procurement procedures exist to prevent or detect irregularities or wrongdoing, and also to examine and report on the activities of the FÁS corporate affairs area since 2000. This is in order to achieve reasonable assurance as to whether there were any occasions of potential fraud or irregularity in that area other than those already brought to light by the FÁS internal audit unit.

It is a matter for the Comptroller and Auditor General to determine the scope of his investigation. The Comptroller and Auditor General has indicated that in doing so he will take into account the deliberations of the Committee of Public Accounts hearings on the FÁS element of his special report on semi-State bodies.

As regards wider value-for-money issues relating to FÁS programmes, I point out that my Department has already commenced a review into the active market programmes, including those being delivered by FÁS. The objective of this review is to examine these programmes, including programmes provided by FÁS and Skillnets, in terms of efficiency and effectiveness and to draw conclusions about the adequacy and balance of resources in the context of current and future labour market policy challenges, including the national skills strategy.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: I have three questions. The Tánaiste asked the Comptroller and Auditor General to start his inquiry straight away rather than wait for the report of the Committee of Public Accounts. Has she received a response from the Comptroller and Auditor General with regard to that specific request, and if so, what was it?

Second, the Tánaiste suggested on "Morning Ireland" that she felt the Committee of Public Accounts was following another agenda. Perhaps she will clarify exactly what she meant when she suggested that the all-party Committee of Public Accounts was following another agenda.

Third, and perhaps most important, what is the Tánaiste's agenda with regard to all these matters? When we first began to discuss this several months ago, she told the House that she was happy with FÁS. Subsequently, she told the House that she believed the matter had been dealt with by the Comptroller and Auditor General. When further revelations came forward, the Tánaiste said that her Secretary General would follow the matter up with the director general. Subsequently again, she asked the Comptroller and Auditor General to carry out a

report. It now appears that she has chosen not to allow the Committee of Public Accounts to complete its inquiry and that she wants the Comptroller and Auditor General to do it.

Aside from my first two questions, I wish to know what the Tánaiste's agenda is with regard to this issue. Does she want there to be a comprehensive forensic audit of FÁS or does she merely want a quick limited investigation that she can brush away and move on — essentially a cover up?

Deputy Mary Coughlan: What were the last words the Deputy used? Was it “cover up”? Is that the words he used?

Deputy Leo Varadkar: Does the Tánaiste want a cover up?

Deputy Mary Coughlan: I am sorry.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: Does the Tánaiste want a limited investigation that is done quickly behind closed doors, one that is limited to the corporate affairs situation? In my view, that would be a cover up.

Acting Chairman: We have approximately two minutes left on this question.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: Unfortunately, a very serious accusation has been made on the floor of the House. My agenda is the following. I want to ensure that those people who have unfortunately lost their jobs as a consequence of the economic difficulties, those who wish to obtain training and those with disabilities will be afforded those opportunities. That is the role of FÁS and I want it to remain centre-stage in the context of our economic difficulties.

In saying that, I indicated that I was not happy with issues that arose from the Comptroller and Auditor General's initial special report. I thought it best, given his independence and his reputation, that the Comptroller and Auditor General would afford us greater guidance. I asked him, through my Secretary General, to facilitate a further investigation. He indicated to me that his preferred option was to listen to the Committee of Public Accounts and to use its findings as an opportunity to make his final determination on how he would proceed.

It is the case that the Committee of Public Accounts of this House has an agenda. It does not specifically relate to FÁS, but is a much wider agenda. It has progressed over the past number of years in the implementation of that agenda. In no way have I ever indicated that I do not agree with the methodologies of the Committee of Public Accounts, on which my party has members, as do all parties. It has a different agenda, namely, to examine and give outcomes. However, it is not specific to FÁS. On this occasion, my agenda is to make sure that FÁS and issues relating to that organisation are raised and addressed.

The broad sweeping statements made by the Deputy have no impact in terms of where I want FÁS to be in the next number of years. As a consequence of these statements, an organisation that is made up of many people will feel vilified, which is not appropriate. I know every Member of this House would agree that there are excellent people working in this organisation. We all interact with them, almost on a daily basis, perhaps even more so now. I do not want to see a situation whereby people would feel vilified by broad sweeping statements made in this House.

Without a shadow of doubt, I have concerns and issues. I wish to have this matter investigated fully by the Comptroller and Auditor General in order that he can advise me of his independent views when his investigation is completed. I will take those on board and address the issues he may or may not raise. I wish to obtain clarity on the matter.

[Deputy Mary Coughlan.]

Under no circumstances will I, or any of my team, or my Department, ever condone a situation whereby information is withheld from the board or from Ministers with responsibilities. The Comptroller and Auditor General has an exemplary reputation in this country. I await his report to me prior to making any further decisions that may be necessary arising from this report.

Acting Chairman: We are well over time.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: There is usually a second opportunity.

Acting Chairman: There is when Deputies stay within the limits. I pointed out at the beginning that Priority Questions take six minutes. We are now one and a half minutes over time.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: I did not take six minutes.

Acting Chairman: The Chair is obliged to follow the orders of the day. If the Deputy wishes to make a brief comment——

Deputy Leo Varadkar: I believe I took about one minute. Surely the time should be shared equally.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: If the Deputy mentions Tallaght, he will get in.

Deputy Willie Penrose: I mentioned it six times.

Acting Chairman: The Chair will be impartial. I will order each six minutes but my difficulty is that we are now almost two minutes over the time and the Deputy's colleagues will not get a chance to raise their questions. If he wishes to make a brief comment——

Deputy Leo Varadkar: I note that the Minister did not answer whether the Comptroller and Auditor General had responded to her most recent request to expedite the issue.

I agree with her that excellent work is done in FÁS and that there are some excellent people there. Does she agree that the best way to restore confidence in FÁS, if it can be restored, is to have a comprehensive investigation of the organisation rather than limit it to the corporate affairs department? That seems to be her agenda.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: It is not my intention to have an overall investigation of FÁS, as I indicated in my reply. We are looking at labour market policy challenges and it is in that context that a review of the workings of FÁS is taking place.

On the issue of the Comptroller and Auditor General, he is still anxious to have a conclusion to the deliberations of the Committee of Public Accounts. I am sure that Deputy Varadkar, as the Opposition spokesperson in this regard, wishes equally for this to happen for the betterment of FÁS, which is in the interests of all of us.

Live Register.

2. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment her views, in view of the fact that the numbers on the live register have increased by more than 100,000 in a little more than 12 months, on whether Ireland is facing an emergency in terms of job losses; the steps she is taking to stem the number of job losses; if she will provide new training opportunities for persons who have lost their jobs; if she will encourage

the creation of new employment opportunities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41990/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): The total number of people recorded on the live register for October 2008 is 251,951, showing an increase of about 94,500 in the 12 month period. It should be noted that the live register is not designed to measure unemployment and includes part-time, seasonal and casual workers entitled to unemployment benefit.

Employment and unemployment are measured by the quarterly national household survey and published by the Central Statistics Office. In the second quarter of 2008, the most recent quarter for which data are available, employment increased by 6,900 over 12 months to a current total of 2,108,500. Unemployment increased by 15,200 to 115,500 in the same period. I understand the Central Statistics Office will release quarterly national household survey results for the third quarter tomorrow.

The rise in unemployment, while regrettable, must be viewed in light of unprecedented growth in the economy and employment in recent years. Overall employment growth was driven by significant growth in employment in the construction sector. Such levels of growth could not last indefinitely and the resultant rise in unemployment has been compounded by the international credit crisis in the economy and a general slowdown in employment in all sectors. Ireland is not alone in finding itself in this position, as many countries throughout Europe and around the world are experiencing similar difficulties in their labour markets. For example, it was announced recently that the euro zone has slipped into recession. Moreover, Britain, Japan and the United States are experiencing economic difficulties while China has announced it will pump €500 billion into infrastructural development to stimulate its economy. Clearly, we are not alone in facing grave challenges.

FÁS and the Department of Social and Family Affairs are working together in order that they can respond quickly to the increase in unemployment. For example, as regards employment and job search services, FÁS, with the local employment services provided by area based partnerships, has geared up its employment services further to provide increased capacity for expected increased referrals from the live register and put in place a series of actions to facilitate redundant apprentices in completing their studies.

Additional information not given on the floor of the House.

These include redundant apprentices being allowed to progress to their next off-the-job phase of training without having to do the next on-the-job phase. I have also provided FÁS with €4 million to subsidise the employment of redundant apprentices in 2009. FÁS has specific mechanisms in place to deal with redundancies and-or company closures. It offers a tailored approach as early as possible to the workers affected with a view to assisting them to access alternative employment.

As regards training for those who become unemployed, I have given FÁS an additional €5 million for training the unemployed and the organisation will increase total training places in 2009. It will also provide a range of certified, short, flexible, modular programmes in construction sector activities which are expected to remain buoyant despite the slowdown in construction. It has established a training fund to enable a speedy response to identified retraining needs for low skilled and redundant craft workers and in 2009 it will open evening classes to people who are unemployed without payment of a fee.

As regards promoting enterprise development to create new jobs, the enterprise development agencies of my Department, including IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland, are working

[Deputy Billy Kelleher.]

to ensure we continue to expand the economy and increase jobs, even in the current more challenging environment. The pipeline of new business for which IDA Ireland is competing is as strong as at any time in recent years. To facilitate this process we need to ensure our competitiveness is sustained into the future.

Deputy Willie Penrose: The loss of jobs in the economy exercises every member of the Labour Party, which has prepared a comprehensive document entitled, Labour's New Deal: Key Proposals for Economic Recovery. The proposals constitute a stimulus package to try to reflate the economy and address some of the issues arising, particularly in the employment area, while recognising the deep human and social cost of rising unemployment.

Next year, the number of people out of work is likely to reach 300,000, a figure that has not been reached since the 1980s. Surely this sounds a wake-up call for the Government. One would need to have one's head in the sand not to be aware that the number of redundancies has increased by 50% in the past year, 700 people are losing their jobs every week and 40,000 jobs will be lost in the building sector next year. People are moving to the Middle East and Australia to seek employment. Will we give people the one-way ticket many of my relatives had to take in the 1950s? Will that be the Government's badge of honour?

I am concerned about small and medium size enterprises, about which I have spoken in the Joint Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment. This is the area on which we should focus. I am grateful that foreign direct investment will continue and a number of projects are in the pipeline and I acknowledge the hard work being done by Mr. Frank Ryan and his colleagues.

Surely credit is the oxygen of small businesses. Unfortunately, however, the small business sector believes the Government is standing idly by while it is being choked to death.

Acting Chairman: As the time remaining for the question is limited, I ask the Deputy to put a question to the Minister of State.

Deputy Willie Penrose: I will ask about Tallaght first. Is the Minister of State concerned about the crisis facing many small and medium size enterprises arising from the credit famine, which is contributing significantly to the massive increase in unemployment levels? A large factory shedding 300 jobs will make headlines but I suggest that the hidden cost of a factory closure will be another 300 jobs lost down the line.

Will the Minister of State condemn the refusal of banks to make available the normal credit streams which are the life blood of small companies? Why is the Government not prepared to provide alternative sources of credit? Members of the Government have spent recent months clapping themselves on the back for introducing the Credit Institutions (Financial Support) Bill. Despite the Government stepping in to rescue the banks, chief executives and others continue to pay themselves top dollar. Why has the Government not brought representatives of the banks into the Departments of the Taoiseach and of Finance to tell them their job is to lend money and that, having been helped out by the public, it is their turn to show patriotism and help out small businesses? If we fail to get our act together, these businesses will die on their feet and rural areas will be decimated and left without jobs.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: The Government is acutely aware of the challenges facing small and medium size enterprises. The Minister has met representatives of the sector, while the Minister for Finance has held discussions with the banks. However, Deputies had an opportunity to show solidarity with small and medium size enterprises and the broader economy when legislation came before the House to give comfort to the banking institutions.

Deputy Willie Penrose: The Minister of State should look at what the banks did. They proved the Labour Party right. The Government did not give a penny to small businesses but helped those who were already successful. The Labour Party's approach was to protect the small people.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: The Labour Party failed to step up to the mark and took a populist approach.

Deputy Willie Penrose: The Labour Party is proud of its actions. The banks did exactly what we said they would do.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: We now see crocodile tears. The Labour Party had an opportunity to act but sat on its hands.

Deputy Willie Penrose: I will not listen to claptrap from the Minister of State about what my party did.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: The Labour Party did nothing. It sat on its hands and failed to support the country at a time when it was facing a serious challenge.

Acting Chairman: Order, please.

Deputy Willie Penrose: We have been proven right. The banks have done nothing for the people. The Government was worried about the land developers and speculators.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: I have heard that before. The Deputy is being populist.

Deputy Willie Penrose: I am not being populist.

Acting Chairman: The Deputy has made his point. If he does not allow the Minister of State to conclude, I will reluctantly suspend proceedings.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: As I pointed out, the Government is acutely aware of the challenges facing small and medium size enterprises, which are the powerhouse of the economy. Banks must open credit lines to small businesses. Without the support provided by the Government and main Opposition party, we would be in a much more challenging position. The Labour Party did not step up to the mark and took a populist approach.

Deputy Willie Penrose: Unfortunately, we have been proven correct.

Economic Competitiveness.

3. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the reason there has been no improvement in Ireland's economic competitiveness, according to the World Economic Forum report; the measures she will take to restore Ireland's economic competitiveness; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41985/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Jimmy Devins): The World Economic Forum, WEF, Global Competitiveness Report 2008-2009, ranks Ireland 22nd overall, the same score recorded for 2007-08 and 2006-07. Ireland was ranked 30th in 2003 and 2004. Achieving 22nd place out of 134 global economies is not a negative scoring for a small economy such as Ireland.

The World Economic Forum ranks countries according to 110 indicators. Within this set of rankings we score well in a number of important areas. For example, Ireland scores first place

[Deputy Jimmy Devins.]

for the business impact of rules on foreign direct investment, seventh place for the number of procedures required to start a business and our financial markets, at seventh place, continue to be assessed as among the most sophisticated in the world. University-industry research collaboration has increased two points from 18th place last year to 16th place this year. We also score well on quality of primary education — seventh place — foreign direct investment and technology transfer — second place — and availability of scientists and engineers — 14th place. Our WEF competitiveness ranking has not declined for the past three years, while some other European Union countries have not managed to maintain their positions over the same period.

Many international reports and organisations measure our competitiveness and Ireland is ranked differently depending on which one chooses. For example, we are ranked second in the world as the best place to do business in 2008 according to a survey by *Forbes* magazine in June. Ireland is the second most competitive economy in Europe according to the Lisbon Council's European jobs and growth monitor published last March. We were ranked 12th in the world in terms of overall competitiveness in 2008 according to the IMD world competitiveness centre and the World Bank ranks Ireland eighth out of 178 countries for ease of doing business.

We are fully committed to strengthening the competitiveness and productive capacity of the economy.

Additional information not given on the floor of the House.

Our priority remains the creation of high quality, sustainable employment, driven by companies with higher profitability which are technologically advanced and prove a better fit with the competitive characteristics of our economy. We have a strong support system for developing the capabilities of Irish companies to compete on international markets with innovative products and services.

In terms of enhancing productivity growth, which is the cornerstone of our competitiveness, my Department has a capital allocation of €495 million for 2009, which will be spent on productivity enhancing investments by departmental agencies, namely, Science Foundation Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, the Industrial Development Agency and county enterprise boards. In addition, the Government remains committed to investing in key national infrastructure projects through the national development plan.

To underpin long-term competitiveness my objective is to ensure we build the productive capacity of the economy through investing in people. I am doing this directly through the science, technology and innovation strategy and our skills strategy. I am confident that the areas on which we have chosen to focus are paying dividends and working well in terms of attracting and maintaining investment and growing jobs.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: I do not need to remind the House that Ireland is in the depths of a recession which will probably be deeper and longer than many of us anticipated. One cannot tax, borrow or cut one's way out of a recession. We will have to trade our way out of this recession and that will require restoring competitiveness. As the Minister of State indicated, Ireland has been stuck in 22nd place in global competitiveness rankings for some time. During the Celtic tiger period, we were ranked 30th.

When Deputy Richard Bruton and Deputy Mary Harney held this ministry we were in fourth place in the world. We need to get back to that type of position to restore growth levels. The Minister of State gave examples of some other measures in terms of ease of doing business, which is different to competitive measures. Does he accept the findings of the report which particularly identify what I term the "three I's", inflation, infrastructure — where we fell from

55th place to 64th, just behind Barbados — and inefficient Government bureaucracy, to the effect that these are the now the major drags on competitiveness?

More importantly, since it is his Department's responsibility to drive competitiveness and push associated policy, is he satisfied with the progress made by the former Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Deputy Martin, in recent years and the Government with regard to the fact that there has been no improvement in three years?

Deputy Jimmy Devins: I remind the Deputy that is one survey but there are many others some of which have ranked Ireland at a much higher position, including the IMD. There is an argument to the effect that the World Economic Forum survey is very much based on perceptions, whereas the IMD survey is based more on factual information. There are other surveys, such as that of *Forbes* magazine, which ranks our country second in the world.

Inflation is falling. The National Competitiveness Council is to bring forward proposals in the near future to deal with that whole area.

Credit Availability.

4. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment her views, following a recent publication by Irish Small and Medium Enterprise which stated that some 54% of its members surveyed were refused extensions to overdrafts, term loans and stocking loans in recent weeks, on credit availability to businesses here; if she has had communications with the banking sector regarding the ease of flow of credit to specifically, the small and medium enterprise sector; the proposals in place or being prepared to ensure that SMEs are able to access credit in order to continue trading; if principles have been agreed to, within the banking sector on the issue of lending to SMEs; if she has satisfied herself that sufficient action has been taken by her to assist SMEs accessing credit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41986/08]

Deputy Mary Coughlan: The proper functioning of the banking system is key to our ability to address the current economic crisis and to our capacity to respond to recovery in the future. The continuing availability of credit to enterprises, especially SMEs, is a central responsibility of the banking system. Ministerial responsibility for the banking system rests with my colleague, the Minister for Finance.

The Government's bank guarantee provided the Irish banks with the support they required to maintain their normal liquidity position in interbank lending and debt markets. This move was essential to allow banks to continue their normal ordinary business of providing credit in this country and contributing to the normal functioning of the economy. The availability of finance is a critical element of overall competitiveness and a key part of our national economic and financial infrastructure. Given that the Government has provided the guarantee, covered institutions in Ireland have access to the liquidity and funding necessary for this purpose.

The Government wants to see the banks meeting the legitimate financial needs of consumers and business. The onus is now on the boards and senior executives of the banks to ensure they are properly positioned to meet this expectation. The banks have confirmed that notwithstanding the challenging economic and financial environment, good projects will continue to be supported by them.

The banks' principal area of focus is on their existing customers or new business customers with good commercially sound projects. They are very conscious of what is expected of them under the guarantee in so far as business lending is concerned. I am in regular contact with my colleague, the Minister for Finance, on the issue and officials of my Department are in ongoing

[Deputy Mary Coughlan.]

discussions with their counter parts in the Department of Finance concerning the impact of the lending practices of the banking sector on small businesses.

Within my area of responsibility, my Department's continuous support for indigenous companies arises through maintaining a positive business environment and through particular interventions from the State development agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, the city and county enterprise boards, CEBs, and FÁS. I have ensured that these agencies continue to be sufficiently resourced through the Estimates process and that key areas such as the science and technology allocation and micro enterprise support, through the CEBs, received additional funding for 2009.

The agencies are focused on helping Irish businesses through the current economic difficulties to develop and grow their exports, by continuing to prioritise investment in science, technology and innovation and by providing financial and non-financial supports to small businesses. The existing range of training supports will continue and appropriate re-training and support services will be available for those who have recently lost their jobs.

Additional information not given on the floor of the House.

Access to capital is also available to firms through BES and seed capital schemes, and through the venture capital initiatives promoted through Enterprise Ireland, including the Government's investment of €175 million through Enterprise Ireland. Some seven new venture funds have raised over €500 million which is available for investment in the Irish SME sector. The importance of the small business sector is clear, as is the extent of the Governments ongoing commitment to the sector.

The Minister for Finance has already acted positively to support the banking system through the introduction of the State's bank guarantee scheme. Deputies will be aware that the Taoiseach has in the last number of days signalled in this House that the Government is actively considering a range of proposals in this area and is ready to take appropriate action.

Deputy Damien English: I take it from that answer that the Minister has no plan to help businesses get cash. What will she do to ensure cash is available to businesses? They need overdrafts and small term loans, which are the tools of small business and no longer exist. Does the Minister realise that, and realise how serious this is, because she has not answered my question? What specifically is she proposing to do? Has she met the banks and warned them as regards the situation? Is she willing to engage in some type of State-guaranteed bank loan situation as has been mentioned by the Small Firms Association — and is being done in England — or is she prepared to do anything? We do not seem to have any action plan. I have read through the Finance Bill but it is not being addressed. The only concession there is that new businesses may defer tax, nothing else.

Small businesses have very serious problems. Will the Minister not even encourage her own State agencies to pay them more quickly? Is there not money in the European Investment Bank that may be accessed? Will the Minister not seek it because people are under serious pressure and in January there will be many unpalatable announcements unless we wake up and do something constructive in the next couple of weeks?

Deputy Mary Coughlan: The inferences are wrong from across the House. I have——

Deputy Damien English: Tell me why they are wrong.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: I have been in constant discussions and negotiation. I have met and spoken to the chief executives of the major banks, as has the Minister for Finance on my behalf.

On the issue of access to the EIB, four banks from Ireland have been in discussions with it regarding access to funding specifically for enterprises.

On the issue of the proposals by the Small Firms Association, which I met last night, we have agreed that the small businesses want a forum between themselves and the banks, which is being set up.

On the issue of funding, it would be best for the banks to provide a facility in order for that to happen. That view has been expressed to the banks on my behalf by the Minister for Finance, and I, too, have advanced it to them.

I have indicated I will examine the issue of prompt payment, which is part of an answer to a question to be addressed later. My colleagues in the UK have decided to introduce a ten day turnaround period. However, I would urge people to pay within the existing timeframe, although improvements in the feasibility of this are being examined.

There is no point in putting down an unreasonable marker that cannot be achieved. That would be foolish and retrograde. We are working towards what is feasible and what may be done to ensure that prompt payments progress as quickly as possible.

Deputy Damien English: Is the Minister aware that our counterparts in the UK have put a condition on the banks regarding recapitalisation, specifying that money must be made available, particularly for small businesses? Will she assure the House that if the Government decides to invest money in the banks she will insist the Minister of Finance ensures this condition also applies here? This is very serious and I want to get that through to the Minister.

A useful initiative in the UK is in the whole area of credit advice being made available to small businesses. More professionalism is being provided to give them good advice with regard to invoicing, credit management and so on. That is real action and it is needed. I realise we have mentors, enterprise bodies, training boards etc., but we need to send specific professional help into businesses to give them the advice and coaching they need to get through these tough times. That alone might encourage the banks to lend them some money.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: I will support any initiative that will help the SMEs and I have met many of them on the specific issues they want addressed.

Deputy Damien English: I did not say that.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: We did not nationalise our banking system, it must be emphasised. I reflect on the time when we did have State-owned banks and there were reasons why we decided they should not continue, on the basis that Governments did not run the banks.

Deputy Damien English: I did not ask about that at all.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: The Deputy is on the mantra of the Fine Gael spokesman on this issue and making an assumption.

Deputy Damien English: I specifically asked what the Minister will do. I only asked if the Government was to capitalise the banks.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: I cannot answer that because I do not engaged in speculation of that kind. We have impressed the position on the banks in the context of the bank guarantee. We have not capitalised the banks. The view is that at this time that is not necessarily where we need to be and that other initiatives are available. We are working with the banks and, as the Deputy knows, the Minister for Finance is working on these issues on a day to day basis, as a matter of urgency. To say that——

Deputy Damien English: With respect, the question I asked——

Acting Chairman: I am sorry, but the time for this question has concluded. If I allow the Deputy, there will not be time for his next question. I have to do my job.

Deputy Damien English: It does not matter about my next question. The Minister has not answered my question, so I must ask it again.

Acting Chairman: Very quickly.

Deputy Damien English: Is the Minister aware that the UK Government, as a condition of putting money into the banks, specifically insisted that money should be made available to business? I am only asking whether the Minister agrees with that concept. If the Minister for Finance ultimately decides that money has to be put into the banks, will the Minister urge him to have this condition inserted? I am asking her for her views in this regard.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: One cannot have views on this issue. The situation is that we have not capitalised the banks. Therefore that question does not arise.

Deputy Damien English: That is not an answer to the question.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: That was the question, and there is the Deputy's answer. The matter does not arise, as we have not capitalised the banks.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: The matter does not arise at this time as we have not capitalised the banks.

Acting Chairman: The Deputy will get his chance again. I must follow the order of the day.

Deputy Damien English: It proves my point that they do not have any answers.

Acting Chairman: I do not know what I am supposed to do in these circumstances. The Chair is not allowed to sing.

Small and Medium Enterprises.

5. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number of people employed in the small and medium enterprise sector; her forecast for 12 months time; her plans to make available a new scheme to enable SMEs to maintain their current employment level; her further plans to make available a new scheme or schemes to enable SMEs expand their current employment levels, *vis-à-vis* training and upskilling opportunities, PRSI holidays, VAT reduction and so on; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41987/08]

Deputy Mary Coughlan: Small and medium sized businesses account for more than 97% of companies in Ireland and the sector employs in excess of 800,000 people. In my reply to the previous priority question from the Deputy I fully acknowledged the importance of the sector and my ongoing commitment to support it.

My Department and its agencies will play an important role in working through the current economic circumstances and in making sure that we are well positioned to reap the benefits that will undoubtedly arise when the situation improves. We will do this by continuing to work to attract foreign direct investment, helping Irish businesses to develop and grow their exports, by continuing to prioritise investment in science, technology and innovation and by providing supports to small businesses. We will also ensure that adequate retraining and support services are available for those who have recently lost their jobs.

4 o'clock

The fundamental objective is to sustain and grow employment by driving investment and promoting export growth in a challenging global environment. Success in overseas markets will generate wealth that will sustain prosperity and employment throughout all parts of the country. The allocations in my Department's Estimates for 2009, particularly to the IDA and Enterprise Ireland, will ensure that we continue to build on this strategy for the future.

My Department's continuous support for indigenous companies arises through maintaining a positive business environment and through particular interventions from the State development agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, FÁS and the city and county enterprise boards. In particular, Enterprise Ireland is the agency with responsibility for supporting the development of Irish companies with ambitions to grow in world markets. Many of its client companies are small to medium in size. Enterprise Ireland recognises the varied challenges facing such companies in the context of the changing economic environment.

In addition to Enterprise Ireland, the 35 county and city enterprise boards provide support to small businesses or micro-enterprises with ten employees or fewer. CEB funding will increase next year by almost €3 million, or 9%, to €34.8 million and this represents a further indication of the Government's commitment to supporting this sector of business.

The county and city enterprise boards have developed a structure capable of generating and tapping into enterprise at local level. They have been particularly effective in their ability to respond to the needs of micro-enterprise. The 2009 allocation for the CEBs recognises the need for access to practical business information and supports for small companies, and the importance of continuing to promote entrepreneurship at this time.

FÁS, through their One Step Up programme, is encouraging employees to increase their competency levels and promoting an ethos of lifelong learning in the workplace. Its key intervention in this regard is the competency development programme which offers workers different types of training programmes directed at various skill levels across major economic sectors. These training programmes are available to employees of SMEs. FÁS also has a number of other training programmes aimed at upskilling SMEs namely through Skillnets and the strategic alliance programme. Priority is given to programmes aimed at the upskilling of low-skilled workers, these programmes, in the main, will be at or below level 5 equivalent on the national framework of qualifications.

The Government has already made very considerable progress on the implementation of the Small Business Forum's report recommendations. This progress is reflected through a substantial package of financial measures and schemes introduced to assist the sector over the last two years, including fiscal measures in the Finance Acts 2007 and 2008.

I am satisfied that the range of measures and supports provided will continue to help small to medium enterprises adapt to the current economic climate. Of course, these measures will be kept under review to ensure that they remain appropriate to the current circumstances.

Acting Chairman: I have adapted to the needs of Deputy English so he received the whole answer.

Deputy Damien English: I did not get an answer. I specifically asked about "further plans to make available a new scheme or schemes to enable SMEs expand their current employment levels" and included PRSI holidays. There was no comment on that. If the answer is that there are no such plans I should be told that. I asked for the predictions for 12 months time. I am glad to see the figures but I have had them for a long time. I want to know the predictions.

I do not want to become angry but I want to know the new schemes the Minister will try in the coming months to sustain and increase jobs. I welcome the extra money for the enterprise

[Deputy Damien English.]

boards, which will make up for the money they did not have during recent months, because they need it. I asked earlier if the professional advice would be made available to small businesses on credit management and invoicing. It has been done in the UK, it is a good idea and the Minister might look into it. We have mentioned programmes with the enterprise boards which do good work, which I compliment, but we need to add to these.

Can the Minister give me a commitment to look at making professional advice on credit available to businesses? It could be very helpful. I attended a meeting last week held by a bank where an action coach, similar to a mentor from an enterprise board, spoke to 50 businesses about credit management and how to get through the tough times. It was clear that most of the businesses learned a lot from that person who armed them with information. We need to see more of that. It is something the Government in the UK has acknowledged and implemented. If the Minister cannot give an answer today, she should commit to examining the matter and if it works we should introduce it here.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: I need to outline the programmes available.

Deputy Damien English: I want to hear about the new programmes.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: These include a mentor network, the Enterprise Ireland export orientation programme, Leadership for Growth, innovation voucher initiative and Enterprise Start programme. There are programmes within the seventh EU framework on research and development. There is a finance and investment programme on venture capital, for which I announced an additional €500 million last week.

Other programmes include research and development technology transfer, the commercialisation fund, bench to boardroom commercialisation, Irish Research, the applied research enhancement programme and all of the city and county enterprise boards enhancement programmes, of which the Deputy is acutely aware and to which I have provided additional funding. The competence development programme, the FÁS strategic alliance programme, the Skillnets programme and the Management Development Council are also in place.

On the small business forum——

(Interruptions).

Acting Chairman: Allow the Minister to continue.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: We are, within the European Union, introducing a small business Act but due to the antics of the Opposition I was unable to attend a meeting on that which was a retrograde step.

Other Questions.

Unemployment Levels.

6. **Deputy Seán Barrett** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she is satisfied that sufficient action is being taken to stem the tide of rising unemployment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41860/08]

14. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the latest estimates available to her Department from FÁS regarding the potential

number of job losses in the construction sector up to the end of 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41764/08]

15. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the extent to which she has made provision or will make such provision for the retraining of persons who may have lost their jobs in the course of the economic downturn; if the resources available to her Department are sufficient to meet the full anticipated cost of such requirements; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41849/08]

Deputy Jimmy Devins: I propose to take Questions Nos. 6, 14 and 15 together. The rise in unemployment, while regrettable, must be seen in the light of the unprecedented growth in the economy and in employment in the past number of years. Overall employment growth was driven by significant growth in employment in the construction sector. Such levels of growth could not last indefinitely. The resultant rise in unemployment is now compounded by the downturn in the global economy and a general slowdown in employment in all sectors. Ireland is not alone in finding itself in this position; many countries throughout Europe and around the world are experiencing similar difficulties in their labour markets.

FÁS, as the national training and employment authority, is providing a range of proactive job-related services, supports and programmes, to assist individuals to return to the labour market. Last month's budget contained an additional €9.5 million allocation to FÁS specifically to fund additional initiatives to help those who have been made redundant. FÁS and the Department of Social and Family Affairs are working together so they can respond quickly to the increase in unemployment.

FÁS has, with the local employment services provided by area-based partnerships, geared up its employment services further to provide increased capacity for expected increased referrals from the live register and will be providing a range of certified, short, flexible, modular programmes in construction sector activities which are expected to remain buoyant despite the slowdown in construction, including, for example, in sustainable energy and environmental and related activities. These programmes are designed to activate the unemployed to re-enter the labour market in another job role. A number of programmes are already in place and the frequency and range of these will be expanded over the coming months.

In 2009 FÁS will open evening classes to people who are unemployed without payment of a fee. This intervention is aimed at meeting the needs of those who were recently active in the workforce and who now find themselves unemployed. FÁS and the Department of Social and Family Affairs have agreed that redundant apprentices will be referred immediately to FÁS rather than wait for three months on the live register. FÁS has also established a training fund to enable a speedy response to identified re-training needs for low skilled and redundant craft workers.

FÁS has also put in place a series of actions to facilitate redundant apprentices in completing their studies. These include redundant apprentices being allowed to progress to their next off-the-job phase of training without having to do the next on-the-job phase. A register of redundant apprentices has been established to identify these people at the earliest possible point in time and FÁS has prioritised the need to locate an employer to sponsor the completion of the apprentices' off-the-job training.

In addressing the issue of redundancies, FÁS liaises with other relevant stakeholders such as Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, the city and county enterprise boards and the Department of Social and Family Affairs. It also works closely with the agencies to identify and support individuals who wish to start their own business.

[Deputy Jimmy Devins.]

The enterprise development agencies of my Department, including IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland, are working to ensure we continue to grow the economy and jobs, even in the current more challenging environment. The pipeline of new business for which IDA Ireland is competing is as strong as at any time in recent years. To facilitate this, we need to ensure our competitiveness is sustained into the future.

There is uncertainty around the number of job losses that may occur in the construction sector, with various labour market projections available. The latest FÁS Quarterly Labour Market Commentary, for the third quarter of 2008, estimates that construction employment will fall by 11.2% this year and by a further 19.4% in 2009.

These are challenging times and Ireland, as a small open economy is particularly prone to the effects of a global economic downturn. However, we are continuing to develop the necessary policies and initiatives to tackle rising unemployment.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: We have asked many questions about unemployment at Question Time recently and I know there will be more over the coming year. However, the overriding impression I get from the Minister's office is that there does not seem to be any serious understanding of how bad the situation is. Does the Minister of State realise that since Deputy Coughlan took up her job as Minister when Deputy Cowen became Taoiseach that 80,000 people have lost their jobs, enough people to fill Croke Park?

Deputy Mary Coughlan: Does the Deputy think we are stupid or something? We are not stupid.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: The Minister does not seem to appreciate that.

Acting Chairman: The Deputy must make his remarks through the Chair.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: Does the Government realise there are now more people signing on than when Fianna Fáil came to office in 1997?

Deputy Mary Coughlan: Is the Deputy blaming that on me being in the Department? That is just another sweeping remark.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: What I am saying is the situation is worse than it was when Fianna Fáil came to power. Take the standardised unemployment rate —

Deputy Mary Coughlan: Is the Deputy so naive as to think that global economics have no impact on what is happening in the world?

Deputy Leo Varadkar: Do the Minister and Ministers of State opposite understand that what is happening in the world is not the same everywhere? In Ireland, the standardised unemployment rate is now 6.8%. We have overtaken seven or eight countries in the past few months, since the Minister took office, and we will overtake the European average by January or February. Do they realise how serious this is and that they cannot wash their hands of it?

Deputy Billy Kelleher: Some companies in Poland are in recession also.

Acting Chairman: Is Deputy Devins dealing with this question?

Deputy Jimmy Devins: I remind Deputy Varadkar that some weeks ago he said Ireland was the only country in recession.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: That was the case at the time.

Deputy Jimmy Devins: Many European countries, including some that are much bigger and stronger than we have ever been, are officially in recession. The Deputy is very selective in what he says.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: Deputy Varadkar obviously does not know what is happening in the world.

Deputy Jimmy Devins: Ministers and Deputies on this side of the House are very aware of the situation because we meet it every day in our clinics. We are attacking the problem with all our strength. It is a two-pronged attack. We are engaging with the people who have been made redundant and are upskilling and retraining them. We are also looking at foreign direct investment and development of our indigenous industries through Enterprise Ireland and the IDA. The amount of money that is being spent on both programmes is increasing dramatically. This is a challenge, but to imply the Government is totally unaware of the situation is to live in a never, never world.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: It seems the Department is unconcerned.

Deputy Willie Penrose: The budget did not contain even one significant initiative to deal with unemployment. The only initiative taken on the issue of unemployment in the budget was to make it more difficult to qualify for jobseeker's benefit and restrict the period over which it is paid.

I have asked about county enterprise boards previously. Will the Minister agree to strengthen the role of the county enterprise boards by removing the limitation on the type of enterprise the boards can support and by raising the limit on the number of jobs an enterprise can create, which is currently set at ten? We must move from negativity to positivity. If an enterprise wants to create 11 jobs, it cannot do so and such enterprises fall between the cracks between the enterprise boards and Enterprise Ireland and the IDA. It is local jobs that will rescue us from the dire situation we are all in.

The Fianna Fáil Party has great connections with the building industry, but let me put a suggestion to it. The Labour Party has suggested that a major school building programme to move the 40,000 children from prefabs into proper classrooms and a national insulation scheme to make our houses more energy efficient and reduce carbon emissions and household energy costs be initiated. Does the Minister of State not agree this would create jobs? The job creation scheme in place is going nowhere.

Most people would agree that the poor person's bank is the credit union and like myself, most people started off in life by borrowing €3,000 or €4,000 there. When Deputy Pat Rabbitte was Minister, he widened the scope for lending by the credit unions, through the Credit Union Act, so they can now lend significant sums. The other day we heard of a lady who could not get an additional overdraft of €5,000 to help her protect jobs. Thankfully, credit unions can now lend sums of €50,000 or €60,000.

Will the Minister ensure the Financial Regulator, who operates under the aegis of the Central Bank, does not restrict the ability of the credit unions to lend such sums? Credit unions are liquid and are not in the same mess as the banks, because they maintained a rigid discipline. Most credit unions with savings such as €150 million would only lend €80 million of that. They can also pay 3% or 4% of a dividend. These are the poor person's bank.

Can we encourage credit unions to become part of the process of promoting jobs and get them to lend money for this? Should we not bring in the directors of the credit unions and

[Deputy Willie Penrose.]

other financial institutions and tell them this is a critical time for our economy and we need all hands on deck to ensure small enterprises are given the life blood they need — the oxygen of credit to maintain and create jobs? The issue for many small and medium enterprises is not profitability, but the availability of credit.

Deputy Finian McGrath: Does the Minister of State agree that sometimes we must borrow to stimulate the economy and create jobs so as to tackle unemployment? Is he aware cutbacks on the current and capital sides may depress further economic activity? What new creative and radical proposals has he in mind to generate new jobs in our economy, particularly in disadvantaged areas?

Will the Minister of State condemn the outrageous attacks by some politicians, commentators and those on the right on our public service and public sector workers? Does he agree the public service has made a major contribution to employment and to delivering public services to people? Does he agree it is time to end these types of attack?

Deputy Damien English: I welcome the move to provide a fast track for people to FÁS. However, when we say the Minister is unaware of what is going on, we are pointing out that there are things that could be done to prevent jobs being lost in the first place.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: What, for example?

Deputy Damien English: I tried to mention them earlier, but the Minister gave me a list of something else. The Minister could make cash available. That is what is needed. All the training in the world is no good without cash, but the Minister is doing nothing in that regard.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: The finance spokesperson for Fine Gael keeps telling us to cut expenditure.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: He would cut it by more than we did, 5.5% in each Department.

Deputy Damien English: All I asked was that the Minister come up with some initiatives and comment on them.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: The Labour Party wishes to spend more.

Deputy Damien English: The Minister simply read out a list of what had been done historically. That is irrelevant and I wish to hear of new measures that will work.

Acting Chairman: The Deputy has made his point. I understand the Minister of State will deal with all these matters.

Deputy Jimmy Devins: Several points have been raised with which I will try to deal in the limited time available. Deputy Penrose made a good suggestion that Enterprise Ireland and the county and city enterprise boards should not be arbitrarily confined to ten jobs. This is a matter on which the Department is working actively.

Deputy Willie Penrose: Hear, hear. I thank the Minister of State.

Deputy Jimmy Devins: While the point is being made to all Members on the ground, this issue is being worked on actively.

The Leader programmes constitute a source of a huge amount of money. The Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Deputy Ó Cuív, recently announced a substantial

increase in the funding for the Leader programmes over the next number of years. As for the schools building programme, I remind the Deputy that in the budget this year, funding for the school building programme has been increased from the allocation last year. From memory, I believe the allocation is slightly more than €340 million, which should stimulate some sections of the construction industry. Moreover, FÁS is actively involved in retaining and reskilling construction employees in the green homes and sustainable energy sectors.

Deputy Finian McGrath raised a couple of issues and referred to borrowing for capital expenditure, which the Government is already providing for. The research and development tax credits were increased in the budget from 20% to 25% and constitute an important measure both to attract foreign direct investment and to stimulate indigenous industries to engage in research and development. The Government is very aware that every company, be it a small enterprise with three to five employees, or a large multinational, should be actively considering research and development. As the Minister announced earlier, the innovation voucher, which is worth €5,000 to a small company, can be the lifeline to prevent it from going out of business.

As for the public sector, while the Government is aware of the huge number of great people who work in the public sector, it is also aware there must be public sector reform, which is ongoing at present.

Acting Chairman: I thank the Minister of State. The Dáil is very calm.

Deputy Finian McGrath: Next question.

Deputy Willie Penrose: It is the Cathaoirleach's soothing voice.

Official Engagements.

7. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she will make a statement on her recent visit to the United States; and the details of specific agreements concluded while she was there regarding investment or job creation here. [41755/08]

Deputy Mary Coughlan: I recently visited the east coast and the mid-west of the United States from 1 to 7 November on a promotional programme, organised by IDA Ireland, which is the agency with statutory responsibility for the attraction of foreign direct investment to Ireland.

The objective of this visit was twofold. My first objective was to cement relationships with US companies that have a presence in Ireland and to explore with them, in conjunction with IDA Ireland, the potential for further investment here. My second objective was to meet a number of companies that have not yet invested here and from which the IDA are hoping to attract new investment for this country. The purpose of my meeting with these companies was to support the ongoing engagement by the IDA with them.

The programme involved meeting with chairmen, chief executive officers and other senior executives of leading companies in a broad range of sectors, including life sciences and information communications technology, ICT. The feedback from these meetings confirmed to me the high standing in which Ireland is viewed as a business location by leading global companies.

They are aware of, and impressed by, the high standards of performance that are achieved by Irish management and staff within foreign-owned companies that have operations here. The meetings also underlined to me the importance of the Government's commitment to strengthen research and education capabilities, while retaining the flexibility and responsiveness of our operating environment and low tax regime.

[Deputy Mary Coughlan.]

I am optimistic that new investments and jobs will follow in time, particularly given the positive views expressed to me about Ireland and the high standing in which Ireland is viewed as a business location by leading global companies.

Deputy Willie Penrose: I compliment the Minister on her mission to the United States. It is important that she should continue that role regarding foreign direct investment with IDA Ireland. Did the extreme importance of Ireland's young, vibrant, well-educated and highly-skilled workforce, its low tax regime and flexible policies come across during her mission? While I acknowledge such projects have long gestation periods, is the Minister hopeful in these difficult times as a result of her visit?

I was surprised by the study or survey that purported to reveal discontent among multinationals regarding Ireland's supposedly high costs and poor infrastructure despite the investment in infrastructure of a great deal of money in the past 15 years. Did this issue arise, was it bubbling below the surface or did anyone refer to it? I do not anticipate that anyone did so. How did the survey results that up to 60% of such multinationals were dissatisfied in one form or other surface? I was greatly surprised by the alleged contents of the survey, which I have not seen. I understand it was secret, although it appears to have entered the public domain. While I am not familiar with it, I read reports of it. Its contents surprised me greatly because our educated workforce, flexibility and motivation, the infrastructure Ireland provides for many firms that come here, together with its lower corporate tax rates constitute huge elements of attraction. Was anything bubbling beneath the surface that gave the Minister cause for concern or that she might be obliged to re-examine to ensure Ireland remains as competitive as it was?

Deputy Finian McGrath: While the Minister was in the United States, did the debate on our low-tax regime arise? What was the mood in the United States among politicians and business people?

With regard to global companies, the importance of US investment and other European countries, the Minister also should think beyond the box in respect of other countries as there is a bigger world out there. While the Minister was involved in respect of China, we also should be trying to attract investment from other countries.

Given the presence of low-cost labour in other countries, does the Minister have concerns for industries in Ireland that may be unable to compete on the international market and which could lose many jobs?

Deputy Mary Coughlan: The access we received was superb. The views expressed by those who are in Ireland at present is that this is a good place in which to do business. Ireland is perceived to be pro-enterprise and has a flexible and talented workforce and this is the basis on which many people make decisions to come here. Ireland's investment in research and development is of great importance to them. Moreover, its centres for science, engineering and technology, interaction between industry and the commercialisation of intellectual property are highly important. Ireland needs to be at the high-value end, which is the type of product in which I was trying to invest and encourage into Ireland. We met a number of new, emerging types of businesses. As the Deputy noted, that will take some time in gestation. That said, our message is clear that Ireland still is a good place in which to do business.

On the issue of costs, some naturally have reflected on that issue, most particularly in the context of energy and, in some cases, labour costs. However, much of this was offset by our talent pool. In addition, the Government is cognisant of the input costs that cause difficulties to a number of companies and has new initiatives to consider and support this issue. Moreover,

the reiteration in his Budget Statement by the Minister for Finance of Ireland's 12.5% corporation tax rate was greatly welcomed.

In the context of the changing political dynamic in the United States, much of which concerns fears that are not necessarily well-founded, the view that Ireland is in any way perceived as a tax haven was not present. Ireland's absence from the OECD's Richter scale in this regard is of great importance to us. Therefore, I continue to be of the view that Ireland will see further investment from our foreign direct investment community. This is not to suggest it will not be without its challenges, as I would be naïve to say that.

As for travelling abroad, I visited Zurich last week, where I engaged in much networking with ICT businesses. Next week, I intend to travel with 60 companies to Dubai and Abu Dhabi to examine new opportunities for them. Members are aware the Taoiseach has travelled to China and I intend to go to Japan. Moreover, there will be further works carried out by my Ministers of State, including the Minister of State with responsibility for trade, who is on such a mission at present to attract and provide opportunities for foreign direct investment and to afford indigenous companies opportunities abroad.

Departmental Agencies.

8. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment when she expects to receive the report commissioned from the Comptroller and Auditor General into the effectiveness of FÁS's financial management and control systems; if, pending the receipt of the report, she will take action arising from allegations of financial irregularities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41765/08]

Deputy Mary Coughlan: In his report on non-commercial semi-State bodies published in May 2008, the Comptroller and Auditor General reviewed the issues raised in one specific FÁS internal audit report.

I discussed this matter with the director general of FÁS and have expressed my concerns about the issues raised by both the Comptroller and Auditor General and the internal audit report, and in particular, the need to secure value for money in public expenditure. On my instruction, the Secretary General of my Department wrote to FÁS on 30 June 2008 seeking the formal assurance of the director general that the practices outlined in the audit reports of FÁS and the Comptroller and Auditor General had ceased and that adequate systems and controls were in place to prevent any recurrence and requesting details of the remedial actions taken by FÁS in respect of the issues raised by the audit reports, with quarterly progress reports on the implementation of the audit reports' recommendations. The director general replied on 1 July confirming that the unacceptable practices referred to in the audit reports had ceased. A further response was received at the end of October, which set out the progress being made on the issue of controls on procurement and the observance of the procurement policy of FÁS.

Following discussions with the chairman and director general, I decided that there should be an external investigation into the effectiveness of the financial management and control systems generally in place in FÁS, rather than be limited to aspects raised in the internal audit report that gave rise to the special report. The Comptroller and Auditor General has acceded to my request to consider doing such a review. My intention in requesting this review is to ensure that appropriate public procurement procedures exist to prevent or detect irregularities or wrongdoing and to examine and report on the activities of the FÁS corporate affairs area since 2000 to achieve reasonable assurance as to whether there were any occasions of potential fraud

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or irregularity in that area other than those already brought to light by the FÁS internal audit unit.

It is a matter for the Comptroller and Auditor General to determine the scope of his investigation. He has indicated that, in doing so, he will take into account the deliberations at the Committee of Public Accounts hearings on the FÁS element of his special report. The timing of the investigation is a matter for him but, as the Minister responsible for FÁS, I am understandably anxious for it to proceed as quickly as possible so that I may address any issues arising in respect of the financial management and control systems in place within the organisation.

Deputy Willie Penrose: It would appear that the Tánaiste wants a specific investigation. From her inquiries with FÁS and her Department, is she satisfied that the steps taken on new procedures in accountancy and auditing will be put in place, thereby ensuring no recurrence of a matter that may be the subject of an investigation? We should not prejudge an outcome until after a full investigation has been carried out.

Some 500,000 people must be retrained and reskilled. The Minister of State, Deputy Haughey, is involved.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: Yes.

Deputy Willie Penrose: I do not want to cut across him, but will the Tánaiste ask the Minister of State to set out a programme whereby this aspect of FÁS's mandate can be accelerated? It will not be an easy task, but it could be worthwhile. FÁS has done much positive work and many fine people work for it, but perhaps more people should be on the ground. One of the Ministers of State referred to how many people there are on the ground as opposed to in offices, which is important.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: The Tánaiste has overall responsibility for FÁS, but we should not ignore the importance of the role of the director general and the board in being on top of these issues. The board may have been able to do a better job in preventing problems. Does the Tánaiste still have full confidence in both?

Deputy Mary Coughlan: It is a matter for Deputy Penrose to make his own determinations. I have received a written assurance from the director general that the matters raised in the audit committee have been addressed and that correct procedures have been put in place.

Regarding the board, I have met its chairman regularly, who every Deputy would agree is a fine individual, and its director general. I have also met senior staff members of FÁS in the context of driving its agenda of targeting and supporting people. We have greater interaction with the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the Minister of State, Deputy Haughey, is driving the issue of lifelong learning and reviewing labour market measures to determine where there are greater opportunities, particularly between the Department of Education and Science and my Department. Like the House, I do not want training for training's sake.

Deputy Willie Penrose: That is right.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: Nor should scarce resources be targeted anywhere other than at those most in need. It is the intention of the Minister of State, Deputy Haughey, and the rest of our team to progress matters as expeditiously as possible.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: Does the Tánaiste still have full confidence in the director general and the board?

Deputy Mary Coughlan: I have answered that question.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: Does she?

Deputy Jimmy Devins: She just answered.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: I did not quite hear a “Yes” or “No”.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: I appreciate the Deputy’s views and I know that FÁS offered to take him and his party’s leader through the issues, but that only his leader took up the offer. I believe the Deputy indicated that he was not interested.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: That is not the case. We were supposed to go this afternoon, but FÁS cancelled. The Tánaiste is quite wrong.

Departmental Appointments.

9. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the process used to select the new chair of the board of Enterprise Ireland; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41932/08]

Deputy Mary Coughlan: Members of the board of Enterprise Ireland are appointed under section 9 of the Industrial Development (Enterprise Ireland) Act 1998. The Act provides that members shall be appointed by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, with the consent of the Minister for Finance, and that the former shall designate one member of the board as chairperson. The Act specifies that a member of the board shall not serve for more than ten consecutive years.

On the resignation of the previous chairperson of Enterprise Ireland some months ago following completion of ten years of exemplary service to the board, I immediately sought a suitable replacement. I was pleased that Mr. Hugh Cooney was willing to accept my invitation to join the board and to assume the position of chairperson. The Minister for Finance had no hesitation in giving his consent to Mr. Cooney’s appointment. I am pleased with Mr. Cooney’s appointment and I am satisfied that he is eminently qualified and suitable for his new position.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: On the last question, if I may digress, Mr. Rody Molloy, the director general of FÁS, has met Deputy Kenny.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: I know.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: I met Mr. Molloy separately.

Acting Chairman: The Deputy should finish his question.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: This is a question on Enterprise Ireland.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: FÁS has offered to allow us to examine some of its records. We have accepted, but FÁS has been unable to find a suitable time. The Tánaiste might want to check her facts.

Deputy Damien English: And change the record.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: And to change the record, of course.

Someone should not be barred from holding office because he or she contributed funds to Fianna Fáil, but it creates questions among the public. Was any effort, direct or indirect, made by the Taoiseach to lobby the Tánaiste on this appointment? In future, would it not be more appropriate for such decisions to be analysed by the appropriate committee, as is the case in the United States and elsewhere? Fine Gael has drafted a Bill to that effect. Does the Tánaiste agree that this provision would remove some of the concerns people have about contributors to Fianna Fáil being appointed to important offices by ensuring proper scrutiny of this area and that decisions are not made as they are currently?

Deputy Mary Coughlan: The views expressed by the Member opposite are a disgrace.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: Why?

Acting Chairman: Let the Tánaiste answer.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: He obviously does not know the man.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: I do not.

Deputy Damien English: He is speaking in general.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: The Deputy does not know of his capacity or capabilities——

Deputy Leo Varadkar: I do not. That is why I would like an answer.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: ——as many in the House do. That the man made a small contribution to a party in a personal capacity, which he was more than entitled to do, in no way influenced anyone. I did not know of the contribution. It is scurrilous of Deputy Varadkar to imply that there was any lobbying for the position.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: Was there?

Deputy Damien English: That was his question.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: I took a considerable period of time----

Deputy Leo Varadkar: I asked a question and the Tánaiste has not answered.

Deputy Jimmy Devins: Inferences were made.

Acting Chairman: Let the Tánaiste reply.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: Following the retirement of the previous chairman, I took considerable time to ensure that the next appointee would give the board the necessary direction and support. He has given both. Perhaps the Deputy might revert to the fact that his Government appointed a contributor, Mr. Lynch, with whom I have worked and who is eminently qualified to sit on a board. If someone makes a contribution to a political party or a local cumann or branch, should he or she be barred from participating on a board?

Deputy Leo Varadkar: I specifically stated that it should not be a bar.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: As always, the Deputy has made an inference to win the populist vote. Mr. Cooney, who is well known by many Deputies, is eminently qualified, has significant capacity and is someone who knows what is occurring in the country. His skills and talents will add to the board's eminence. It would be more appropriate for the Deputy to familiarise himself with my appointee before throwing mud at him.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: The Minister did not answer either of the questions I posed.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: I did.

Employment Rights.

10. **Deputy Tom Sheahan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she will amend the Industrial Relations Act 1976 to preclude the inclusion in an employment regulation order or registered employment agreements an obligation that employers pay double the minimum rate on Sundays; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41259/08]

27. **Deputy Ulick Burke** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she will amend the Industrial Relations Act 1976 to allow employers covered by employment regulation orders and registered employment agreements to plead inability to pay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41244/08]

Deputy Billy Kelleher: I propose to answer Questions Nos. 10 and 27 together.

I presume the Deputies are referring to the Industrial Relations Act 1946. Under the provisions of that Act, employer and worker representatives voluntarily enter into collective bargaining negotiations with a view to concluding an employment regulation order or registered employment agreement. The State is not party to such negotiations and, accordingly, I have no plans to amend the Industrial Relations Act as proposed by the Deputies.

Minimum rates of pay and other conditions of employment for workers in certain sectors are set down in employment regulation orders, EROs, made by the Labour Court. These orders are legally binding and are determined on the basis of proposals drawn up by the employer and employee representatives on the relevant joint labour committees, JLCs. The latter are independent bodies and are composed of equal numbers of representatives of employers and workers in a particular sector, with an independent chairman.

An employment agreement is an agreement made either between a trade union and an employer or employer organisation or at a meeting of a registered joint industrial council, which relates to the pay or conditions of employment of any class, type or group of workers. Employment agreements may be presented to the Labour Court for registration. Where the Labour Court is satisfied that an agreement presented satisfies the statutory requirements, it will register that agreement. The effect of this is to make the provisions of the agreement legally enforceable in respect of every worker of the class, type or group to which it is expressed to apply and to his or her employer, even if such workers or employers are not party to the agreement.

In the context of our voluntarist approach to collective bargaining, JLCs covering certain sectors, including the catering and hotel sectors, have agreed terms and conditions, which include the payment of premia for Sunday work, to apply to the workers covered by their respective remits. These terms make no provision for an inability to pay clause because they

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are essentially agreements on the going rate for the job reached by employers and workers themselves. It is not a Government imposed rate.

I am aware of concerns that have been raised by some employers regarding the impact of Sunday premia payments. Deputies on all sides have raised this matter with me on numerous occasions. I am conscious of the pressures on and concerns of employers and employees in the hotel and catering sectors. Any adjustment or variation in the rates applying to Sunday work in these sectors or any provisions that would allow for an inability to pay plea by an employer remain matters for agreement by the parties represented on the JLCs or those who are party to an REA, as appropriate.

The operation of the joint labour committee system was recently considered by the social partners in the course of their negotiation of the Towards 2016 review and transitional agreement. We have initiated the process to amalgamate the two joint labour committees in the catering sector. Advertisements relating to this matter were placed in national newspapers in the past week.

Deputy Leo Varadkar: Even if one is an 18 year old student who works on Sundays, the minimum rate of pay is over €20 per hour. It is difficult for many small businesses in the catering and hotel sector to meet such rates of pay and, as a result, they are obliged to close. Many businesses no longer trade or serve food on Sundays. I hope the new joint labour committee will address this matter. Is the Minister of State satisfied with regard to the legality of the current EROs? Is it constitutionally correct for the Oireachtas to give the Labour Court power to set minimum terms and conditions?

Deputy Willie Penrose: Is the Minister of State satisfied that all those involved are acutely aware of the importance of competitiveness in the economy at this point?

Deputy Billy Kelleher: I urge Deputies to use their influence in order to ensure that people are aware of the pressures that exist, particularly in the hotel and catering sectors. There is a commitment in Towards 2016 to strengthen the JLCs. Some members representing hotels recently launched a court challenge but as yet there has not been any outcome in that regard.

We are aware that major pressures exist. I urge the representatives of the workers and employers on the JLCs to meet and discuss this matter. I have received representations from Members on all sides, from employers and employees in respect of this matter. If Deputies have any influence in such matters, they should urge the JLCs to convene and strike a rate that reflects the existing reality. Many people are losing their jobs, businesses are experiencing major difficulties in attempting to trade on Sundays and restaurants are closing. There are several restaurants in my constituency that no longer open on Sundays. I again urge Deputies to use their influence.

Acting Chairman: The Chair wishes to acknowledge the co-operation it has received from all Members during Question Time.

Deputy Willie Penrose: As usual, we acknowledge the efforts of the Acting Chairman.

Deputy Mary Coughlan: The Acting Chairman never mentioned Tallaght.

Written Answers follow Adjournment Debate.

Adjournment Debate Matters.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Brian O'Shea): I wish to advise the House of the following matters in respect of which notice has been given under Standing Order 21 and the name of the Member in each case: (1) Deputy Ruairí Quinn — the promotion of Irish excellence and design in architecture following the victory by Irish architects in the World Building of the Year Award; (2) Deputy James Bannon — the need to stimulate job creation in Longford; (3) Deputy Michael D. Higgins — the award of a stamp 4 to a person granted residency; (4) Deputy Charles Flanagan — to raise with the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the impact and consequences of the proposed cuts to the budgets of the Equality Authority and the Irish Human Rights Commission; (5) Deputy Róisín Shortall — the implications for the opt-in programme at the Finglas ICTU centre for the unemployed of the cancellation of the fund for the development of targeted educational responses to certain children at risk; (6) Deputy Bernard J. Durkan — the urgent and pressing issue of mortgage supplement in the case of a person where the HSE is only prepared to assist on a 50% basis because the mortgage is in joint names but there is a barring order against her husband and if the Minister will make a statement on the matter; and (7) Deputy Joe Costello — the need for the Minister for Education and Science to ensure that the centre for deaf studies, TCD, 40 Lower Drumcondra Road, Dublin 9, is adequately funded.

The matters raised by Deputies Bannon, Higgins, Quinn and Shortall have been selected for discussion.

Adjournment Debate.

Job Creation.

Deputy James Bannon: I thank the Ceann Comhairle for affording me the opportunity to raise this important matter, namely, that the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment recognise the urgent need to counteract Government neglect of County Longford in the light of increasing numbers on the live register and the loss of economic stability as a result of the announcement of the closure of Connolly Barracks and several industries in the area.

According to the latest live register figures, the number of people signing on in County Longford stands at 3,423. This represents an increase of 1,136, or 49.7%, in 12 months and a rise of 678, or 24.7%, since Deputies Cowen and Coughlan became Taoiseach and Tánaiste, respectively. Following a number of closures in County Longford, the latest body blow to our economic viability is the ill-thought-out closure of Connolly Barracks in Longford town, which has seen the removal of 180 full-time jobs and 160 reservists from the local economy. This is equivalent to the loss of two major industries at a time when Longford is getting less than its fair share of State-assisted jobs.

There is a history of Government neglect in respect of Longford. The then Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Deputy Harney, announced in December 2000 that the pharmaceutical giant, Cardinal Health, was to invest £100 million in Longford, in a state-of-the-art manufacturing and technology centre. The project was hailed as one which would transform the industrial make-up of County Longford and the surrounding areas. Construction work on the centre was due to start in early 2002 and it was hoped that it would be operational by 2004 and would create between 1,300 and 1,400 jobs by 2006. By 2004, however,

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this much heralded boost for County Longford turned out to be just another general election promise.

In recent times we have witnessed not only the closure of the barracks but also the shutting down of the court services in Granard. The courthouse and allied services brought huge economic benefits to the town and surrounding areas. Now funding for the enterprise centre in Granard has been stalled. Kimbal Electronics closed in April with the loss of 66 jobs and, shortly before that, Nexans Ireland shut down with the loss of 162 jobs. Butlers in Longford town has let one third of its staff go and staff at Glennons are on a two-day week. Employees at Fenelons in Longford have been threatened by lay-offs and the Quinn Group is curtailing its operations. In addition, enterprise starter grants have been reduced.

The Longford-Westmeath area has been shamefully disregarded in respect of the gas expansion scheme. Companies operating in Longford have again been left on the hind tit in respect to this important facility. Seven years after it was first promised inclusion under the expansion scheme, Longford is now under consideration for the final phase — phase 3.

It is frightening to think that in one year unemployment in County Longford has risen by 49.7%. Some 24% of that increase occurred in the six months since Deputy Cowen became Taoiseach. This is indicative of the lack of positive action on the part of the Government. Government policy is to blame others for the shocking rise in unemployment in County Longford and other areas throughout the country. Far too many jobs have disappeared as a result of the high cost base. Companies are leaving the country and transferring their operations to more business-friendly locations.

Stealth taxes, high fuel prices, infrastructural deficiencies and a lack of competitiveness are driving up unemployment figures at an alarming rate. We need a high level of intervention and investment by Government and State agencies in order to secure a future for the people of Longford and Westmeath. This country lacks an industrial strategy geared towards low taxes. The Government deserves criticism in respect of inflation and the lack of competitiveness.

The Government must overhaul FÁS and provide a public works scheme for the unemployed. I call on the Minister to restore competitiveness and to support business, in particular small and medium enterprises and other companies in County Longford that are currently experiencing difficulty. It is clear to everyone but the Government that this can be achieved by freezing charges such as rates and development levies; reducing utility costs for electricity, gas, water and telecommunications; investing in infrastructure, in particular broadband, road and rail; cutting back red tape; reversing the hike in VAT; suspending the pay deal, consolidating labour law and abolishing anti-employment provisions such as double pay for Sunday working in the catering sector; and, crucially, wasting no further time in recapitalising the banks so that businesses, large and small, can access credit.

Acting Chairman: The Deputy must conclude as his time has expired.

Deputy James Bannon: The economic profile of County Longford suffered another blow with the drastic cutback in local government funding which has seen Longford County Council lose 6.02% on last year's figure and Longford Town Council facing a shortfall of 6.93% in essential funding, which will hit at already poor infrastructural development.

Acting Chairman: Deputy Bannon has gone well over time.

Deputy James Bannon: Our farmers have had an extremely rough time for the past 11 years under the Fianna Fáil-led Government, with the record of support by previous and current Ministers for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food being abysmal.

Acting Chairman: I must ask the Deputy to conclude.

Deputy James Bannon: The suspension of installation aid will force many young farmers to emigrate to the detriment of the farming sector.

Longford is suffering from the Government's callous disregard for the economic development of the midlands. Cutback after cutback and multiple business closures are attacking the fabric of our society, with families forced to bear the brunt of this. It is time to halt this decline and to restore confidence in the economic potential of County Longford.

Acting Chairman: Deputy Bannon must conclude now.

Deputy James Bannon: I urge the Minister to do everything possible to attract new jobs to Longford and the midlands.

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): I apologise to Deputy Bannon in that I can only reply to the question submitted. I may not be able to answer all the points he made in his Second Stage speech.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: The Deputy might ask them again.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: The recent increase in the numbers on the live register is unwelcome. All Members will be aware that behind the statistics are individuals and families facing the prospect of unemployment. The situation not alone challenges those people who are currently unemployed but the broader labour market.

The Government is taking specific measures to address these challenges and to ensure that job losses are minimised as much as possible. Its priority is to create the environment that will allow those who have lost their jobs to quickly return to the labour market. The enterprise development agencies, along with FÁS, are actively engaged in facilitating job opportunities in Longford.

In line with the national spatial strategy, IDA Ireland actively promotes the town of Longford for new and expanded investment across a wide range of sectors. Longford is traditionally a centre of manufacturing for foreign direct investment and has been comprehensively marketed by IDA Ireland. Currently, there are eight IDA Ireland-supported companies in Longford employing approximately 905 people. IDA Ireland also continues to work with the existing company base in the area to identify new areas of opportunity and to expand their presence.

In April this year, Cameron Corporation of the US, one of the world's leading providers of oil and gas pressure control equipment, announced that it is to significantly develop and expand its existing manufacturing and research and development facility in Longford town, with the potential to create an additional 140 high quality jobs in engineering and support activities during the next five years. In addition, €15 million will be invested in new buildings and equipment. The company currently employs 241 people in Longford. IDA Ireland is an active participant in the county development board and collaborates with other stakeholders in the county to promote the infrastructure and environment for enterprise and job creation.

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New indigenous companies have created new employment in the county. In August 2008, Kiernan Milling in Granard announced plans to extend its factory and will employ an additional 45 people. Turner Printing installed a fully automatic computer-to-plate system as part of its current modernisation programme. This has allowed it to bring the highest print quality to customers in Ireland and has contributed to recent overseas success. Industrial land recently procured by Turner Printing in the town will contribute significantly to future development. Butler Manufacturing Services, which is involved in the design and manufacture of waste water treatment products, recently expanded its factory to 25,000 sq ft for a major research and development programme.

Deputy James Bannon: It has also let one-third of its staff go.

Acting Chairman: The Minister without interruption, please.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: In 2007, the Midlands and West Enterprise Programme, MWEP, was launched to support high growth entrepreneurs incubate their business ideas. The programme is run jointly between Athlone Institute of Technology and the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology. Ten new entrepreneurs, a number of whom are from Longford, commenced incubating their businesses at Athlone Institute of Technology in April of this year, with the aim of developing sustainable export oriented businesses.

FÁS is providing a range of proactive job-related services, supports and programmes to assist individuals to return to the labour market. The €9.5 million allocation for FÁS announced in last month's budget, is specifically to fund additional initiatives to help those who have been made redundant.

Deputy James Bannon: Is that in Longford?

Deputy Billy Kelleher: Employment services are available from FÁS employment services offices in Longford town and clinics in Granard and Ballymahon. It is expected that in 2008 1,763 people will participate on FÁS programmes in County Longford.

The community employment programme continues to be a major provider of work places for the unemployed. In County Longford, 18 organisations employ 289 people in a variety of community employment work projects. In 2007, more than 200 people availed of assistance from the Job Club in Longford town, either through formal job club sessions or through one-to-one guidance. The supported employment programme assists the integration of persons with a disability into employment. Currently, 20 people from County Longford are on the programme and 78 are availing of courses in newer occupations such as, care assistants for nursing homes and hospitals, forestry operatives for the growing forestry industry, beauticians and child care assistants.

For those who have lost their jobs and those in employment, the importance of upskilling in the context of the economy's competitiveness is vital. Our workforce will need to be able to adapt quickly to meet the challenges posed by a rapidly shifting global economic market. The Government is continuing to develop the necessary policies and initiatives to tackle the issues currently facing us.

In regard to Connolly Barracks, Longford, the Minister for Defence, Deputy O'Dea, has assured me that there should not be any economic impact on the local communities as most of the personnel serving in these installations live in the areas and will continue to do so in the

future, thereby minimising impact. The economic impact of the closure could benefit the area as the barracks is redeveloped. Were Deputy Bannon to visit Ballincollig, Cork, it might change his view in regard to what can be done in an area following redevelopment of old barracks. This was the experience of the last consolidation process where barracks were redeveloped, thus providing housing, offices and retail facilities for local communities and creating job opportunities.

I understand that Longford barracks was re-opened specifically to provide for the requirement for Border duties. On the northern side of the Border, the chain of British military bases has been removed. Clearly, the reduction in paramilitary activity and the benefits arising from the Good Friday Agreement were going to have some effect on current deployment.

Acting Chairman: I must ask the Minister of State to conclude.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: I am informed that most personnel in the barracks understand the need for this action and welcome the benefit in terms of military training and development to which the consolidation process will give rise.

Residency Permits.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: I appreciate the Minister of State taking this Adjournment matter. The issue that arises concerns residency and is little less than an outrage, language I rarely use, and I have been a Member of this House for a long time.

The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform grants permission to stay under section 3 of the basic legislation. I will give an example without naming the individual concerned as the person is named in the question for information. A letter written in October states:

I am directed by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform to refer to your application for temporary permission to remain in the State. As an exceptional measure, I am to inform you that the Minister has decided to grant you temporary permission to remain in the State for three years until 21 October 2011.

Many people receive these letters. The letter goes on to set out a number of conditions in regard to the person's right to remain in the State. One has an expectation of being able to remain in the State permanently if one obeys the law.

What happens in Galway is that individuals who receive this type of letter, and who have been staying in hostel accommodation, later receive another letter. The individual concerned received the other letter the following day stating:

Dear. . . .

The Reception and Integration Agency has been informed that you have been granted leave to remain. You must now make arrangements to move into the community and begin your new life in Ireland. As the accommodation you currently occupy is for asylum applicants and noting that you were granted leave to remain on 21 October 2008 you are required to leave this accommodation as soon as possible but no later than 11 November 2008.

The letter goes on to make many helpful suggestions.

The individual presented to the GNIB in Liosbán, where he was asked for his passport. He responded that he had with him an old passport when he arrived in Ireland. We spent two weeks trying to find that passport at the level of the Department, only for him to be told when

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he found it that an up-to-date passport was needed. Without a stamp four, the individual, who is only allowed to stay in his hostel out of charity, cannot register for housing, social services or medical benefits. Effectively, the GNIB is operating its own immigration policy in complete frustration of the policies of the INIS.

Four such cases are currently outstanding in Galway and gardaí have looked for an up-to-date passport in each. The people concerned are from Zimbabwe, where matters are impossible, Somalia, where there is no state, Liberia and Eritrea. In the Eritrean case, from which I cannot receive satisfaction, it is suggested that the Garda will write a travel document to enable the individual to leave Ireland in order to apply to the Eritrean Embassy in London. This individual has fled from Eritrea after coming under Islamist pressure for being a Christian. He will have to present himself to the embassy, pay £500 sterling and sign an undertaking that anything he earns in Ireland for the rest of his life will go back to Eritrea. The gardaí in Liosbán see nothing wrong with that scenario. In the original letter sent by the Minister of State at the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Deputy Conor Lenihan, the suggestion was made that the Garda had received a faxed copy. When my office raised the matter, it was told that Garda procedures do not recognise facsimiles because one would not know what “they” would be up to in terms of forgeries.

The original letter in one case is still missing. It was sent from the Minister’s office to the Phoenix Park. In another case, there is not even the sight of a letter. The remark made in Liosbán when my copy was produced was to the effect that I am only a Deputy and not a garda, so the individual concerned will not get a stamp four.

In my 30 years of public life, I have never been required to speak this way. I am conscious that half of my family have gone abroad. If I go to America I travel with Irish status and I am conscious that people have basic rights to move all over the world. I do not believe in a State that has an unaccountable police force. If any Deputy wishes to visit Liosbán, it is open from 7.30 a.m. until 12 p.m. and from 2 p.m. until 3 p.m. No information is made available in any language. People arrive with their sleeping bags and wait their turn and, when they are told they will not get their stamp, they leave and return the following morning at 6.30 a.m. It is a scandal and a disgrace. I have before me a stack of letters on the issue.

I spoke to a decent sergeant and a good inspector who informed me that they forwarded my correspondence to the superintendent of the section, who will send it to the divisional chief superintendent. However, I cannot arrange a meeting with the western region Assistant Commissioner. I want these cases to be resolved before I raise them again next week in the Dáil.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: I hope my reply will satisfy the individual concerned and I will immediately bring to the attention of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the issues raised by Deputy Higgins regarding Liosbán and, if difficulties remain, can facilitate a meeting with a Garda representative.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: The regional Assistant Commissioner.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: I find it hard to accept that members of the Garda would refuse to meet a democratically elected Member of the Oireachtas and I urge those who are in a position to assist the Deputy to do so.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: They did not refuse. They did not arrange a meeting. It was a waste of time.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: I will urge them to arrange a meeting immediately and will bring the matter to the attention of the Minister.

I would like to clarify the procedures in place for the registration of non-EEA national persons who are granted residency in the State. Where a decision is made to approve a residency application following consideration by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, this decision is conveyed in writing to the applicant and, if known, his or her legal representative. The decision letter will advise the successful applicant of the period of residency that has been granted, the conditions attaching to this residency permission, the grounds under which permission can be revoked and the registration process involved.

The registration process requires the successful applicant to attend at his or her local Garda district headquarters station or at the offices of the Garda National Immigration Bureau in Dublin City Centre with the original copy of the decision letter of the Department and his or her national passport or some other form of photographic identification document.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: The original letter is demanded. Copies or faxes will not suffice.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: Upon payment of the appropriate registration fee, the process is completed and results in the successful applicant being issued with a stamp four on his or her passport.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: Other forms of photographic identification are not accepted. They are insisting in a thick way on one particular form of identity. It is as thick as it could be, and proud to be thick.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: I am sure that the passionate manner in which the Deputy raised the issue will cause those who are listening to take account of what he has said. I will raise the matter with the Minister and the Garda authorities.

The Minister strongly refutes the Deputy's contention that the procedures are in some way unreasonable. The Deputy will appreciate that it would not be at all appropriate to have a person conferred with an entitlement to reside in the State on an ongoing basis without being required to produce definitive documentary evidence as to his or her identity and nationality.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: I never suggested that.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: The Minister would regard such a condition as being entirely reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances.

In regard to the individual to whom the Deputy referred, I understand he arrived in the State on 8 November 2004 and claimed asylum the following day. His asylum application was investigated by the Refugee Applications Commissioner and, on appeal, by the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. Both investigations concluded that the person concerned did not meet the criteria for recognition as a refugee.

Arising from the rejection of his asylum application and in accordance with section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999, as amended, the person concerned was notified by letter dated 16 June 2008 of the Minister's proposal to issue a deportation order in respect of him. This communication also notified the person concerned of the options open to him at that point in time, namely, to leave the State voluntarily, to consent to deportation or to submit, within 15 working days, written representations to the Minister setting out the reasons he should be allowed to remain temporarily in the State. Representations were submitted on behalf of the person concerned at that time.

[Deputy Billy Kelleher.]

Following consideration of the person's case under section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999 and section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996 on the prohibition of *refoulement*, the Minister decided, as an exceptional measure and subject to certain stated conditions, to grant temporary leave to remain in the State for a three year period until 21 October 2011. This decision was conveyed in writing by a letter dated 21 October 2008 which explained in detail the means by which registration in the State could be effected.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: He has to go to London.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: I understand from the Garda Síochána that the registration process has not yet been completed. Accordingly, it is recommended that the individual should proceed to procure any outstanding documentation required of him in the context of his registration in the State so that he can clearly show that he is making every effort to become economically viable in the State, which is one of the stated conditions under which he was granted residency.

Excellence in Architecture.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: It is appropriate that the Minister of State, Deputy Kelleher, is taking this matter because some of my remarks pertain to his Department.

The world building of the year award, which was given for the first time this year, represents a major achievement. It is the equivalent of the Nobel prize. This is the first year in which it was awarded and it was won by a middle sized Irish architectural practice, Grafton Architects, of which Shelley McNamara and Yvonne Farrell are the two principals. Eight major architectural awards are awarded at present, six of which are given to individuals for lifetime achievements by institutes such as the RIBA in London. The remaining two awards are for specific buildings. The world building of the year award has the most rigorous and demanding criteria and adjudication process. Yvonne Farrell and Shelly McNamara are like Olympic gold medalists. That is the status and standing of their achievement. This should be publicly celebrated and recognised by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism. In response to a parliamentary question I tabled, he advised that he had sent a private letter congratulating them, which is simply not sufficient.

We should use this achievement to promote Irish art and culture abroad and I will make some suggestions for consideration. Every Irish Embassy abroad should showcase it in collaboration with the various State agencies and the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland. It would be a golden opportunity to showcase an achievement of excellence on a global scale by Irish architects. IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland should also promote it. Ireland has 4% of the global market for services, which is an incredible achievement. At present, those involved in the Irish construction industry must be encouraged to find work abroad owing to the downturn in our economy. For example, 30% of people employed in architectural practices have been given notice or made redundant in recent months and more will follow.

We need joined up thinking in Departments in this regard. The Departments involved are the Departments of Foreign Affairs, Arts, Sport and Tourism, Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. A co-ordinated promotion and sales drive with the Construction Industry Federation and all of the building professions is now required. They should unashamedly use the excuse of the achievement of the award of world building of the year. They won in two categories. There are approximately five categories relating to building type and there is an overall award. In both cases they won that award. What has happened is well known across the world of architectural services and design.

I invite the Minister of State and his colleagues to be active and celebrate this achievement and to communicate, promote, export and sell our expertise globally. This is a unique opportunity to do so. There should be a public reception or other event to celebrate the achievement here. It is simply not sufficiently well known. If it was a sports or a literary achievement, it would be acknowledged in a much more profound and celebratory way than simply sending a private letter of congratulations.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: The Deputy is aware that the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism has sent a letter offering his warmest congratulations to Yvonne Farrell and Shelly McNamara of Grafton Architects on winning the first building of the year award at the inaugural World Architecture Festival. The new faculty building for the Luigi Bocconi University in Milan, which they designed, is both stunning and truly inspiring. If I am ever in northern Italy I intend to visit it. Northern Spain has that famous landmark building in Bilbao that one associates with the city itself.

I take on board the views the Deputy has expressed regarding showcasing to promote Irish architecture and construction. While I am unsure about the dates, I understand that within the next two weeks the Tánaiste will travel to Dubai and Abu Dhabi with some construction firms to promote Irish companies abroad in the context of the challenging times we have domestically in the construction sector. The Deputy is correct in highlighting the large numbers of lay-offs of engineers and architects. These are highly skilled, educated and, obviously, well motivated people. We now need to look beyond our shores to find employment opportunities for these people.

I will convey the Deputy's views in the context of the achievement of Yvonne Farrell and Shelly McNamara. As he said, we should unashamedly use these awards not only to advance the nation, but also to give opportunities to young architects, engineers and others involved in the construction industry to break into the international market. However, this is a challenging time and unfortunately even though we are going abroad on trade missions, we are going to countries that are also suffering from the severe downturn internationally. If Ireland was alone in having internal challenges, it would be different. However, all countries have their own difficulties at this time. We need to continue to promote Ireland not only as a place for inward investment, but in challenging times we need to provide opportunities to Irish companies to go abroad and establish businesses there. We have recently built up considerable capacity and expertise in the construction sector which we could showcase abroad in the future.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: Will the Minister of State raise the matter with IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland, which are within his remit?

Deputy Billy Kelleher: I will convey the Deputy's views to Enterprise Ireland which is the appropriate agency.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: I thank the Minister of State.

Special Educational Needs.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: The decision by the Department of Education and Science to cut funding for programmes providing for the development of targeted educational responses to children at risk is shameful and a prime example of cutbacks being directed at those who stand to suffer most. These cutbacks are swingeing and very shortsighted if one considers what those funds are achieving at local level. I am particularly familiar with the situation in the Fingal Centre for the Unemployed in Finglas, a facility in my constituency that provides support for

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potential early school leavers and young people who are struggling in some way. Recently it was informed by the Department of Education and Science that funding for its opt-in programme has been cancelled not just for next year, but for this year also.

Opt-in is designed to counter disadvantage by engaging with young people identified as being at risk through 12 second level schools in Finglas and surrounding areas and to provide focused interventions such as intensive summer programmes and ongoing one-to-one support with a view to assisting each young person meet his or her potential and engage in meaningful education. Each year, the programme supports more than 40 young people who are described as “highly at risk” and also works with 12 local schools in delivering vital preventive measures to these young people.

The programme has been running very successfully for the past 14 years and in that time has assisted almost 500 young people. I ask the Minister of State not to simply take my word for it, but to consider what has happened in the Finglas area and the testimonials from local schools that have availed of the programme. A representative of Beneavin De La Salle college has stated that the programme has proved beneficial for the target group of potential early school leavers. The school reported that only one of all the boys referred to it left school prior to completion of leaving certificate examinations, which is an excellent record. The representative said that of particular benefit are the summer months projects when these young people are deciding the path in life to follow. The summer holidays between two school years for secondary school boys is a critical time and the opt-in programme is that point of contact that keeps them engaged and motivated to stay on in school. It has been extremely successful in doing so.

A representative of another school in Finglas, Patrician College, said that every child has benefited from the programme and it has prevented several students from dropping out of school. A representative of another school St. Dominic’s college in Cabra wrote:

May I take this opportunity to thank you and your colleagues for all the real and tangible support you have given to many of our most at-risk students over the years. Your professional work with them has changed their lives for the better and they have gone into the world as more responsible citizens which benefits all of us. The amount of work done is incalculable. I hope that in these difficult economic times you are allowed to continue the invaluable work you are doing. The consequences of your work not being allowed to go forward would be too much to contemplate.

The programme only costs €82,000 per year. On an annual basis, a relatively small amount of money has enabled 40 young people to remain engaged in the education system up to leaving certificate level. It has been a very cost-effective and worthwhile project, as testified by all the local schools.

I ask the Minister of State to ask the Minister for Education and Science to revisit this decision, which strikes me as being penny wise but pound foolish. It is in nobody’s interest that these young people would drop out of school before completion of the leaving certificate and end up dependent on welfare and probably finding it very difficult to find future employment. Goodness knows in what other undesirable activities they may get involved.

This is a very practical programme with proven results which can be seen and which have been praised, not only by local schools but by the Department itself. I ask the Minister of State to make representations to the Minister for Education and Science to reverse this cut, which is very short-sighted. I ask especially that steps be taken to ensure that the funding already committed to for the current year of 2008, and which has already been spent, will be reimbursed

to the Fingal ICTU centre. The money has been spent as borrowings etc. were committed to. Serious consideration must be given to funding this initiative into the future as it has been so worthwhile.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: The Minister for Education and Science sends his apologies and has asked me to clarify the issues raised by the Deputy, particularly the Department's position on the project in question and the fund for the development of targeted educational responses to certain children at risk.

The Department of Education and Science has funded projects under this fund since 1999 with a total of €1.269 million provided annually. The main objective of the fund was to develop preventative and supportive programmes, which are targeted at children and young people who are at risk of educational disadvantage and social exclusion. The funding of proposed projects was based on an annual application process and all successful applicants were informed that commitment to funding was not given beyond one year and that no liabilities should be entered into which assumed the continued availability of funding in future years.

Typically, homework support and after school projects, early school leaving projects, mentoring and alternative provision for out of school children have been supported where they could not be accommodated through mainstream funding and where it was demonstrated that there was a gap in provision. With the introduction and expansion of the school completion programme, SCP, many projects which were funded by this fund have been integrated and into SCP projects.

Given the current volatile and challenging economic climate, difficult decisions have had to be made in order to contain public sector spending. Tax revenues are down significantly and Government expenditure has to reflect this reality. One of these decisions involves the discontinuation of the fund for the development of targeted educational responses to certain children at risk. Only commitments entered into at this time will be met from the funds for 2008. These commitments will extend to seven projects which are due to be evaluated by the Departments inspectorate in the near future. Support for all other projects will be discontinued and no consideration will be given to new applications in future years.

The main focus of social inclusion measures will be to retain resources in schools participating in DEIS and the action plan for educational inclusion. The Department of Education and Science intends to continue to focus targeted resources on the schools serving the most disadvantaged communities and this approach is in line with the broad thrust of the recommendations of the Comptroller and Auditor General, which are set out in his report on primary disadvantage of 2006, which recommended that the Department should focus its educational disadvantage measures on those schools most in need.

DEIS, the action plan for educational inclusion, is being rolled out on a phased basis over the period 2005-10 and focuses on addressing the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school through second-level education, those aged three to 18 years. The action plan provides for a standardised system for identifying levels of disadvantage and a new integrated school support programme. It brings together and builds upon a number of existing interventions in schools with a concentrated level of disadvantage. There are 876 schools in DEIS, which comprise 673 primary schools and 203 second-level schools, with 27 schools in the Finglas and Cabra areas -19 primary and eight post-primary are currently participating in DEIS and receive supports.

Such supports include reduced class sizes of 20:1 in junior and 24:1 in senior classes for band 1 primary schools, additional non-pay and capitation allocation based on their level of

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disadvantage, a financial allocation under the schools books grant scheme, access to numeracy and literacy supports and programmes at primary level, access to home school community liaison services; access to the school completion programme, enhanced guidance counselling provision at post-primary level, access to the junior certificate schools programme and the leaving certificate applied and provision for school library and librarian support for the post-primary schools with highest concentrations of disadvantage.

There are currently four school completion projects in Finglas and Cabra, which are in receipt of over €1 million in total annually, targeting approximately 900 young people. The objective of the school completion programme is to provide a range of interventions in areas of disadvantage that support the retention of young people in education and to develop local strategies to ensure maximum participation levels in the education process. This entails targeting individual young people of school-going age, both in and out of school, and arranging supports to address inequalities in education access, participation and outcomes.

There is considerable overlap between the aims, objectives and the services provided by the school completion programme and the project in question. In order to avoid duplication of effort and resources, it would be inappropriate for the Department of Education and Science to continue to provide funding to this project in the current economic climate.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: That is not true. A commitment was given for this year.

The Dáil adjourned at 5.25 p.m. until 2.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 25 November 2008.

Written Answers.

The following are questions tabled by Members for written response and the ministerial replies as received on the day from the Departments [unrevised].

Questions Nos. 1 to 10, inclusive, answered orally.

Consumer Protection.

11. **Deputy Michael D. Higgins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the steps being taken to implement the commitment in the Programme for Government that steps would be taken to ensure that consumer codes of conduct are published by businesses; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41778/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Consumer Protection Act 2007, which commenced in May last year, empowers the National Consumer Agency to prepare and publish Guidelines to traders in relation to matters of consumer welfare and protection and matters related to commercial practices. The Act also empowers the Agency to review or approve Codes of Practice submitted to it by traders or their trade associations where the Agency is satisfied that the Code of Practice protects consumer interests.

In October 2008, the National Consumer Agency, in accordance with its powers under the Consumer Protection Act 2007, published Guidelines for the Leisure and Fitness Sector. The Guidelines are intended to help the sector to draw up clearer and fairer terms and conditions in consumer contracts.

In tandem with the Guidelines, the Agency also published Seven Principles for the sector. These Principles, which are non-binding, are essentially a best practice guide for leisure clubs in the context of their contractual commitments to consumers.

In early September, the Agency published a consultation document on Guidelines on Advertising of Price Discounts and Related Matters. The Guidelines are intended to facilitate the retail sector in complying with the requirements of the Consumer Protection Act 2007 in relation to a variety of misleading practices. The Agency is currently assessing the various views received, with a view to publishing Guidelines for the retail sector in the New Year. The Guidelines, when finalized, will help traders to better appreciate their obligations to provide unambiguous information to consumers, give clarity on certain aspects of the Act and provide a basis for a fairer and more evenly balanced approach towards advertising throughout the sector.

[Deputy Mary Coughlan.]

I very much welcome the Agency's initiatives in these areas. I am confident that the production of Guidelines in important sectors of the economy such as the retail and leisure and fitness sectors will help in the development of a strong consumer culture in those sectors. I strongly support the Agency's strategy of engaging constructively with business through initiatives such as Agency Guidelines and Consumer Codes of Practice, which will be to the benefit of not only consumers but also the businesses themselves.

Social Partnership Agreements.

12. **Deputy Emmet Stagg** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she has received a request for a meeting from the Construction Industry Federation regarding the possibility of its members deferring the pay increases agreed in the recent national agreement; her views of such a proposal; her further views on the potential consequences of such a move for the draft national agreement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41757/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): No such request from the Construction Industry Federation for a meeting has been received either by the Tánaiste or myself. I am, however, aware that CIF members will deliberate on ratification next week.

I welcome the fact that the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and IBEC have recently ratified the Towards 2016 Review and Transitional Agreement, 2008-2009. This new Agreement provides us with an important framework for addressing the economic and social challenges which the country faces in the immediate period ahead.

At the same time, I appreciate the very real difficulties being faced by a sizeable number of firms in the construction sector in the current climate.

The CIF have always been strong supporters of the national pay agreements process. I believe that they recognise the value of this approach in order to:

- maintain the orderly conduct of industrial relations in the sector;
- underpin the management of change within the industry, particularly in the current volatile times; and
- recognise the very particular difficulties being faced by individual firms.

I firmly believe that the Agreement reached represents a sensible compromise and the best terms that could be achieved in current circumstances. Most importantly, it will serve as a welcome boost for investors and workers alike — providing certainty in pay determination, safe-guarding employment and helping to preserve the industrial peace that has been a hallmark of social partnership and which was benefited our economy significantly over the last 21 years.

I am hopeful that all concerned will recognise the clear benefits of the Agreement — for themselves, their organisation and for the country as a whole — and will proceed to ratify the Agreement.

Prompt Payment System.

13. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment her plans to promote a culture of paying bills quicker in the small and medium enterprise sector, if she will take a lead on this issue; if she will ensure that her Department

will commit to better the payment time of 30 days under the European Communities (Late Payment in Commercial Transactions) Regulations, 2002 to 15 days of receipt of invoice; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41944/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan):

Payment terms in commercial transactions are determined by the parties concerned and the responsibility for the collection of those payments and general credit control rests with the selling enterprise.

As the Deputy has mentioned, the issue of late payments in commercial transactions is addressed by the European Communities (Late Payment in Commercial Transactions) Regulations 2002 (S.I. No. 388 of 2002).

In accordance with these Regulations, it is an implied term of every commercial transaction that where a purchaser does not pay for goods or services by the relevant payment date, the supplier shall be entitled to interest (“late payment interest”) on the amount outstanding. Interest shall apply until such time as payment is made by the purchaser. The current interest rate applicable is 11.00% per annum or 0.0301% per day. This rate is set as at 1st January and 1st July each year at a rate of 7 percentage points above the European Central Bank interest rate on its most recent main re-financing operation. In the absence of any agreed payment date between the parties, late payment interest falls due after 30 days has elapsed. The 2002 Regulations also provide for compensation for debt recovery costs. Greater use of these provisions would assist in achieving earlier payments.

In addition, under the Regulations the use of terms that are grossly unfair may be unenforceable and such terms may be challenged in Court on the basis of criteria specified in the Regulations. Organisations representing small and medium sized enterprises may challenge any terms that they feel breach the Regulations. It is open to any such organization to pursue this operation. However, I understand that this provision of the Regulations has not been availed of to date.

The EU Commission has indicated that it will be proposing amendments to the Late Payments Directive early in 2009. Their intention is to simplify the provisions of the original Directive and to clarify issues such as interest payments, with a view to discouraging late payers and guaranteeing that SMEs are paid within time for all commercial transactions. Ireland will work actively in negotiating amendments.

Government Departments have a role to play in leading by example. There already is transparency in Departments’ paying practices with each Department required to report on late payment interest incurred by it during the year by way of a specific note to its Annual Report. I am not aware that payments by Departments, including my own, are a cause of particular concern and I would welcome specific problems relating to late payments by Departments being brought to my attention.

Questions Nos. 14 and 15 answered with Question No. 6.

EU Funding.

16. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if her Department collects, collates and analyses statistics on redundancies and job losses in such a way that enables it to make an application for funding from the European Globalisation Fund; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41276/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): Employers have a statutory obligation under the Protection of Employment Acts

[Deputy Billy Kelleher.]

1977 to 2007 to inform the Redundancy Payments Division of my Department at least 30 days in advance of all proposed redundancies of 5 or more workers. Information on these collective redundancies is then collated and analysed by the Employment and Training Strategy Unit of my Department in order to establish whether the necessary eligibility criteria of the European Globalisation Fund have been triggered and whether or not the basis exists on which to make a claim on that Fund.

The European Globalisation Fund was established under Regulation (EC) No. 1927/2006 to assist workers in EU Member States made redundant as a direct consequence of major structural changes in world trade patterns. The Fund provides up to €500m annually in supports and has been in operation since January 2007. Strict eligibility criteria and conditions apply in seeking up to 50% matching financial assistance for active labour market interventions under the Fund which are complementary to existing national measures. These criteria include the requirement that at least 1,000 redundancies take place either over a period of 4 months in the case of a single enterprise, including its suppliers or downstream producers, or the same number of redundancies over a period of 9 months in the case of small or medium size enterprises in a particular sector. To date, the relevant criteria have not been met and hence no application has been made.

The President of the European Commission recently announced that the Fund may be modified in the light of the present economic situation and would form part of the programme to revitalize the European economy to be announced later this month. Ireland continues to closely monitor the level of collective redundancies nationally in the context of assessing whether the strict criteria currently applicable under the Fund, or any potential future modification thereof, would be reached enabling an application to be made.

Appointments to State Boards.

17. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the appointments she has made to boards, agencies or other bodies operating under the aegis of her Department since 7 May 2008; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41766/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan):
Enterprise Ireland

I appointed Mr Hugh Cooney as Chairperson of the Board of Enterprise Ireland with effect from 1 November 2008.

Shannon Development

Two appointments were made to the Board of Shannon Development in May 2008. Dr Roger Downer was reappointed and Dr Richard Sadlier was appointed on 7 May 2008.

Science Foundation Ireland

Three appointments were made to the Board of Science Foundation Ireland on 25th July 2008. I re-appointed Dr Pat Fottrell as Chairperson of the SFI Board and reappointed Dr Jim Mountjoy and Mr Peter Mac Donagh as members of the Board.

FÁS

I appointed Mr Dermot Nolan to the Board of FÁS on 10 October 2008

Expert Group on Future Skills Needs

I appointed Mr Tony O'Donoghue to the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs on 10 June 2008

Management Development Council

I appointed Ms Gail Warrick to the Management Development Council on 30 July 2008

Labour Court

I reappointed Mr Peter D.R. Murphy as a member of the Labour Court on 12 September 2008.

Grocery Industry.

18. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the extent to which grocery prices have fallen since she came into office; if she is satisfied with the measures taken to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41288/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Grocery prices and their impact on household budgets have been the subject of much debate and concern for some time not just in this country but throughout the world.

Whereas food inflation in Ireland remained relatively low throughout most of this decade, prices for a wide range of staple food items began to increase significantly from the early part of 2007. Annual food inflation continued to rise and reached a peak of 9.3% in March this year as per the published returns of the Central Statistics Office. The annual rate of food inflation at the time of my appointment as Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment in May 2008 was 7.8%. The annual rate has since decreased to 4.6% as of October and indeed food prices, as measured by the Central Statistics Office, have fallen in each of the last five months.

Whilst much of the inflation experienced in the area of food prices was due to global factors including demand, economic and climatic reasons, consumers can also influence prices in the marketplace by actively seeking out the best value for money. The National Consumer Agency, through its well publicised Grocery Comparison Surveys, has provided consumers with the necessary price information to enable them to seek out best value. Research commissioned by the Agency shows that a significant number of consumers are changing their shopping habits to achieve value for money, which undoubtedly is having an effect on prices in the marketplace.

Whilst I very much welcome the recent reductions in food prices, I am conscious of the impact of grocery expenditure on the average household budget. It is important, therefore, that the importance of achieving value remains in the forefront of this debate and that through the ongoing work of the National Consumer Agency in conjunction with continued discernment by consumers themselves, recent progress in tackling food inflation can continue.

Ministerial Staff.

19. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number, in respect of her and of her Ministers of State, the constituency office and the private office, of staff employed, broken down by grade and the cost of each office in terms of salaries and expenses for 2007 and the projected costs for 2008; if there will be a reduction in staffing levels in these offices, arising from the requirement to effect a 3% reduction in salary costs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41753/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The tables below outline the number of staff by grade in my private and constituency office and in those of each Minister of State within my Department. The cost for 2007 of each such office in terms of salary, overtime and expenses are included together with the costs for 2008 to date. It should be noted that the Office of the Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation was created on 20th June 2007 and, therefore, the figures do not represent a full calendar year.

Office of the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise Trade & Employment

Private Office	Constituency Office
2 Special Advisers	1 Executive Officer
1 Press Adviser	2.8 Clerical Officers
1 Private Secretary (HEO)	1 Personal Assistant
2 Executive Officers	1 Personal Secretary
5 Clerical Officers	1 Temp. Clerical Officer

Year	Salaries, Wages and Allowances*	Travel & Subsistence**	Ministerial Allowance	Miscellaneous	Total
2007	1,099,700.40	58,053.27	11,161.20	6,110.78	1,175,025.65
2008 to date	1,138,831.55	26,355.90	14,000.46	9,378.64	1,188,566.55

Office of the Minister for Labour Affairs

Private Office	Constituency Office
1 Private Secretary (HEO)	1 Personal Assistant
1 Executive Officer	1 Personal Secretary
3 Clerical Officers	2 Civilian Drivers

Year	Salaries, Wages and Allowances*	Travel & Subsistence**	Ministerial Allowance	Miscellaneous	Total
2007	333,209.14	81,433.54	12,001.36	846.95	427,490.99
2008 to date	324,569.54	91,379.45	10,142.20	3,633.18	429,724.37

Office of the Minister for Trade & Commerce

Private Office	Constituency Office
1 Private Secretary (HEO)	1 Personal Assistant
1 Staff Officer	1 Personal Secretary
1 Clerical Officer	2 Secretarial Assistants
	1 Clerical Officer
	2 Civilian Drivers

Year	Salaries, Wages and Allowances*	Travel & Subsistence**	Ministerial Allowance	Miscellaneous	Total
2007	404,894.49	114,483.63	15,213.00	2,062.22	536,653.34
2008 to date	462,390.03	169,112.24	11,156.20	2,594.35	645,252.82

Office of the Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation

Private Office	Constituency Office
1 Private Secretary (AO) 1 Executive Officer 1 Clerical Officers	1 Special Adviser 1 Personal Assistant 2 Personal Secretaries (each staff member on a 0.5% worksharing basis) 1 Clerical Officer 2 Civilian Drivers

Year	Salaries, Wages and Allowances*	Travel & Subsistence**	Ministerial Allowance	Miscellaneous	Total
20th June 2007	176,870.95	46,535.60	4,056.80	790.66	228,254.01
2008 to date	481,304.52	59,964.24	11,156.20	4,766.45	557,191.41

*The totals provided for Salaries, Wages and Allowances include Overtime and Employer's PRSI.

**The totals provided for Travel and Subsistence Expenses include the cost of flights invoiced directly to the Department.

There are also two additional Ministers of State who have responsibility in this Department, however, they do not have offices in the Department. The Ministers concerned are:

- Minister for Equality, Disability and Mental Health at the Department of Health and Children.
- Minister for Lifelong Learning at the Department of Education and Science.

Measures to effect a 3% reduction in salary costs have been agreed as part of the estimates process and this includes the suppression of a number of posts which will be spread across the Department.

Labour Inspectorate.

20. **Deputy Liz McManus** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number of labour inspectors employed by the National Employment Rights Authority; the number of labour inspectors available for assignment on normal duties; the number of labour inspectors in training following recruitment; the status of the recruitment campaign to increase the Labour Inspectorate to 90 inspectors; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41772/08]

22. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number of inspections carried out by the Labour Inspectorate to ensure that the minimum wage was being paid in 2006, 2007 and to date in 2008; the number of breaches detected; the number of prosecutions initiated; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41774/08]

23. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number of workplace inspections carried out by the Labour Inspectorate to date in 2008; the way this compares with the same period in 2007; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41773/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): I propose to take Questions Nos. 20, 22 and 23 together.

In accordance with commitments given under *Towards 2016*, the Social Partnership Agreement, the number of Inspectors in the National Employment Rights Authority was scheduled to increase from 31 to 90. Competitions were held in 2007 for the recruitment of the additional fifty-nine Inspectors and, fifty-nine inspectors have been assigned to NERA from these competitions.

All new inspectors have completed the NERA Inspection Services Introductory Training Programme and are currently undertaking further training, including on-the-job training with experienced inspectors. This involves working with experienced Inspectors in conducting inspections and other associated enquiries at places of work with a view to determining compliance with certain employment rights legislation.

Ten Inspectors have left NERA over the past year as a result of promotion or internal and external Departmental transfers and re-assignments. As a result, the total number of NERA Inspectors currently stands at eighty.

Competitive selection processes will take place later this month to fill existing vacancies and future vacancies as they arise.

The number of employment rights inspections/visits/calls undertaken by the Inspection Services of the National Employment Rights Authority in the year to the end of October 2008 was 25,155. During the same period in 2007 some 11,380 inspections/visits/calls were undertaken.

Of the 25,155 inspections/visits/calls to the end of October 2008, breaches were detected in 4,212 cases. In the same period in 2007, breaches were detected in 2,037 cases. To the end of October 2008, €2.05 million in underpayments of wages due to employees has been recovered by NERA Inspection Services compared to €2.25 million for the corresponding period in 2007.

The outputs and outcomes to date in 2008 reflect the focused and targeted activities being undertaken by NERA in relation to employment rights promotion and compliance and the increased number of NERA Inspectors.

The number of inspections carried out in relation to the National Minimum Wage Act, 2000 during which breaches of the Act were detected and the number of prosecutions initiated is as follows:

- in 2006: 2,002 inspections were undertaken; in 104 cases breaches were detected and in one case a prosecution was initiated.
- in 2007: 1,942 inspections were undertaken; in 192 cases breaches were detected and no prosecutions were initiated.
- in 2008: 2,824 inspections have been undertaken to 31st October; in 248 cases breaches have been detected and in two cases prosecutions have been initiated.

In one case, at the direction of the District Judge, at the commencement of the trial, the parties entered into a compromise agreement and the prosecution was withdrawn.

NERA undertook a targeted campaign, which focused on compliance with the National Minimum Wage Act 2000, during the period 14 April to 11 May 2008. Such campaigns, accompanied by awareness and promotional activities, are a significant feature of the National Employment Rights Authority's employment rights compliance and information strategy.

The primary role of the National Employment Rights Authority, in the case of breaches of employment rights legislation, is to seek compliance and rectification of any breaches identified, including redress for the employees concerned and payment of any arrears due to those employees.

It should be noted that in the majority of cases, employers rectify breaches of employment law and pay underpayments of wages due to employees without prosecution. However, the National Employment Rights Authority reserves the right to initiate prosecutions in respect of breaches of certain employment legislation.

The Deputy should be aware that Rights Commissioners of the Labour Relations Commission also hear complaints concerning breaches of the National Minimum Wage Act 2000.

Foreign Direct Investment.

21. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment her plans to make contact with the incoming administration in the United States in view of reports that proposed tax changes may impact on US investment here and the possible consequences for job creation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41750/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): My Department and I are always mindful of potential international developments that could adversely effect foreign direct investment here. In that respect there is continuous liaison with the business community, through domestic and overseas channels, to monitor any potential changes. I am not aware of any concrete proposals to make changes to US tax legislation. While there has been some speculation in the context of the Presidential election that any new Administration could seek to make changes to the tax code, it is merely speculation. I and other Government Colleagues will be actively engaged in these matters with the new administration.

I do not need to remind the House of the importance of US investment to the Irish economy which has been valued by successive Irish Governments over the last forty years. Irish investment in the US is also of significance. In that context it would be remiss of me not to be mindful of the sensitivity of investment decisions to the overall economic environment that would prevail including the tax environment that could undermine such decisions

Questions Nos. 22 and 23 answered with Question No. 20.

Export Levels.

24. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the work being undertaken by her Department to increase the number of exports made by Irish owned companies. [41955/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy John McGuinness): The Irish Government is strongly supportive of Irish exporting firms working to increase their level of exports on world markets. My Department, through Enterprise Ireland, is active both nationally at the developmental local level and, through promotional activities carried out from a range of locations abroad, in assisting Irish indigenous companies to find new markets for their products and services and to increase their existing level of market share.

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Through its network of 32 international offices, Enterprise Ireland creates and implements successful strategies for market entry, development and growth in overseas markets. These activities include:

- Arranging access to international buyers and increasing in-market trade promotion activities,
- Increasing the number of overseas missions, raising the level of participation at trade shows and increasing the number and quality of incoming buyers,
- Seeking to ensure increased international media coverage of the range of product and service providers in Ireland and the benefits of doing business here,
- Continuing to increase the number of incubation centres in key overseas markets, thus providing a low cost market entry mechanism for company clients with strong potential.

In this work, close coordination is maintained with other agencies, such as An Bord Bia and with relevant non-governmental bodies. Enterprise Ireland is also assisted by our Irish Embassies abroad, in facilitating the development of export markets for Irish exporting companies.

Both myself and my colleague, the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Mary Coughlan T.D., have been active in leading trade missions organised by Enterprise Ireland. We will continue to do so, to both existing long-established markets, to the new EU Member States and also to Asia and other emerging markets, with a view to increasing the share of exports by Irish companies on the world market.

In January of this year, the then Taoiseach Mr. Bertie Ahern led a trade mission to South Africa. Last month, I accompanied Taoiseach Brian Cowen on a trade mission to China. A total of 94 companies participated in the China mission and it is estimated that new export sales of €65m were generated during that event.

Research by Forfás has established that in 2007 the value of exports by Irish owned manufacturing and internationally traded services companies, which are supported by Enterprise Ireland, was €11.8 billion, which represented an increase of 8% on the previous year.

Economic Competitiveness.

25. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment her plans to improve competitiveness in the manufacturing and service sectors here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41850/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Maintaining the competitiveness of the enterprise sector in Ireland is a priority issue for my Department and our development agencies. In order to sustain and grow the manufacturing sector, Irish based manufacturing enterprises will be encouraged and assisted to continue the progression to high value added sectors and activities, and continue to increase productivity through investments in human capital, technology and innovation. The productivity gains that flow from innovation are the new foundations for competitiveness. The Report of the High-Level Manufacturing Group, which was launched earlier this year, contains some 26 recommendations directed at key areas of innovation and productivity leading to transformational change, reskilling and management development which will ensure Irish manufacturers can continue to compete successfully on international markets and provide high value sustainable employment.

The Social Partners agreed, as part of the recently concluded review of Towards 2016, that a Manufacturing Forum should be established, in line with the recommendations of the High Level Group on Manufacturing. This matter will be progressed by my Department in consultation with the Dept. of the Taoiseach and the Social Partners.

We continue to be one of the world's leading service exporting countries and are currently ranked the 10th highest exporter of services in the world. In Sept 2008, I launched the report of the Services Strategy Group, "Catching the Wave: A Services Strategy for Ireland". This report sets out new policy proposals on how we can ensure the continued development and growth of Ireland's services sector and outlines how to maximise the future returns to the country from services activities in all enterprises, both current and potential. I believe that the implementation of these recommendations will enable Irish service companies to exploit new and exciting opportunities, such as eLearning, business and financial services, professional and consultancy services and others. My Department is working in conjunction with other Departments to progress the implementation of these recommendations.

We fully acknowledge the vital role that the services sector itself and the growing services element within manufacturing companies will play in Ireland's future economic performance. Yesterday I launched Enterprise Ireland's "Strategy for Internationally Traded Services" which sets out priority initiatives that Enterprise Ireland will focus on for the growth and development of the services sector with a view to increasing exports. Their Strategy will focus on maximizing the performance of companies that are already active on export markets, on encouraging companies that are currently only trading locally to expand their markets abroad, and on fostering a new breed of start-up services companies with exporting potential. Enterprise Ireland has analysed the needs of service companies and is responding by aligning its resources with these needs.

We are clearly focused on the needs of both manufacturing and the services sector and have the strategies in place to deliver growth, strengthened productivity and improved competitiveness.

Fuel Prices.

26. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment when she expects to receive the National Consumer Agency's report on petrol and diesel prices; the action she is empowered to take on foot of the report; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41286/08]

30. **Deputy Emmet Stagg** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment her views on recent EU figures which suggested that consumers are being charged up to 20% more for diesel and petrol; the steps she will take to ensure that consumers receive fair treatment in regard to petrol and diesel prices; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41758/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 26 and 30 together.

I am aware of the concerns expressed by a number of commentators in relation to the retail price of fuel products, such as petrol and diesel, and particularly that prices have not fallen commensurate with reductions in the wholesale price of oil. I am also aware of the findings of the Consumer Petroleum Price Products Survey published by the Energy and Transport Directorate General of the European Commission which showed that the average retail price of petrol and diesel in Ireland was significantly greater than the weighted average price for such products throughout the Euro 15 region. I would point out that the Commission's survey

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related to retail prices on 20th October, and that pump prices in Ireland have dropped significantly since then.

Notwithstanding these developments, Deputies will be aware that in September this year, I requested the National Consumer Agency to undertake a survey into the underlying reasons as to why pump prices for petrol and diesel have not fallen in line with the drop in the wholesale price of oil. I understand that the Agency's work in relation to this matter is well underway. As part of its work, the Agency will seek to benchmark movements in prices in Ireland against those in other EU countries and it will also seek to examine the frequency and the timeliness in which changes in the wholesale price are being passed on to consumers. The Agency has been conducting surveys of retail prices throughout the country, and is engaging in a series of meetings with the main distributors, the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources (D/CMNR) etc. I am advised that the Agency expects to finalise its report in the coming weeks.

Another factor which must be taken into account when looking at the underlying determinants behind retail fuel prices is exchange rate fluctuations and, in particular, the relative value of the Euro against the dollar. In this regard it is worthwhile to note that the Euro was trading at a high of \$1.599 on 15 July whereas it is now trading at \$1.266. This loss in value against the dollar will offset to some degree any benefits accruing.

Given the significance of recent developments in the wholesale oil market and the changes in value between the Euro and the dollar, I feel it is important that there should be greater transparency between the manner in which the retail price for fuel paid by consumers follows changes in the wholesale price and I look forward to receiving the National Consumer Agency's report on this matter.

Question No. 27 answered with Question No. 10.

Redundancy Levels.

28. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number of redundancies notified to her Department during 2007; the number notified to date in 2008; the way this compares with the same period in each year from 2002 to 2007; her views on the rapid increase in the number of redundancies; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41761/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): The table of figures below shows the actual number of employees who qualified for statutory redundancy lump sum payments on a year by year basis from January 2002 to end October 2008. This does not reflect those who lost their jobs having less than two years' service in an employment as this does not qualify for payment under the Redundancy Acts.

Analysis carried out previously by my Department compared the average annual level of redundancies for the period 2002-2006 as against the level of redundancies in the period 1995-2001. It was found that the level of redundancy had almost doubled and the cause may be attributed to two factors. Firstly, there were more people at work in the 2002-2006 period which accounted for 20% of the increase in the level of redundancies. Secondly, the risk of redundancy increased significantly in the second period and this accounted for 80% of the increase in the level of redundancy.

The increase in redundancies reflected in 2007 and, more particularly in the current year to date, indicate the considerable downturn being experienced in all of the major employment sectors of the economy and, in particular, in the construction sector. This Department will

continue to monitor the trends in the level of redundancies and report on any significant developments that may arise.

Actual Redundancies 2002-2008

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Actual	24,432	25,769	25,041	23,156	23,684	25,495	32,076
% Increase/Decrease on previous year	51.9%	5.5%	-2.8%	-7.5%	2.3%	7.5%	50.2%

Proposed Legislation.

29. **Deputy Kieran O'Donnell** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment when she will conclude her review of the Competition Act 2002; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41939/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): As part of an ongoing review of the 2002 Competition Act, submissions received on foot of a public consultation from a variety of interested parties are currently being considered by my officials. These submissions cover a range of issues, many of a technical nature.

The Deputy will also be aware that the Government recently indicated its intention to amend section 4 of the Act subject to consistency with EU competition law.

To give effect to the Government decision to merge the National Consumer Agency and the Competition Authority, I propose to bring forward legislation which will encompass the outcome of the review of the 2002 Act, the amendments to section 4 and the amalgamation of the two bodies.

Question No. 30 answered with Question No. 26.

Prompt Payments System.

31. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she has met with representatives of Irish Small Medium Enterprises to discuss the issue of the length of time small businesses are waiting to receive payments in respect of work carried out and goods delivered. [41953/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I have met with the Irish Small And Medium Enterprises Association (ISME) and also the Small Firms Association (SFA) as recently as last night to discuss their concerns on a range of issues impacting on small businesses as result of the current economic situation.

I am very much aware of the difficulties facing small firms in relation to access to credit finance and the impact of late payments on the sector. In this regard, I would refer the Deputy to my reply today to Question 41944/08 relating to the issue.

I am happy to continue to consult with ISME and SFA on all issues impacting on small businesses.

Decentralisation Programme.

32. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the revised arrangements for decentralisation of those bodies for which her Department has responsibility, arising from the Budget 2009 announcement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41752/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Minister for Finance, in his Budget 2009 address, announced that the proposed decentralisation of a number of bodies was being deferred pending a review in 2011. This impacts on five agencies under my remit viz. FÁS, Enterprise Ireland (EI), Health and Safety Authority (HSA), National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) and National Consumer Agency (NCA). Decisions on the timing of further work on these programmes are being deferred pending such a review in 2011 in light of budgetary developments.

In reaching its decision the Government has also taken into account the report of the Decentralisation Implementation Group (DIG) on the State Agency aspects of the programme together with the views of the Decentralisation Sub-Group of the SMI Implementation Group of Secretaries General.

As part of the Government's decentralisation programme, advance staff moves have taken place in relation to the Health and Safety Authority to Kilkenny and FÁS to Birr and staff in such locations will remain in place.

Finally, the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IAASA) has fully decentralised to Naas, Co Kildare.

FÁS Training Programmes.

33. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if additional FÁS training places are to be made available in the wake of her decision to cut jobseekers benefit from 15 to 12 months. [39486/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Matters relating to the payment of Jobseekers Benefit are the responsibility of the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

In response to the current labour market climate FÁS has devised a number of measures that are designed to increase the availability of training courses for those who are seeking employment.

FÁS has developed a Short Course Programme, which is targeted at the needs of those who have just become unemployed. The course is designed to enable this group to re-enter the labour market in another sector or job role. Successful completion of the training leads to certification at a minor level, which through further training can be developed into a major award. It is hoped that this initiative will provide up to 6000 places during 2009.

FÁS has also established a training fund to enable it to provide a timely response to identified training/re-training needs for low skilled and redundant craft workers from the construction sector. It is intended that this will enable individuals to secure a speedy return to work, or where this cannot be secured, to provide relevant up-skilling opportunities in order that those affected can secure employment in alternative sectors. FÁS is also focusing on providing retraining opportunities for redundant construction workers in emerging areas such as the installation of energy efficient and renewable technologies, environmental activity, and compliance and regulatory work.

For those who are on the live register and/or in receipt of a Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA) payment, FÁS will be providing evening classes without payment of a fee. This intervention is to provide up to 16,000 additional places in 2009 aimed at meeting the needs of those who were recently active in the workforce and who now find themselves unemployed. It will give them an opportunity to add to their skills set, build on their existing level of employability and allow them to re-enter the labour market in another sector or job role. The courses

will be certified at a minor level and will also, through further training, be convertible to a higher award status, which will provide further opportunities in the context of lifelong learning.

As well as the initiatives just outlined, FÁS also plans to expand its range and capacity of On-Line and Blended Learning (On-Line with workshops) in 2009 by 8,000 places.

Employment Rights.

34. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the progress made with regard to the implementation of the Temporary Agency Workers Directive, agreed at the Council of Ministers meeting on 23 May 2008; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41759/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): The European Parliament by way of its legislative Resolution, of 22nd October 2008, have approved the Council common position for adopting a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on temporary agency work. I welcome the fact that the Parliament, in Plenary, accepted the Council common position without amendment. This matter will now be scheduled for the next meeting of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council, on 17th. December, when consideration of this dossier will be concluded. This will conclude the final element in the process of its adoption, and publication in the Official Journal.

Under the terms of the agreement reached by EU Ministers and approved by Parliament, there will be a three year period in which Member States will be required to transpose the Directive, following its adoption, into national legislation. The Deputy will recall that following the welcome developments in the European Parliament, I invited the Social Partners to discussions with my Department. These discussions will aim at establishing a framework within which agency workers in Ireland would achieve equal treatment within an agreed timeframe. The proposed Review and Transitional Agreement 2008-2009 concluded by the Social Partners contains a commitment to developing such a framework.

Regulatory Reform.

35. **Deputy Seymour Crawford** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the steps she has taken to alleviate some of the red tape and form filling related to the small business sector; her views on whether without this sector the employment situation would be worse; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41729/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Small Business Forum Report, published in May 2006, outlined the contribution of the small business sector and made a range of recommendations for its support. Government has progressively implemented these recommendations to the benefit of small businesses.

The Small Business Forum Report and more recently in the EU Commission's Communication on a Small Business Act identified the need to provide a more consistent and clear regulatory environment on the basis of better regulation principles continuing to cut red tape and by better adapting administrative rules to the needs of small business.

The Government's commitment is to reduce the administrative burden on Irish business by 25% by 2012 and this demanding target is a key priority.

The High Level Group on Business Regulation is tasked with identifying where legislation has imposed an administrative burden, or "red tape", on business and with recommending ways to reduce that burden, without undermining the policy objectives behind the regulation. The

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work of the Group is focused on concrete measures in specific policy areas, including taxation, statistics, environment, health and safety, employment and company law. The first report of the Group sets out a number of instances where procedures have been simplified, making it easier for business to deal with Government, for example:

- e-filing of annual returns to the Companies Registration Office;
- on-line access to tax clearance certificates for Government contracts;
- increased exemption thresholds for VAT registration; and
- higher thresholds, exempting small businesses from having to conduct a statutory audit.

In its 2008 Report the Group identified over €20m in cost savings to business as a result of simplified administrative procedures such as cutting out paperwork, revising the rules for small businesses and making much better use of on-line services.

In addition, further changes to reduce the burden on business are expected in the procedures surrounding waste collection permits, road haulage permits and employment permits.

In addition to the work of the High Level Group, my Department has put in place a process across all Departments that will measure the administrative cost of red tape on business arising from domestic legislation.

As in all the other countries that have done this, it will take about a year and a half to complete the measurement process. In line with the recommendation of the Business Regulation Forum we are adopting a prioritised approach. Initially, all Government Departments are required to list the Information Obligations that their regulations impose on business. From that listing, Departments will assess, in consultation with business, which requirements are the most burdensome. They will then measure the actual cost to business of the most burdensome requirements. At that point the most appropriate approach to achieving the Government target to reduce the administrative burden of domestic regulation on business by 25% by 2012 will be determined.

With regard to future regulations, the Government has agreed that all Departments should measure the administrative cost on business and specifically examine the impact on small business.

Small businesses make a major contribution to jobs and wealth creation throughout all economies. In Ireland, 97% of all businesses are small (up to 50 employees) and employ some 800,000 people across 250,000 enterprises. At EU level, there are some 23 million Small and Medium Enterprises. These figures confirm how crucial small industry is to our employment and economic development. The Government is committed to supporting indigenous companies through maintaining a positive business environment and through particular interventions from the State development agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, FÁS and the County and City Enterprise Boards. The allocations in my Department's Estimates for 2009 will ensure that we continue to build on these supports for the future.

Equal Opportunities Employment.

36. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the average industrial wage earned by a male worker and female worker respectively; the average male earnings and average female earnings generally; if she plans additional measures to help bridge the male/female earnings gap; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41775/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): Data from the CSO quarterly industrial survey shows that average industrial earnings per hour for male industrial workers on adult rates in June 2007 was €16.62. For female industrial workers the average rate was €12.73.

From the CSO National Employment Survey for October 2006, average hourly earnings were €20.50 for males and €17.67 for females. These latter figures cover the entire economy in October 2006 (excluding employees in agriculture, forestry and fishing).

Addressing the factors behind the gender pay gap is a multifaceted task involving a number of Government Departments and agencies as outlined in the National Women's Strategy, 2007-2016 launched last year by the then Taoiseach. Overall coordination of the National Women's Strategy is led by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

The introduction of the national minimum wage in 2000 has had a positive impact on women who previously were more likely to have received very low wages in sectors which were predominantly female.

My Department is responsible for chairing and providing the secretariat for the National Framework Committee on Work/life Balance Policies. This Committee, which was established under the social partnership process, comprises representatives from IBEC, ICTU, the Equality Authority and a number of Government Departments. The Committee has undertaken and continues to undertake a range of activities to raise awareness and encourage the provision of work/life balance at the level of the enterprise, including the provision of financial assistance to organisations, information dissemination activities, seminars, research etc. These activities may help encourage greater female participation in the workforce, including at senior levels which in turn can help narrow the earnings gap.

Similarly, "Expanding the Workforce", which is run by FÁS, is aimed at proactively encouraging women to return to work. The initiative facilitates women returnees by ensuring that training is provided in a flexible manner and is tailored to meet business requirements and skills needs of employers.

Job Creation.

37. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment her plans for job creation in Limerick in view of the announcement of the loss of 700 jobs at a plant (details supplied) and the loss of a further 100 jobs at another plant. [41958/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I am very conscious of the implications of job losses in Limerick and the entire Mid West area. In many cases such company announcements are a result of global conditions and/or global decisions, over which we have little or no influence.

While the news of job losses in both Dell and Irish Express Cargo is most disappointing, it is important to be aware of plans of many companies to reinvest in the area. As per the 2007 Employment Survey, Limerick currently has 39 IDA grant-aided companies employing approximately 8,960 employees. IDA Ireland has since September 2006 announced nine new projects for Limerick and the Mid West region with a job potential of over 1,000 people at full operation. For its part, Enterprise Ireland has a client base of 269 companies employing some 7,000 people in County Limerick. EI provides a range of supports and incentives to those companies to maintain and expand their businesses.

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IDA Ireland's strategy for the Mid West Region and Limerick is to win new FDI in innovation driven, high value, high skills sectors; to work with the existing company base to expand their presence by increasing the number and scale of functions being carried out; to promote balanced regional development and to influence the provision of modern property solutions with supporting infrastructure.

The investment projects which IDA are seeking to attract to Limerick today are much different to those of the past, relying principally on the skills of its people and on a strong business and educational infrastructure to pull investment to the county. IDA's strategy is to re-position the region as a hotspot for knowledge based industry, while focusing on marketing Limerick as a key location for investment by building on the strengths already evident in the county. To support this strategy, IDA Ireland works closely with educational institutions in the region to develop the skill sets necessary to attract high value-added employment to the county. IDA is also working closely with the existing base of employers to encourage additional investment, particularly in activities such as R&D, customer support and back office functions. IDA works closely with Shannon Development in the provision of suitable property solutions for potential investors to the county.

In cases where downsizing and closures occur, the State development agencies IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Shannon Development, FÁS and the County Enterprise Boards provide a co-ordinated and cohesive support response.

Departmental Agencies.

38. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the proposals for rationalisation of State agencies for which her Department has responsibility, arising from the Budget 2009 announcement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41751/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): As the Deputy is aware, my colleague the Minister for Finance announced during his Budget 2009 address that the Competition Authority and the National Consumer Agency would be merged.

This will bring about improved co-ordination and synergies in the interests of consumer and business alike. The merger of both bodies also coincides with the review already underway of Ireland's competition law code which will ensure that Irish competition law, in so far as is possible, continues to be applied in a pragmatic way, reflecting the realities facing both the consumer and business, while protecting competition within relevant markets.

The issue of other possible rationalisations is still under review.

Consumer Protection.

39. **Deputy Michael D. Higgins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number of on-the-spot fines for breaches of consumer law imposed to date under the terms of the Consumer Protection (Fixed Payment Notice) Regulations 2007; the type of breaches in each case; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41777/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Consumer Protection (Fixed Payment Notice) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 689 of 2007) came into effect on 13 October 2007. Responsibility for enforcement of these Regulations is a matter for the National Consumer Agency and I have no direct function in the matter.

I am informed that to date 40 notices have been served by Authorised Officers of the National Consumer Agency. Thirty-nine of these notices were issued in respect of alleged offences under the European Communities (Requirement to Indicate Product Prices) Regulations 2002 (S.I. No. 639 of 2002) and one was issued in respect of an alleged offence under the Retail Price (Beverages in Licensed Premises) Display Order 1999 (S.I. No. 263 of 1999).

Departmental Expenditure.

40. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she will make a statement on her Department's Estimate for 2009; and the main areas where savings will be made. [41754/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): My Department's Estimate for 2009 amounts to €1.569 billion (gross) in Exchequer funding. A further €382 million is being made available to my Department from the National Training Fund, giving me a total budget of €1.951 billion (gross) for 2009. This represents a reduction of €47.2 million, or 2%, on the 2008 allocation.

Appropriations in Aid for my Department in 2009 are estimated at just over €70 million. This represents a reduction of €25.4 million compared to the 2008 Estimate and is largely due a reduction in the level of receipts from the European Social Fund under the current Structural Fund programmes.

Within the allocation available to me for 2009, I am prioritising spending to stimulate the productive capacity of the economy, while at the same time providing supports to those who are impacted by the changing labour market conditions. Thus, my Estimate includes an increase in funding of €8.4 million, or 3%, for science, technology and innovation programmes; an increase of just under €3 million, or 9%, for small business support through the County and City Enterprise Boards; an increase of €10.5 million, or 2%, for FÁS Employment programmes; and an increase of €9.5 million, or 5%, from the National Training Fund for FÁS's training programmes for the unemployed.

For the most part, where reductions in spending were necessary to meet the Government's budgetary targets, they were made in areas where demand for services was reducing, or where there was a downward trend in expenditure in the last twelve to eighteen months.

Thus, the allocation from the National Training Fund for FÁS's training programmes for people in employment has been reduced by €35 million, or 20%, for 2009, mainly reflecting the reduced demand for new apprenticeship places. Some of this reduction in funding has been reallocated to training programmes for the unemployed, including measures to assist redundant apprentices. FÁS's Capital expenditure has been reduced by €6 million compared to the 2008 Estimate. Other Capital savings have been realised in relation to grants paid by the industrial development agencies, based on recent trends in expenditure and demand.

Reductions have also been made in the administrative costs my Department and most of its Offices and agencies. My Department's Administrative Budget has been reduced by €2.1 million, or 3%, compared to 2008. The administrative savings across the Department, its Offices and agencies include a 4% payroll cut in real terms, after taking account of the carry-over cost of Towards 2016 increases paid in 2008 and the fact that no additional funding is being provided to cover the cost of increases which will become payable from 1 September 2009. Consultancy savings will amount to at least €3.1 million in 2009, while advertising/PR savings will amount to a minimum of €5.4 million. Other savings in my Department's allocation can be identified in the 2009 Estimates published in parallel with the 2009 Budget.

National Employment Rights Authority.

41. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment when the National Employment Rights Authority will be established on a statutory basis; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41767/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): Significant progress is being made on delivering the commitments agreed in Towards 2016 and, in this regard, the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) was established on an interim basis in February 2007, pending drafting and enactment of legislation, to undertake greater levels of employment law compliance activities. The Employment Law Compliance Bill was initiated in this House on 13th March 2008. Part 2 of the Bill provides for the establishment of the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) on a statutory footing.

The Bill is a substantial and quite complex piece of legislation, and in its final form will provide for necessary amendments to over 30 separate existing enactments from 1946 onwards. Since publication of the Bill, work has been continuing including further drafting of provisions, legal clarification of certain issues and preparation of schedules of amendments to existing employment law.

In addition, and further to the Transitional Agreement under Towards 2016 concluded in September last, discussions have taken place with a number of stakeholders with a view to enforcing the provisions of the bill. Discussions are also taking place with the Office of the Attorney General on any remaining amendments and draft provisions. The intention is to have all outstanding work on the Bill completed without delay so that the Bill can proceed to Second Stage in the current Dáil term.

The National Employment Rights Authority will be established one month after the Employment Law Compliance Bill 2008 is signed into law by the President.

Grocery Industry.

42. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she has received a report from the Competition Authority following its request to the Authority to monitor the operation of the grocery trade on an ongoing basis; when she expects to receive the report; when she expects to introduce the required legislation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41762/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Following the repeal of the Restrictive Practices (Groceries) Order 1987 in March 2006, the Competition Authority was requested to review and monitor developments in the grocery sector in light of the new regulatory environment.

As I have previously indicated to the Dáil, the Competition Authority presented two reports in March this year, as part of the Grocery Monitor Project. The first report, A Description of the Structure and Operation of Grocery Retailing and Wholesaling in Ireland: 2001 to 2006 provides a description of the market structure at the wholesale and retail levels of the Irish grocery sector. The second report is entitled Price Trends in the Irish Retail Grocery Sector: A Description of the Evolution of Retail Grocery Prices between 2001 and 2007. In this report, the Competition Authority has considered the impact of the removal of the Groceries Order by examining the evolution of the aggregate retail grocery price trends since 2001 by analysis of price data published by the CSO. These reports were noted by Government in April and were published by the Authority shortly thereafter.

At that stage, the Authority indicated its intention to publish a third Report examining the retail planning system as it applies to the retail grocery sector. Following the submission of that Report to me, I brought it to Government in July and this third Report, 'Retail Planning System as applied to the Grocery Sector 2001-2007', was published by the Authority on 10 September 2008. This report identifies a number of features of the retail planning system that affect competition in the grocery sector. It contains seven recommendations aimed at promoting competition in grocery retailing in Ireland. These recommendations are addressed to my colleague the Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Mr John Gormley, who has indicated his intention to initiate a review of the retail planning guidelines in 2009.

The Authority's Reports do not call for changes to legislation which fall within my area of responsibility and I have no plans to introduce legislation in this area.

I would like to advise the Deputy that the three Reports are available on the Authority's website www.tca.ie.

Workplace Accidents.

43. **Deputy Brian O'Shea** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number of workplace accidents and of workplace fatalities recorded to date in 2008; the way this compares with the same period in each year from 2002; if she has satisfied herself that all accidents are reported; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41770/08]

51. **Deputy Brian O'Shea** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment her views on the increase in the number of deaths recorded in workplace accidents in the construction sector during 2007; her proposals to ensure a reduction in the number of construction accidents and deaths; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41769/08]

52. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment her views on the 34% increase in the number of deaths recorded in workplace accidents during 2007; her proposals to ensure a reduction in the number of workplace accidents and deaths; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41768/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): I propose to take Questions Nos. 43, 51 and 52 together.

The number of deaths recorded in workplace accidents during 2007 was 67 compared to 51 in 2006 with a considerable amount of this increase being accounted for by a number of fishing accidents.

Of the 67 fatalities in the year 2007, 18 occurred in the construction sector. This was an increase of five fatal accidents on the 2006 figure. The construction sector ranked third in relation to fatality rates, at 5 per 100,000 workers, in 2007. This figure is higher than the rate of 4.3 fatalities per 100,000 workers in 2006 (the lowest recorded rate for the sector) but maintains the general downward trend in the fatality rate seen since 2002.

There have been 52 workplace deaths reported to the Authority so far in 2008 (as at 17.11.08). For the first ten months of this year, there were 50 workplace deaths. For the first ten months of previous years, the figures are: 60 in 2007, 44 in 2006, 65 in 2005, 46 in 2004, 60 in 2003, 47 in 2002.

Construction and agriculture are consistently the highest risk sectors in which to work, based on the number of fatalities. Non-fatal accidents, resulting in absence of more than three days from normal work following the accident, are required to be reported to the Authority. There have been 5,895 non-fatal accidents reported to the Authority so far in 2008 (as at 17.11.08).

[Deputy Billy Kelleher.]

There were 7,757 non-fatal work related accidents reported to the Health and Safety Authority in 2007. This compares with nearly 8,000 for 2006, 8,104 for 2005, 8,453 for 2004, 6,622 for 2003, and 7,746 for 2002. I am not aware that the Authority has come across evidence which suggests under reporting of workplace accidents resulting in fatalities.

The Authority is carrying out a programme of 17,500 targeted and random workplace inspections in 2008. The inspection programme is targeted on the basis of risk, relevant accident triggers, levels of compliance and specific identified workplace trends. In relation to the construction sector, I am informed that the Authority has carried out over 6,000 construction inspections to date in 2008. Also, it continues to implement the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2006 and the Safe System of Work Plan (SSWP).

Recognising the two highest risk areas, the HSA has a particular focus on the agricultural and construction sectors. Earlier this year, I formally launched the Construction Safety Partnership Plan. On the agriculture side, I attended and addressed the first All Island Farm Safety Conference in Monaghan in June of this year. This conference was co-hosted by the Health and Safety Authority along with the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI).

I have encouraged the Authority to continue and develop its partnership with Teagasc and to follow through on the development and distribution of the Farm Safety Code of Practice which was distributed to 160,000 farm households in December 2006.

Safe workplaces can ultimately only be delivered by those who work in them. Day to day responsibility for safety at work rests on the shoulders of employers and employees. The Health and Safety Authority in carrying out its inspection function spends a lot of its time advising as to safety at work and safe systems of work. In general, this advice is well received and only where there is a failure to comply with the Authority's advice or a real and immediate threat to health and safety does the Authority commence enforcement procedures.

The Authority, also in its advocacy role, publishes guidelines, codes of practice and other advice on safety on a regular basis as well as organising sectoral seminars or conferences to promote the occupational safety and health message. These activities, as well as the information on the Authority's website, should be heeded by all those in the workplace in order to improve our safety record.

Job Creation.

44. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the discussions that are taking place between Enterprise Ireland or the Industrial Development Authority and prospective employers wishing to create jobs in County Roscommon; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41740/08]

47. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the discussions that are taking place between Enterprise Ireland or the Industrial Development Authority and perspective employers wishing to create jobs in County Leitrim; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41741/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): I propose to take Questions Nos. 44 and 47 together.

The marketing of the regions for job creation and investment is a day-to-day operational matter for the development agencies and while I may give general policy directives to agencies, I am precluded under the Industrial Development Acts from giving directives regarding individual undertakings or from giving preference to one area over others.

A range of strategies, programmes and financial incentives are in place to promote economic development that will give rise to sustainable employment throughout Roscommon and Leitrim. The strategies and programmes of the development agencies are very much in line with the National Development Plan and the National Spatial Strategy, which have been specifically designed to foster economic development and job creation across the country as a whole.

Both Enterprise Ireland and IDA work closely together and, through their network of regional and overseas offices, interact with existing and prospective clients in an effort to identify opportunities for investment and growth and thereby job creation.

In addition, in counties Roscommon and Leitrim, as elsewhere, the training and enterprise development agencies (FÁS, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and the County Enterprise Board) are active participants in the County Development Boards and collaborate with other stakeholders in the counties to promote the infrastructure and environment for enterprise and job creation.

Proposed Legislation.

45. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the legislative measures she plans to introduce arising from the new social partnership agreement; the proposed timetable for each such piece of legislation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41779/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): I welcome the recent decisions by IBEC and ICTU to ratify the Towards 2016 Transitional Agreement reached between Government and the Social Partners.

The Agreement provides for a number of commitments, including some involving legislation, aimed at strengthening protections for employment standards, while also ensuring that Ireland continues to provide an excellent environment for business and job creation. Commitments that are likely to have a legislative dimension include: enactment of the Employment Law Compliance Bill; the development of a national framework on the employment and rights of temporary agency workers, while prohibiting their use in the case of official strikes or lock outs; addressing the issue of employee representation and appropriate legislative framework; prohibition of the victimisation of employees engaged in trade union activities and of the incentivisation of non-membership of trade unions; and transposition of the optional pension provisions of the Transfer of Undertakings Directive.

I look forward to working with the Social Partners and my Ministerial colleagues in making speedy progress on the commitments entered into under this Agreement, including those requiring legislative enactment. It is difficult to be specific about timetables for legislation as this is primarily a matter for the House and for the Seanad and is also influenced by the availability of legal advisory and parliamentary drafting resources which are faced with ever increasing competing demands. However, the Deputy may be assured that no effort will be spared to meet the commitments in the Transitional Agreement.

Tax Code.

46. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment her views on whether the 0.5% increase in VAT will affect consumer spending in any way in the next 12 months. [41952/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The increase in the standard rate of VAT from 21% to 21.5% was announced by my colleague the

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Minister for Finance in his recent budget statement. Responsibility in relation to taxation matters, including VAT, lies with the Minister for Finance and I have no direct function in the matter.

As the Deputy is aware, consumer price inflation is easing, which will help real disposable income. Accordingly, it is not anticipated that there will be any considerable negative impact from the increase in VAT on consumer spending.

Question No. 47 answered with Question No. 44.

Consumer Protection.

48. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the action being taken to implement the commitment in the Programme for Government that steps would be taken to ensure that prices of goods are labelled and transparent in order that the consumer is well informed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41776/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Price display law is covered by Orders made under the Prices Acts 1958 to 1972 and under the European Communities (Requirements to Indicate Product Prices) Regulations 2002, Statutory Instrument No. 639 of 2002. The various Price Display Orders made under the Prices Acts 1958 to 1972 cover Drinks Display in Licensed Premises, Hairdressing Services, Petrol and Diesel and Restaurants. The European Communities (Requirements to Indicate Product Prices) Regulations 2002 require retailers to display the selling and, where appropriate, the unit price (the price per litre or kilo) for all products covered by the scope of the Regulations. The Commission will be reviewing the Directive upon which these Regulations are based and I will support measures to enhance the information to be made available to consumers. This review is part of the general review of the Consumer Acquis.

The National Consumer Agency whose function it is to enforce consumer laws, regularly undertakes surveillance with a view to securing voluntary compliance on the part of traders.

EU Directives.

49. **Deputy Liz McManus** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number, in respect of EU directives for which her Department has responsibility, remaining to be implemented; the directives that are overdue; the number of reasoned opinions received from the EU Commission since 2002 to date in 2008 regarding delays or non-implementation of such directives; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41771/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): There are currently a total of eight Directives due to be transposed by my Department up to 2012. Three of these Directives are currently overdue. The first of these, Directive 2006/46/EC on company reporting, is expected to be transposed by 28 November 2008. It is intended to transpose the second and third overdue Directives, Directive 2007/45/EC on pre-packaged goods and Directive 2006/43/EC on statutory audits of annual and consolidated accounts, by 19 December 2008 and 31 December 2008, respectively. Full details of all current and recent EU Directives are maintained on the Department's website, www.entemp.ie.

My Department has received 24 Reasoned Opinions from the European Commission relating to Directives since 2002. The outstanding issues concerning all of these Reasoned Opinions have been resolved satisfactorily.

Job Protection.

50. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if the Industrial Development Authority has made contact with representatives of a company (details supplied); and if she will disclose to Dáil Éireann the company's plans for its operations here. [41956/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The fact that Dell is undertaking a fundamental review of its manufacturing operations and global business model has been in the public domain for some time. It is standard IDA Ireland practice, where any of its client companies is undertaking reviews of this type, to engage with the company with a view to mitigating the impact on the company's Irish operations. I can confirm that IDA has been engaged in extensive discussions with the company concerned at the highest level. I have been fully briefed on these discussions as they have occurred and I have also met with the company. As I have said in previous replies and as has been said in recent adjournment debates, such contacts with companies always proceed on a confidential basis and it is vitally important, if the best possible outcome for the Irish operations is to be secured, that confidentiality is respected.

Questions Nos. 51 and 52 answered with Question No. 43.

Job Creation.

53. **Deputy Seymour Crawford** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the efforts she has made to encourage hi-tech industry or otherwise into the Border areas particularly County Monaghan which has had an extraordinary level of redundancies in recent times; his views on whether through all the years of progress at national level no inward investment has been provided in this area; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41728/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): IDA Ireland is the agency with statutory responsibility for the attraction of foreign direct investment (FDI) to Ireland and its regions. The marketing of individual areas for new or expansion FDI investments and jobs is a day-to-day operational matter for the Agency. While I may give general policy directives to the Agency, I am precluded under the Industrial Development Acts from giving directives regarding individual undertakings or from giving preference to one area over others.

Through its network of overseas offices, IDA Ireland is actively marketing Monaghan for new and expansion investments across a wide range of sectors. There are five IDA supported companies in Monaghan employing 321 people.

In recent years, Ireland has undergone a transformation from a low wage/low cost economy towards a high value and knowledge-based one. Arising from this transformation, the nature of foreign direct investment (FDI) has changed and Ireland is now competing for premium mobile investments against the most advanced countries in the world. A key aspect of the high value, knowledge intensive FDI, for which Ireland now competes, is that it increasingly favours locations in or near centres of urban scale, where it has access to the concentrations of infrastructure, skills and services it needs.

Accordingly, IDA Ireland has aligned its strategy with the National Spatial Strategy (NSS). In line with the NSS, IDA is focused on delivering investments to the Gateway and Hub locations nationally. In the case of Monaghan the Agency is concentrating its efforts on the hub town of Monaghan.

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The Agency is promoting its Business Park in Monaghan Town for new knowledge intensive inward investment. The completion of the new Monaghan by-pass has vastly improved access to the existing IDA Park and the ongoing work on the N2 is improving access to Dublin Airport and city. This continues to add to the attractiveness of the location for new inward investment. However, in the final analysis it is the investor who decides where to locate.

54. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number of new jobs she expects to be created during 2008 in regard to manufacturing and to other sectors; the way these compare to figures each year since 2002. [41763/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Irish economy is now one of the most globalised in the world. As a consequence the uncertainty created by the ongoing international financial crisis and the consequent fall in demand for goods and services both domestically and worldwide has had a significant impact on our economy. Forecasting employment figures is a perilous business at any time, but is especially so in the present environment.

The latest available employment data from CSO (Quarterly National Household Survey August 2008) indicates that at Quarter Q2 2008 there were almost 7,000 additional people in employment compared with the corresponding period in 2007. This is a testament to a high degree of resilience in the economy at a time of great uncertainty in global economic conditions and the continued strength of the euro. The Government and I share the concerns of all with regard to employment, however it must be viewed in the context of historically unprecedented numbers of people in work. Since 1997, over half a million new jobs have been created in Ireland and the number in employment still exceeds 2 million. The following table shows that in the period 2002–2007 over 150,000 new full time permanent jobs were created in companies supported by the Government through the enterprise development agencies (IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and Shannon Development). Of this total, 84,619 new jobs were created in the manufacturing sector.

These figures do not take account of the new jobs created with the support of the Government through Údaras na Gaeltachta, which falls within the remit at my colleague, the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

The economic environment is more challenging than we have seen for many years, however we have the foundations in place for long term economic growth through proactive policies such as the Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation, the National Skills Strategy and the National Development Plan. Ireland is well placed to tackle the challenges we are facing, with a strong base of modern industry, a highly skilled and flexible workforce and a pro-business culture. We continue to work to maintain and enhance our framework competitive conditions, and promote new areas of competitive advantage by developing our R&D base, investing in critical physical and communications infrastructures, in line with the NDP and the Programme for Government.

Competition for foreign direct investment (FDI) continues to be relentless but Ireland continues to punch above its weight when it comes to attracting overseas investment. While costs are higher, we have responded by positioning ourselves as a location for more advanced activities, with more qualified and better paying jobs. The pipeline of new business for which IDA Ireland is competing is as strong as at any time in recent years and we remain confident that Ireland is well placed to secure significant investment during 2008 and beyond from key target sectors such as Pharmaceuticals, Biopharma, Medical Technologies and Information and Communications Technology.

Innovation and the productivity gains that flow from it are the new foundations for competitiveness. In order to sustain and grow the manufacturing sector, Irish based manufacturing enterprises will have to continue the progression to high value added sectors and activities, and continue to increase productivity through investments in human capital, technology and innovation. The Government is fully committed to strengthening the competitiveness and productive capacity of the economy. Our priority remains the creation of high quality, sustainable employment, driven by companies with higher profitability, that are technologically advanced and prove a better fit with the competitive characteristics of our economy.

New (Full-time) Jobs Created in Enterprise Agency* assisted firms 2002-2007

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
All Sectors	25,301	22,481	24,208	26,238	27,560	24,339	150,127
Manufacturing	14,431	13,919	13,354	14,895	14,932	13,088	84,619
Services	10,870	8,562	10,854	11,343	12,628	11,251	65,508

*Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Shannon Development.

55. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment her views on the findings of the recent survey carried out on behalf of the Industrial Development Authority, which found that almost half of multinationals based here would not chose to locate here again in view of high business costs and poor infrastructure; the steps she will take to deal with the concerns identified in the survey; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41749/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The IDA Client Survey, which has been carried out since 1992, is a key piece of research for IDA Ireland. The survey is conducted annually across a percentage of the Agency's client base across a number of sectors. The key focus of this survey is to obtain the views of IDA clients on the operating environment in Ireland and IDA's level of service and product offering. In addition, the survey provides senior company executives with an opportunity to discuss, in confidence, a wide range of items outside of their normal engagement with IDA. For IDA it is an opportunity to examine feedback on an aggregate basis from the client portfolio, to identify issues of particular importance to clients, and to formulate appropriate policy responses.

To begin with let me say that one of the key findings from this most recent survey showed that 82% of companies surveyed ranked Ireland as a Good to Excellent location for further investment. This is a strong endorsement of Ireland as a good location for foreign direct investment.

As regards the findings referred to by the Deputy, in relation to choosing to locate in Ireland again, this question is approached in terms of the existing companies' reflections on whether the parent corporation would choose Ireland again if it were making the decision to establish in Ireland today, with the same original activity. The question focuses attention on Ireland's value proposition for this original activity, at the present time, and does not take account of the fact that the decision to come was probably made at a time when Ireland's value proposition was based around lower costs. It should be pointed out that the percentage of companies who responded positively to this question was greater than those who responded negatively. Among the main reasons given by IDA clients for choosing Ireland again, are the availability of skills, business knowledge, the tax environment in Ireland our location in proximity to mainland Europe and the general work ethic.

[Deputy Mary Coughlan.]

IDA has continued to focus on seeking inward investment from top-tier corporations and companies within a number of high potential business sectors including Pharmaceuticals and Biotechnology, Medical Technology, Financial Services, International Services, Digital Media and Information Communications Technologies. I am glad to be able to inform the House that to date in 2008 there have been 43 new investment announcements, including such major companies as Facebook, GlaxoSmithKline, Pfizer and IBM, with a potential to create almost 4,000 new jobs.

During my recent trip to the United States, I met with senior executives of leading companies in a broad range of sectors and given the positive views expressed to me about Ireland and the high standing in which Ireland is viewed as a business location by these leading global companies, I am confident that new investments will continue to flow into Ireland.

Work Permits.

56. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she intends to retain the requirement for nationals from Bulgaria and Romania to have work permits in order to participate in the labour force here when the current arrangement expires at the end of 2008; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41756/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): The Government decided, in October 2006, to continue to require that nationals of Romania and Bulgaria apply for work permits in order to participate in the Irish labour market, but giving those nationals preference over non-European Economic Area nationals. The Government was informed in its decision by the very significant inflow of economic migrants Ireland had experienced since May 2004, when nationals of the EU ten Member States were allowed to participate in the Irish labour market without work permits. The Government felt at the time that it was appropriate to take stock, be cautious and concentrate on the integration needs of those who had already come to live and work here.

EU countries that imposed transitional restrictions had to justify their decision to the European Commission initially, and must continue to do so at intervals thereafter. Countries were allowed an initial, so-called Phase 1, period of two years ending on 31 December 2008 during which to impose restrictions. Before the end of 2008, Member States must notify the European Commission whether they plan to continue during the Phase 2 period 2009-2011 any restrictions imposed during Phase 1, or whether they intend to remove the restrictions and accordingly the Government will be considering this matter for decision ahead of the end year deadline.

Having regard to options open to the Government, the Employment Permits Act 2006 provides the legal basis for three options in relation to access to the Irish labour market by nationals of Bulgaria and Romania: continue to have Romanian and Bulgarian nationals apply for work permits with the current conditions and requirements, but, as before, giving those nationals preference over non-European Economic Area nationals; have Romanian and Bulgarian nationals apply for work permits (mainly for monitoring purposes) and issue them on the basis of job offers, without the requirement to advertise with FÁS; or grant access to the Irish labour market without any restrictions.

In considering these options, the Government will take into account the following factors: the positions of the other Member States that also imposed restrictions; current and forecast economic and labour market conditions in Ireland; the views of the representatives of employers and trade unions, as well as the views of representatives of the Governments of the two countries concerned.

Industrial Relations.

57. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the legislative or other measures she will take to uphold the right to collective bargaining and in particular the right of a trade union to represent its members; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41760/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): Trade unions holding a negotiating licence are free to engage in collective bargaining on wages and conditions of employment. Ireland's system of industrial relations is based on a voluntary approach with terms and conditions of employment being determined in the main by a process of voluntary collective bargaining between the parties, without the intervention of the State. The collective bargaining process can cover the entire range of issues arising from the employment relationship.

The State has sought to facilitate the bargaining process through establishing, by legislation, a number of agencies to assist in the resolution of disputes. These agencies are: the Labour Relations Commission, the Labour Court and the Rights Commissioner Service. There are also statutory provisions designed to back up the voluntary process in areas where collective bargaining does not operate effectively. The most important provisions are those concerning Joint Labour Committees and Registered Employment Agreements. In addition, the 2004 Enhanced Code of Practice on Voluntary Dispute Resolution and the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2001, as amended by the Industrial Relations (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2004, provide mechanisms for the resolution of disputes in situations where collective bargaining does not occur and where the internal dispute resolution procedures that are normally used fail to resolve the dispute.

The issue of employee representation was considered in the context of the recent Social Partnership talks. In that context, the Review and Transitional Agreement 2008-2009 provides for the establishment of a review process which will consider the legal and other steps which are required to enable the mechanisms which were established under previous Agreements to operate as they had been intended. The review is to be completed by the end of March 2009 with a view to enactment of the necessary legislation in June 2009.

In addition, the new Agreement provides for a number of legislative measures to prohibit victimisation and incentivisation (i.e. financial or other incentives to encourage persons not to join trade unions), and to provide effective protection and means of redress to employees when engaged in the exercise of their constitutional right to trade union membership or activity on behalf of a Trade Union or non-membership.

Small Business Sector.

58. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the progress that has been made at EU Council level towards fast-tracking the approval of the European Small Business Act (details supplied); the preparation that has been made here for the implementation of the Act; the type of benefits foreseen for small and medium enterprises; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33990/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The European Commission's proposal for "A Small Business Act (SBA) for Europe" was published on 25 June 2008. Although styled an "Act", the SBA is in fact a Communication from the Commission — COM (2008) 394 final — of 25 June 2008. The SBA consists of three elements: a set of 10 principles which should guide the conception and implementation of policies both at Community and Member States level, a set of policy measures which implement each of the

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ten principles setting out 42 actions to be undertaken by the Commission and 51 actions which Member States are “invited” to undertake, a set of legislative proposals which are guided by the “Think Small First” principle as follows: a general Block Exemption Regulation on State Aids (adopted on 7 July 2008); a proposal for a Statute for a European Private Company (adopted on 25 June 2008); a proposal for a Directive on reduced VAT rates for locally supplied services (adopted on 7 July 2008); a proposal on VAT invoicing to simplify invoicing rules (foreseen for adoption in November 2008) and an amendment to Directive 2000/35/EC on late payments (foreseen for adoption in February/March 2009).

The French Presidency has made the SBA one of its key priorities for its term as Presidency. The Competitiveness Council of 25/26 September discussed the SBA in the context of the current economic situation. There was a strong consensus among the Ministers on three priority areas within the SBA: improving SME Access to Finance, a Regulatory Environment Supportive of SME’s Needs, and enhancing SMEs Access to the Single Market

The French Presidency is currently finalising the preparation of Council Conclusions, together with an Appendix in the form of an “Action Plan” on the SBA, to be adopted in the Competitiveness Council on 1-2 December. These Conclusions and Appendix will then feed into the European Council Conclusions and will have a major role in committing Member States to implementing the SBA. The European Parliament is also preparing an Opinion on the SBA which is expected to be adopted in the plenary session in March 2009.

In terms of implementation, the SBA will be fully embedded in the Lisbon Agenda Growth and Jobs Strategy 2008-2010 to ensure its efficient implementation and to allow for a regular update on its deliverables. The European Commission will insert a first assessment on the implementation of the SBA in its December 2008 Lisbon Report. Member States are expected to report on their implementation measures in their Annual National Reform Programmes starting in 2009. Ireland is supportive of the SBA and welcomes the increased focus on the importance of SMEs and the general « Think Small First » principle. The SBA reflects many of the issues already identified and addressed by the Small Business Forum Report which are already being implemented as part of our policies in assisting SMEs.

Such measures include, for example, in the area of access to finance; the extension of the Business Expansion Scheme and Seed Capital Schemes to 2013, R&D Credits and the seeding of the Venture Capital industry in Ireland; and in the area of Better Regulation, the ongoing work of the Better Regulation Group which published its first report on 6 August 2008.

Ireland is satisfied with the structure of the proposal and with the fact that subsidiarity and proportionality principles are fully reflected in the SBA. Ireland will play an active role in progressing discussions in the relevant Council Working Groups in relation to the five legislative proposals outlined above.

I welcome efforts to identify obstacles to SME development, and policies for their resolution. I believe that a well-constituted and effective Small Business Act can play a positive role in the development of SMEs at both European and Member States levels.

Departmental Agencies.

59. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the action she has taken to address financial misspending concerns in FÁS; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41988/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Comptroller and Auditor General in his report on non-commercial Semi-State bodies, published in May 2008, reviewed the issues raised in one specific FÁS internal audit report.

I discussed this matter with the Director General of FÁS and have expressed my concerns about the issues raised by both the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Internal Audit report, and in particular, the need to secure value for money in public expenditure.

On my instruction, the Secretary General of my Department wrote to FÁS on 30 June 2008 seeking the formal assurance of the Director General of FÁS that: the practices outlined in the FÁS Internal and Comptroller and Auditor General Audit Reports had ceased; that adequate systems and controls are in place to prevent any recurrence; and requesting details of the remedial actions taken by FÁS in respect of the issues raised by the audit reports, with quarterly progress reports on the implementation of the Audit Reports recommendations.

The FÁS Director General replied on 1 July 2008 confirming that the unacceptable practices referred to in the Audit Reports had ceased. A further response was received at the end of October, which set out the progress being made on the issue of controls on procurement and the observance of the procurement policy of FÁS.

Following discussions with the Chairman and the Director General of FÁS, I decided that there should be an external investigation into the effectiveness of the financial management and control systems that are generally in place in FÁS, rather than be limited to aspects raised in the internal audit report which gave rise to the earlier Special Report. I therefore requested the Comptroller and Auditor General to consider doing such a review and he has acceded to that request. My intention in requesting this review is to ensure that appropriate public procurement procedures exist to prevent or detect irregularities or wrongdoing and to also examine and report on the activities of the FÁS Corporate Affairs area since 2000, in order to achieve reasonable assurance as to whether there were any occasions of potential fraud or irregularity in that area other than those already brought to light by FÁS Internal Audit Unit.

It is a matter for the Comptroller and Auditor General to determine the scope of his investigation. The Comptroller and Auditor General has indicated that in doing so he will take into account the deliberations of the Public Accounts Committee hearings on the FÁS element of his Special Report on Semi-State Bodies.

Credit Availability.

60. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the action she has taken to address concerns of small and medium sized enterprises that they cannot access the necessary levels of credit to maintain business operations; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41989/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I refer the Deputy to my answer to Priority Question Number 41986/08 earlier in this session as the issues raised in the current Question significantly overlap.

The proper functioning of the banking system is key to our ability to address the current economic crisis and to our capacity to respond to recovery in the future. The continuing availability of credit to enterprises, especially SMEs, is a central responsibility of the banking system. Ministerial responsibility for the banking system rests with my colleague, the Minister for Finance, Mr. Brian Lenihan, T.D.

The Government's bank guarantee provided the Irish banks with the support they required to maintain their normal liquidity position in interbank lending and debt markets. This move was essential to allow banks to continue their normal ordinary business of providing credit in this country and contributing to the normal functioning of the economy.

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The availability of finance is of course a critical element of our overall competitiveness and a key part of our national economic and financial infrastructure. Because the Government has given the guarantee, covered institutions in Ireland have access to the liquidity and funding necessary for this purpose.

The Government want to see the banks meeting the legitimate financial needs of consumers and business. The onus is now on the boards and senior executives of the banks to ensure they are properly positioned to meet this expectation. The banks have confirmed that notwithstanding the challenging economic and financial environment, good projects will continue to be supported by the banks. The banks' principal area of focus is on their existing customers or new business customers with good commercially sound projects. They are very conscious of what is expected of them under the guarantee insofar as business lending is concerned.

I am obviously in regular contact with my colleague, the Minister for Finance, on the issue and officials of my Department are in ongoing discussions with their counter parts in the Department of Finance concerning the impact of the lending practices of the banking sector on small businesses.

Within the area of my own responsibility, my Department's continuous support for indigenous companies arises through maintaining a positive business environment and through particular interventions from the State development agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, the City and County Enterprise Boards and FÁS. I have ensured that these agencies continue to be sufficiently resourced through the Estimates process and that key areas such as the Science and Technology allocation and micro enterprise support, through the CEBs, actually received additional funding for 2009.

The agencies are focused on helping Irish businesses through the current economic difficulties to develop and grow their exports, by continuing to prioritise investment in Science, Technology and Innovation and by providing financial and non-financial supports to small businesses. The existing range of training supports will continue and appropriate re-training and support services will be available for those who have recently lost their jobs.

Access to capital is also available to firms through BES and Seed Capital schemes and through the Venture Capital initiatives promoted through Enterprise Ireland. Including the Government's investment of €175m through EI, 7 new venture funds have raised over €500m which is available to invest in the Irish SME sector. The importance of the small business sector is obvious as is the extent of the Government's and my own ongoing commitment to the sector.

The Minister for Finance has already acted positively to support the banking system through the introduction of the State's bank guarantee scheme. Deputies will be aware that the Taoiseach has in the last number of days signalled in this House that the Government is actively considering a range of proposals in this area and is ready to take appropriate action.

Job Protection.

61. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if the Industrial Development Authority has contacted representatives of a company (details supplied); and if she will disclose to Dáil Éireann the company's plans for operations here in view of its announcement to cut its global workforce by 1,300. [41957/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): IDA Ireland executives are in constant contact with Nortel and had meetings with senior management of the company as recently as 13 and 14 November 2008. There are no proposed

job cuts for the Irish operation as a result of the recently announced workforce reduction of 1,300 staff.

Following a rationalisation of its global R&D functions in April 2008, Nortel's Galway operation was confirmed as one of five core global R&D sites. The Galway R&D centre is currently recruiting additional researchers.

Trade Statistics.

62. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she will provide a breakdown of the number and names of Irish businesses carrying on business with any companies from Bhutan which are known to her Department; if she will provide a breakdown of Bhutanese companies trading with Ireland; the trade links that have been fostered with Bhutan; if there are plans to foster such links in the future; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42024/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy John McGuinness): The official statistics show that during last year and so far in 2008, Ireland has neither exported nor imported any goods to or from Bhutan. Therefore no companies from either country engaged in trade. Bhutan is not a priority market for Ireland at this time, and we have no plans to foster trade links there in the foreseeable future.

Community Employment Schemes.

63. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number of people who were employed on a community employment scheme in each of the past three years; the percentage figure of those who have progressed to full-time employment from the community employment scheme in each of the past three years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42040/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Community Employment (CE) is an active labour market programme designed to provide eligible long term unemployed people and other disadvantaged persons with an opportunity to engage in useful work within their communities on a fixed term basis. The programme helps unemployed people to progress to the open labour market by breaking their experience of unemployment through a return to work routine and assists them in enhancing/developing both their technical and personal skills.

I am advised by FÁS that the number of people employed on Community Employment for the past three years are as follows:

- Year 2005: 21,210;
- Year 2006: 20,872;
- Year 2007: 21,562.

Finally, the percentage figure of those who have progressed to full time employment over the past three years are as follows:

- Year 2005: 33.8%;
- Year 2006: 35.6%;
- Year 2007: 36.8%.

Work Permits.

64. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment when a work permit will issue to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 8 which was submitted to her office recently; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42055/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): The Employment Permits Section informs me that an application in respect of the above named was received in their section on the 19th November 2008. Assuming the application is complete a decision will be made on the application in the next 2-3 weeks.

65. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment when a work permit will issue in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 8; if she will have the matter clarified or rectified; the process whereby the person's work permit can be reissued urgently; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42056/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher): The application in respect of the above named was refused on the 7/2/2008 on the grounds that it is current Government policy to issue new work permits for highly skilled highly paid positions or for non-EEA nationals who are already legally resident in the State on valid employment permits or where there is an officially recognised scarcity of workers of a particular type or qualification. Furthermore, the position on offer is one of the occupational categories currently ineligible for a work permit.

The applicant was notified of this decision in writing and of their right to appeal within 21 days. An appeal must be made in writing and addressed to the Appeals Officer in the Employment Permits Section and must include any further information of relevance that the applicant wishes to submit. As no appeal was received in the Employment Permits Section within this timeframe the fees in this case were refunded to the applicant. Written correspondence was received outside of the 21 days in respect of the application. However, this related to a correction of the spelling of the applicant's name only and did not constitute an Appeal for the purposes of the Employment Permits Act 2006. In these circumstances, therefore, we cannot re-visit this application.

Consumer Protection.

66. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she or her Department have investigated the situation whereby it appears that recent currency fluctuations likely to benefit Irish consumer do not appear to have been passed on particularly by chain stores with similar outlets here and in the UK or Northern Ireland; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42057/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I am aware of the concerns that have been expressed that a number of retailers may not be passing on to consumers the benefits of the Euro's recent appreciation in value, particularly against Sterling. These concerns were heightened by a survey undertaken by the National Consumer Agency of the price of a range of branded and own-brand goods charged by a number of prominent retailers operating north and south of the Border. The survey found that customers of these retailers in the Republic were being charged up to 31% more than their customers in Northern Ireland in respect of certain branded products and up to 17% more in respect of own brand items.

Arising from these concerns, I initiated an engagement with the retail sector as to the reasons why the benefits of the Euro's appreciation were not being passed on to consumers. In the course of that engagement I met with IBEC and leading members of Retail Ireland, and also wrote to major individual retailers, to express the Government's concern on this matter. In response, retailers advised that while the retail price of goods imported from the UK had lagged exchange rate movements due to factors such as the forward purchase of goods and currency, there had already been reductions in the price of some goods and further reductions were in the pipeline. Retailers also advised that one of the main reasons for the price differential was that the cost of doing business in Ireland was significantly higher than that in the UK. To that end, in September of this year I requested Forfás to carry out an analysis of the relative cost of doing business in a number of locations in the Republic, Northern Ireland and the UK. I intend to pursue this matter with the retail sector on receipt of Forfás' analysis, which I expect to receive shortly.

It is my strong view that where there are significant differentials in consumer prices as demonstrated by the findings of the National Consumer Agency's cross border survey, retailers have a duty to their customers and to the economies in which they operate to explain why there are such differentials. It is my intention to continue to engage with the retail sector on this matter.

Economic Competitiveness.

67. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the steps she has taken or will take to reduce manufacturing costs here with particular reference to ensuring the competitiveness of Irish goods on world markets; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42058/08]

68. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she or her Department have carried out an assessment of the number of manufacturing jobs which have in the past five years relocated to other more cost competitive jurisdictions; her plans to avert this trend in the future; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42059/08]

69. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the extent to which jobs in the services sector have relocated to other jurisdictions in each of the past five years; her plans to address these issues in the future; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42060/08]

71. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the plans she has to address the issue of job relocation to lower cost economies; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42062/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 67 to 69, inclusive, and 71 together.

There are many factors apart from costs that influence a firm's decision to relocate, therefore, it is not possible to determine the number of jobs which may have been lost to lower cost economies. Decisions to relocate companies or elements of their supply chain are a reality of the modern globalised economic environment. Companies adjust their plant location and utilisation strategies to address matters such as accessing new markets, moving production nearer to customers, meeting firm or market specific customer relationship issues, accessing technology, in addition to business takeovers and consolidations. Such decisions inevitably result in flows of investment and employment across borders. In the main, Ireland successfully man-

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ages this process, through our policies on enterprise and foreign direct investment. These policies, such as competitive tax rates, investment in skills, education and R&D and investing in critical physical and communications infrastructure, have positioned us to win many prestigious and high value added investments.

Ireland has not been a low cost economy for some time now, and manufacturers in particular have been facing increased competition from producers in lower cost economies. The manufacturing sector in Ireland has evolved noticeably since 2000, in terms of the composition of industry and the nature of activities, and is likely to continue to do so. The model of manufacturing in developed economies has changed and Irish enterprises are adapting to those changes and engaging in higher value added activities in order to compete in the global marketplace. Irish based manufacturing enterprises will have to continue the progression to high value added sectors and activities, and to increase productivity through investments in human capital, technology and innovation. Innovation, and the productivity gains that flow from it are the new foundations for competitiveness.

Earlier this year my predecessor in this Department launched the Report of the High-Level Manufacturing Group which contains some 26 recommendations directed at key areas of innovation and productivity leading to transformational change, reskilling and management development for the innovative firm, increasing awareness and take up of existing supports. In addition the group recommended the establishment of a Manufacturing Forum to take responsibility for progressing the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the report and to act as a strong advocate and champion for the manufacturing sector thereby ensuring that manufacturing remains central to current and future industrial policy. This matter is currently being progressed by my Department in consultation with the Department of An Taoiseach and the Social Partners.

We continue to be one of the world's leading service exporting countries and are currently ranked the 10th highest exporter of services in the world. In September, I launched the report of the Services Strategy Group, "Catching the Wave: A Services Strategy for Ireland". This report sets out new policy proposals on how we can ensure the continued development and growth of Ireland's services sector and in its recommendations outlines suggested strategies to maximise the future returns to the country from services activities in all enterprises, both current and potential. I believe that the implementation of these recommendations will enable Irish service companies to exploit new and exciting opportunities, such as eLearning, business and financial services, professional and consultancy services and others.

The level of foreign direct investment in Ireland, relative to the size of the economy, remains one of the highest in the world. While competition from emerging markets for FDI has intensified, Ireland continues to punch above its weight when it comes to attracting overseas investment. The pipeline of new business for which IDA Ireland is competing is strong. Already this year over 43 new IDA investments have been announced with the potential to create close to 4,000 jobs over the coming years, demonstrating that we remain a location of choice for mobile investment.

One of the Government's main tasks is to ensure that Ireland remains an attractive place to do business, and to support the development of economic competencies higher up the value chain. In that regard, we continue to work to maintain and enhance our framework competitive conditions, and promote new areas of competitive advantage by developing our R&D base, investing in critical physical and communications infrastructures, and promoting tertiary education, lifelong learning and upskilling to improve labour market flexibility, in line with the NDP and the Programme for Government.

Our priority remains the creation of high quality, sustainable employment, driven by companies with higher profitability, that are more technologically advanced, prove a better fit with the competitive characteristics of our economy, and consequently less likely to move on the basis of simple cost influences.

70. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she or her Department have sought or received reasons for the relocation of a major component of the Irish insurance industry to India; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42061/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): In June 2008, Hibernian Insurance announced a restructuring plan that involves moving 580 jobs out of Ireland over the coming three years. These job losses will come about as a result of outsourcing of work to Bangalore, India. I understand that this is part of a greater outsourcing exercise on the part of Aviva, Hibernian's parent company. While I very much regret the decision of Hibernian Insurance to move jobs from Ireland, the relocation or off-shoring of lower value-added functions, and with them a certain number of jobs, is a reality of the modern global economic environment for a highly developed economy such as Ireland. This shift in the structure of international trade poses challenges to economic policy makers in all developed countries, not just Ireland.

It must be remembered that Ireland also experiences the benefits resulting from globalisation as new markets and business opportunities open up for Irish companies. The level of foreign direct investment in Ireland, relative to the size of the economy, remains one of the highest in the world. While competition from emerging markets for FDI has intensified, Ireland continues to punch above its weight when it comes to attracting overseas investment. While our relative costs are now higher, we have responded nationally to a changing environment by positioning ourselves as the location for more advanced activities, with more qualified and better paying jobs.

The country's international financial services sector has witnessed dramatic growth and phenomenal success in recent times. The financial services sector contributes over 10% of Ireland's GDP, and employs and estimated 90,000 people. Ireland's success in developing a thriving financial services environment has been due to many factors including competitive tax rates, an efficient and responsive regulatory regime, a highly educated and English speaking workforce, and strong political support.

We will continue to pursue policies to promote lifelong learning and upskilling to improve labour market flexibility and ensure that appropriate training supports are provided for workers in sectors that are no longer competitive, should they need to find alternative employment. Investment in our people and ensuring that they have the skills required to live and work in the global knowledge economy is at the heart of the Government's strategy to continue our progress towards a knowledge economy and society.

The Government's priority remains the creation of high quality sustainable employment driven by companies with higher profitability that are more technologically advanced, and prove a better fit with the competitive characteristics of our economy.

Question No. 71 answered with Question No. 67.

FÁS Training Programmes.

72. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if adequate funding has been or will be made available to FÁS to facilitate the

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provision of adequate training facilities to meet the needs of the economic recession; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42063/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Through a regional network of 66 offices and 20 training centres, FÁS provides a comprehensive nationwide service of training programmes as well as providing a recruitment service to jobseekers, an advisory resource for industry and support mechanisms for community-based enterprises. Over the past five years my Department has invested more than €125 million euro in capital expenditure to ensure that FÁS continues to provide high quality facilities for its customers throughout its network. This investment includes a new state-of-the-art training centre in Tallaght and a new Centre of Excellence Training Facility in Co Cork to meet the growing demand for skilled workers in the Pharmaceuticals sector. Major refurbishment projects have also been carried out on FÁS's facilities in Ballyfermot, Finglas, Cork, Sligo and Limerick. I have provided €10 million for capital expenditure in FÁS's 2009 budget.

73. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she has provided adequate funding to meet the expected requirements of FÁS in respect of job retraining in the coming year; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42064/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): In order to meet the challenges of the changing economy there will be greater policy emphasis on activation and training for the unemployed. The budget for FÁS for 2009 was agreed on the basis of detailed discussions between FÁS, my Department and the Department of Finance in the context of the annual Estimates process. A budget of €1,050,488 was allocated to FÁS for 2009.

This includes €450m in respect of Employment Programmes which includes Community Employment and Job Initiative, with a view to maintaining overall numbers on the scheme and the continuation of training for participants.

Within the FÁS budget, the allocation from the National Training Fund for training the unemployed has been increased by €9.5 million to €208.3 million. This funding will help workers who have recently lost their jobs, including redundant apprentices, by providing additional opportunities for training and re-skilling.

Economic Competitiveness.

74. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the extent to which research has been undertaken to ascertain the most likely reason for foreign inward investment here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42065/08]

75. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she or her Department have studied the possible reason for any slow down in foreign inward investment here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42066/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 74 and 75 together.

Forfás, the national policy and advisory body for enterprise, trade, science, technology and innovation conducts extensive research into a wide range of areas relating to the enterprise environment in Ireland from energy and human capital policy to infrastructure and tax policy.

This research and subsequent outputs are produced with a view to supporting the continued development of an environment that makes Ireland an attractive location for enterprise both for indigenous and foreign owned companies. In undertaking any research study Forfás works closely with relevant stakeholders from industry and academia as well as the development agencies to ensure that the needs and interests of different groups including foreign enterprises are fully taken into account and reflected in the research.

Ireland is still considered an attractive location as a host country for FDI. Among the main reasons for Ireland's success in this area is our stable political environment and regulatory regime. We have a reputation for flexibility, responsiveness and innovation. We have a pro business tax environment with a corporation tax rate of 12.5% and, in the recent Budget, we increased in the R&D tax credit from 20% to 25%. We have a young, highly educated, skilled workforce. In addition, we have excellent research facilities and capabilities, with highly productive alliances between industry and academia and, in the recent Budget, we allocated €335m to the continued implementation of the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation.

Traditionally one of the main factors driving FDI to Ireland was low labour costs for relatively low to unskilled work. This is no longer the case. Today, Ireland successfully competes for the highest value FDI projects in the world. Inevitably, however, in a developed economy that means the termination or transfer of certain activities, which are no longer practicable. Even in the best economic conditions there has always been a certain “churn rate” in employment in IDA client companies in any given year. This “churn-effect” is an inescapable fact of modern economic life and should not lead to lamentation about the end of our attractiveness as an investment location nor the suggestion that Ireland is no longer a viable manufacturing location. Manufacturing as a whole continues to create and sustain jobs.

There are also challenges associated with retaining investment from companies currently located in the country. What is happening in multinational companies in Ireland today is the continuation of transformations — far more often positive than not — which have been occurring for at least the past decade.

In the current global economic climate winning FDI is increasingly more challenging. However I am glad to be able to report that IDA Ireland is doing very well in this space. Last year alone IDA secured 114 new investments and created over 9,000 jobs. For 2008 the Agency set itself a target of 122 investments of which 93% have been achieved. To date in 2008, there have been 43 investment announcements with a potential to create almost 4,000 new jobs.

I am confident that the policies being pursued by Government together with the work of IDA on the ground will continue to bear fruit in terms of investment and job creation for this country in the years ahead.

Industrial Development.

76. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the position in relation to a factory (details supplied) in County Roscommon; if these premises should be updated in view of the fact that the desired objective is to have a replacement industry placed there; the plan put in place to find a replacement industry; and the progress to date. [42087/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The position in relation to the factory and a replacement industry is unchanged from that in the reply given to Dail Question No 159 on 4 November, 2008. While the company that vacated the premises was a client of Enterprise Ireland, the remit of the agency does not extend to the acquisition, renovation or construction of industrial facilities.

77. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment her plans in place to attract industry and jobs to Elphin, Strokestown, Carrick-on-Shannon, Boyle, Ballaghaderreen and Castlerea in County Roscommon. [42088/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Industrial Development agencies namely IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland, together with the local County Enterprise Board (CEB) are responsible for inward investment and indigenous enterprise development in County Roscommon.

In line with the National Spatial Strategy, IDA Ireland actively promotes the town of Roscommon for new investment across a broad range of sectors. In addition, the agency has invested over €2m. in the creation of a flagship Business Park in Roscommon town and has undertaken a major upgrade and enhancement of its existing Industrial Estate at Racecourse Road/Gallowstown. At present there are eight IDA Ireland supported companies in Roscommon employing approximately 885 people. The agency works closely with educational institutions in the Region and with the Industrial Training agency FÁS in developing the skill sets necessary to attract high value added employment and in upskilling those already in employment.

Enterprise Ireland is actively involved in assisting its client companies in County Roscommon to grow and develop their businesses. In 2007, the agency worked with over 70 clients in the county employing 1,880 people while funding of €1.2m has been approved so far in 2008 for its client companies. Under the agency's Community Enterprise Centre Scheme, Roscommon IT Centre was approved €300,000 in capital support in November 2007. The agency was already supporting Enterprise Centres in Arigna, Ballaghaderreen, Boyle, Castlerea and Roscommon town. In addition, Enterprise Ireland has approved eight innovation vouchers for Roscommon companies. These vouchers give companies access to the vast knowledge available in Irish Institutes of Technology, Universities and other public research bodies.

During 2007, Roscommon CEB paid out €315,710 in grant assistance to 26 clients. This intervention has assisted in the creation of 59 net jobs. A total of 463 people participated in CEB training programmes. During 2008, the CEB has continued to support enterprise development through the provision of both direct financial assistance (in the form of capital, feasibility and employment grants) and through indirect or soft support assistance such as management development, capability support and the development and delivery of activities to highlight and promote enterprise.

I am satisfied that the policies and initiatives being adopted will continue to bring industry and jobs to County Roscommon.

Job Creation.

78. **Deputy Brian O'Shea** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number of jobs created and the number of jobs lost in County Waterford and Waterford City in each of the past 10 years which had received financial assistance from the Industrial Development Authority or Enterprise Ireland; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42094/08]

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Forfás Annual Employment Survey reports on job gains and losses in companies that are supported by the industrial development agencies. Data are compiled on an annualised basis and are aggregated at county level. Figures for 2008 will not be available until early 2009.

The numbers of jobs created and lost by IDA and Enterprise Ireland supported companies in Co Waterford in each year of the 10 year period 1998-2007 are shown on the attached tabular statements.

Number of jobs created and lost in Enterprise Ireland supported companies over the 10 year period 1998-2007

Waterford	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Jobs created	414	475	294	400	423	355	300	162	404	236
Jobs lost	420	443	324	292	461	234	510	575	214	631

The number of jobs created and lost in IDA Ireland supported companies over the 10 year period 1998-2007

Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Jobs Created	702	267	342	538	572	554	248	351	702	370
Jobs Lost	142	263	636	233	299	224	423	579	210	58

Tax Collection.

79. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance when a P21 statement will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42029/08]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I have been advised by the Revenue Commissioners that they have issued a request to the taxpayer for the necessary information to enable a review of liability to be carried out. P21 will be issued on receipt of the required information.

Tax Code.

80. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Finance the reason a refund of VAT for an unregistered farmer was refused on a slated shed in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Leitrim. [42089/08]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that while a refund of VAT may be made to a farmer who is not registered for VAT, there is a requirement that the claimant must comply with income tax legislation which includes registration for income tax and submission of annual returns.

The Commissioners received a claim for refund of VAT in this case on 6 October 2008. However, as the claimant was not registered for income tax, the claim was returned to him on that date with an application form to enable him register for income tax. It was explained that once this was done, the claim could be resubmitted.

When the requirements mentioned above are complied with and the claim resubmitted, the Commissioners will process the claim.

81. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Finance the reason a refund of VAT for an unregistered farmer was refused on a slated shed in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon in view of the fact that they have a current tax clearance certificate; and when the original invoice will be returned to them. [42090/08]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that a claim for refund of VAT was received from the person in question on 6 October 2008.

[Deputy Brian Lenihan.]

Some doubts arose in relation to the matter as the claimant was not registered for income tax in respect of his farming activities. However, subsequently, the claimant applied for and obtained a tax clearance certificate and in these circumstances the claim has been reconsidered and a cheque for the full amount will issue shortly.

I understand that the invoices, which accompanied the claim, have already been returned to the claimant.

Tax Collection.

82. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Finance the reason a tax clearance certificate has not issued to a person (details supplied) in view of the fact that assurances were given that the certificate will issue. [42092/08]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that a Tax Clearance Certificate with expiry date of 10th October 2009 issued to the taxpayer on the 10th October 2008 following an application on Form TC1 received on the same date. Arrangements have been made for the issue of a duplicate Tax Clearance Certificate to the address supplied.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the taxpayer was issued with a Notice of Assessment on the 22nd October 2008 in accordance with the details on the Return of Income filed on the 9th October 2008 in respect of the year 2007. A copy of that Notice of Assessment has now been re issued to the taxpayer at the address supplied.

National Monuments.

83. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Finance his plans in relation to a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42102/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Finance (Deputy Martin Mansergh): Inspection and maintenance works are carried out at the site in question on a regular basis as part of the programme of works undertaken by the Office of Public Works National Monuments workforce.

Departmental Staff.

84. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Finance the number of public servants other than Ministers and Department secretaries-general who have responded to his call for a voluntary pay surrender; the amount that will be saved by the Exchequer as a result; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42104/08]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): In the Budget speech I informed the House that members of the Government and Ministers of State would surrender 10% of their current total pay and that officers at Secretary General level in Government Departments had volunteered to make a corresponding surrender in respect of their pay.

I also stated that other public servants in leadership and senior positions may wish to consider whether it is appropriate for them to make a similar move in current circumstances. This is a matter for individuals to consider and any surrender of salary is voluntary.

A salary surrender is made by means of a gift to the Minister for Finance. In addition to Ministers, Ministers of State and Heads of Government Departments and Offices at Secretary General level, 24 persons in public service positions have to date completed declaration forms making a gift to the Minister for Finance. It remains open to others in leadership and senior

positions to do this also. In this connection, some others who have not yet completed declaration forms have indicated a willingness to make a salary surrender.

The gross savings to the Exchequer from all declarations made to date are approximately €270,000 in 2008 and €1,400,000 in 2009.

Human Rights Issues.

85. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will introduce legislation to ban the practice of female genital mutilation here in view of recent reports of its prevalence. [41995/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Legal advice which I obtained in 2004 strongly indicated that Female Genital Mutilation would constitute an offence under the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997.

In September 2006, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child(UNCRC) in its concluding observations on Ireland's second periodic report urged Ireland to continue its efforts to end the practice of Female Genital Mutilation through, inter alia, prohibiting it by law. I am currently examining the possibility of introducing specific legislation to ban Female Genital Mutilation in the context of UNCRC's recommendations.

Health Services.

86. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Health and Children the level of speech and language therapy available in the Cork area for children diagnosed with autism; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41961/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): The Deputy's question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

87. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for Health and Children the steps taken by her Department to replace a speech and language therapist providing services at a school (details supplied) in County Laois; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41981/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Almost 130,000 people work full-time or part-time in our public health services. In recent years, the Government's ongoing high level of investment in health has achieved and maintained significant increases in the numbers of doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals employed in the public health services. The Government has also invested heavily in the education and training of such personnel in order to secure a good supply of graduates to provide for the healthcare needs of the population into the future.

Subject to overall parameters set by Government, the Health Service Executive has the responsibility for determining the composition of its staffing complement. In that regard, it is a matter for the Executive to manage and deploy its human resources to best meet the requirements of its Annual Service Plan for the delivery of health and personal social services to the public. The Executive is the appropriate body to consider the matters raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matters investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Medical Cards.

88. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will approve a blue card status for a small number of applicants (details supplied), which would cover their requirements for frequent medical intervention; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [41998/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The entitlement of an individual to services under the Health (Amendment) Act, 1996 is bound by the definition of eligibility inserted in that Act by section 6 of the Hepatitis C Compensation Tribunal (Amendment) Act 2006. This requires a positive diagnostic test for applications received after the specified date. Under the terms of the legislation, a person is only entitled to a Health Amendment Act Card (HAA Card) if they have been diagnosed positive for Hepatitis C, either currently or at any time in the past, using internationally recognised scientific tests, such as the Elisa test, the Riba test or the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test. In addition, proof that the person displayed symptoms of acute infection with jaundice up to 16 weeks after administration of Anti-D is also accepted as a basis for eligibility.

I have given a great deal of consideration to the question of extending eligibility for services under the Health (Amendment) Act, 1996 to a small number of women who have symptoms similar to those associated with Hepatitis C, but who have never tested antibody-positive for the virus. However, I must take into account the rationale which led to the clarification of eligibility requirements in 2006. In these circumstances I regret that I cannot support any dilution of the current eligibility requirements.

I should point out to the Deputy that this group of women are entitled to apply for a regular medical card. Application forms for medical cards are available from the Health Service Executive's (HSE) local health offices. The HSE has discretion to award a medical card to a person whose income exceeds the financial guidelines, where the HSE decides that the financial burden of medical or other exceptional circumstances would cause undue hardship.

Nursing Homes Repayment Scheme.

89. **Deputy Edward O'Keefe** asked the Minister for Health and Children if an application under the health repayment scheme by a person (details supplied) in County Cork will qualify for payment. [42023/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Health Service Executive has responsibility for administering the Repayment Scheme and the information sought by the Deputy relates to matters within the area of responsibility of the Executive.

My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued to the Deputy.

Departmental Facilities.

90. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of car park spaces available nationally to those working in her Department and in the bodies and agencies under the aegis of her Department; the annual cost of car park spaces rented by her Department and the bodies and agencies under the aegis of her Department; the reason this Deputy has not received a reply containing the requested information to date since this question was first listed for answer on 2 April 2008 (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42032/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As explained in my response to the Deputy of 2nd April 2008, car parking spaces in Hawkins House do not involve any rental costs. Rental costs arising from other locations are paid directly by the Office of Public Works. The attached table, which is updated, lists the number of car park spaces available to my Department in Dublin, along with costs where relevant.

	No. of Car Spaces	€
Dept HQ, Hawkins Hse, Dublin	88	No rental cost. Car park owned by OPW
Townsend St/College House, Dublin	26	97,500.00
Adoption Board, Shelbourne House, Dublin	12	38,100.00
Arran Court, Dublin	7	13,332.27
SIAC Building, Clondalkin	2	1,300.00

My Department has again contacted the agencies under its remit asking them to respond directly to the Deputy as a matter of urgency. I understand from the Health Service Executive that a letter has issued recently to the Deputy outlining the position.

Departmental Investigations.

91. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children when the internal review into a case (details supplied) which was initiated a year and a half ago, will be completed; when she expects to be able to publish the report; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42033/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): The Deputy’s question relates to the management and delivery of health and social services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Hospital Services.

92. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children her views on providing funding for a scalp cooling machine in the oncology departments of hospitals that cater for cancer patients; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42034/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The specific question raised by the Deputy relates to the management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the responsibility of the HSE under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in this regard.

Health Services.

93. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding the announcement that a new bus was to be provided to service the needs of radiotherapy patients commuting between Sligo and Galway; the source of this funding; if the bus will be the responsibility of the Health Service Executive; if not, the person who will be responsible; when the bus service will be in operation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42035/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): There is currently a bus service funded by the Health Service Executive to transport Sligo patients attending for radiotherapy treatment and other clinics at Galway University Hospital. An application was received by my Department from the Friends of Sligo Hospital for a National Lottery grant to assist with the purchase of a new bus. In September 2008 I approved a grant of €170,000 from my Department's 2008 allocation of National Lottery funds towards the cost of purchasing a new bus. I understand that Friends of Sligo Hospital are in the process of sourcing a suitable bus and that the running costs of this service will continue to be met by the HSE.

Hospital Staffing.

94. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children when a cystic fibrosis specialist consultant will be appointed for the Mid-west Regional Hospital, Dooradoyle, Limerick to treat adult cystic fibrosis patients; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42036/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I have identified the need to improve services for persons with cystic fibrosis as a priority in the Estimates process over recent years. Since 2006, additional revenue funding of €6.78m has been allocated to the Health Service Executive (HSE) to develop services for patients with cystic fibrosis.

The HSE has advised that 44 additional staff dealing with cystic fibrosis have been appointed to date across a number of hospitals, including St Vincent's, Beaumont, Temple Street, Crumlin, Tallaght, Cork University Hospital, Galway, Limerick and Waterford. The necessary funding is available to facilitate the recruitment of a further 37 staff nationally.

My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy regarding the development of the service at the Mid West Regional Hospital, Limerick.

Departmental Investigations.

95. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason the report into the misdiagnosis of X-rays and CT scans in the north east does not contain recommendations; the reason there was no patient representative on the review panel; the reason there is no explanation of the errors in diagnosis that were made; the way 29 patients X-rays or case files went missing; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42037/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): On 4 November the Health Service Executive published a Review of Chest X Rays and CT Scans reported by a Locum Consultant Radiologist from August 2006 to August 2007. The review was prompted by concerns that a small number of patients in two Louth Meath Hospitals had their diagnosis delayed, due to an abnormality on their chest X-ray not being identified on initial reporting.

This review took the form of a clinical look-back. It was carried out to identify any possible ongoing patient safety issues and to provide reassurance to those patients whose chest X-rays and CT scans were assessed by the consultant whose work prompted the review. The methodology of the review was developed to identify ongoing harm or disadvantage to patients and allow for any additional care or treatment required to be delivered.

The interests of patients were represented on the Review Team by the HSE's Head of Consumer Affairs. Communications with patients were a priority for the Review Team. The families of the nine patients who were identified as having a delayed diagnosis of lung cancer each received individual reports prepared by Prof Muiris Fitzgerald. These individual reports

set out the clinical significance of the delayed diagnosis. Prof Fitzgerald also met with each of the families and relayed their concerns to the HSE.

The Report noted that despite extensive searches 29 out of almost 6,000 X-rays and CT scans could not be found. These patients were followed up. In some cases a subsequent similar radiograph was examined. In the remaining cases patients were offered new examinations. One person who was not an Irish resident could not be traced from the contact details held by the hospital.

While the Report did not issue formal recommendations it set out actions to be taken by the HSE on foot of the findings of the Review. These actions include:

- **Improving Quality and Patient Safety in the North East Hospitals:** The HSE has initiated a project to enhance clinical governance within radiology services in the North East. Work has already commenced and it is envisaged that an action plan will be completed next month.
- **Referral to Professional Bodies:** The report has been referred to the Medical Council of Ireland and has been copied to the General Medical Council in the UK.
- **Recruitment of Locum Consultants:** The HSE has stated that there will be full compliance with the new national guidance in relation to the level of and recruitment of locums in medical practice, which was issued in May, 2008.

It is important to note that diagnostic radiology is not a precise, error-free science. It is a multi-step process where high-tech imaging is used to assist health professionals in the diagnosis of a range of conditions. International studies suggest that the incidence of discrepancies and errors in general radiology practice lies between 2% and 20%. This range of errors is a world-wide phenomenon and includes all radiology departments. This review was designed to identify patients who may need additional care, not to assign blame or culpability to a particular physician. Clinical governance within healthcare systems reduces the likelihood of errors occurring and increases the likelihood of detecting those errors which do occur. The HSE North East Hospitals are fully committed to driving change and, in partnership with its clinical staff, doing all it can to enhance patient safety at all levels.

Vaccination Programme.

96. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Minister for Health and Children the cost of the yearly flu vaccination for Health Service Executive staff; the rate of uptake for this staff vaccination; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42041/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular matter raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Health Services.

97. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position of an application for dental treatment in respect of a child (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42053/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Deputy's question relates to the funding, management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities.

98. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number, under the multi-annual funding commitments in relation to disability services, of residential places committed to that were to be provided in 2006 and in 2007 for people with physical and sensory disabilities; the number of actual places that will be provided and the location of such places in each of these two years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42098/08]

99. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number, under the multi annual funding commitments in relation to disability services, of extra residential places for people with an intellectual disability and autism committed to be provided in 2006 and 2007 respectively; the number of actual places provided and the location of such places; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42099/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 98 and 99 together.

Under the Multi Annual Investment Programme additional funding of €75m was allocated to the Health Service Executive in both 2006 and 2007 to provide for additional disability services.

Intellectual Disability/Autism:

- 255 residential places,
- 85 respite places,
- 535 day places and transfers from Inappropriate Placements.

Physical and Sensory:

- 80 residential places, Home Supports and Personal Assistance — an additional 250,000 hours.

As the matters raised by the Deputy, including the number of actual places provided and the location of such places, is a matter for the HSE under the Health Act 2004, I have requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have these matters investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Health Services.

100. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health and Children the situation with respect to the provision of transport for patients in the north east Carlow area for medical appointments; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42100/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services, including patient transport, is a matter for the Health Service Executive and funding for such services is provided in the Executive's Vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular

issue raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matters investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

101. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding a matter (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42101/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services is a matter for the Health Service Executive and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall Vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular issue raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Departmental Agencies.

102. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Health and Children the date, in relation to the announcement in Budget 2009 to subsume the National Council on Aging and Older People into the Office of Older People in her Department, by which this will be done; if this will require legislation; the date by which this will be published; the savings that this is expected to accrue to the Exchequer in 2008, 2009 and 2010; the basis for those savings; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42106/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hackett): As the Deputy is aware the new Office for Older People was established on 30th January 2008. In line with recommendations of Prospectus Report 2003 the National Council on Ageing and Older People will be absorbed into the Department of Health and Children. Legislation will be required and my Department is working on the legislation at present. The National Council on Ageing and Older People is currently budgeted for €1.819m in vote 39 the Department of Health and Children's own vote so there will be no additional cost to the exchequer. It is not possible to give an accurate forecast of savings at this time.

The absorption of the National Council on Ageing and Older People will provide the new Office with a key resource necessary for it to carry out the additional duties and responsibilities placed upon it in terms of the development of an overall government Strategy for Positive Ageing and to develop the relationships and networks necessary at interdepartmental and public service level necessary to carry out this work.

103. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Health and Children the date, in relation to the announcement in Budget 2009 to subsume the Children Acts Advisory Board into the Office of the Minister for Children in her Department, by which this will be done; if this will require legislation; the date by which this will be published; the savings that this is expected to accrue to the Exchequer in 2008, 2009 and 2010; the basis for those savings; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42107/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): It is intended that the Children Acts Advisory Board (CAAB) will be subsumed into the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) in 2009. To give effect to the proposal amendments will be required to the Child Care Act 1991 and the Children Act 2001. My Department is considering the best approach to give effect to this measure which has arisen in

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the context of the Government decision on the rationalisation of agencies across the public service.

The measures for the rationalisation of agencies within the health sector was taken in the light of the OECD's recommendations on the need for a more integrated public service and reflect the progress to date with agency rationalisation within the sector under the overall health reform programme. While there is clearly a need to secure efficiencies from the rationalisation programme, the primary aim is to streamline service delivery, professional registration and policy making in a number of areas in the health sector, through the integration and/or amalgamation of functions. While it is too early to project the administrative savings that will accrue to the exchequer, efficiencies will be derived from economies of scale and the elimination of duplication in areas such as recruitment, procurement, payroll and ICT systems.

In the context of the new structures and developments which have occurred in the area of children's policy and the organisation of services over the past number of years it is an opportune time for this measure. My Department's focus is to continue and to build on the progress that has been undertaken in the area of child care and protection. This is centred on ensuring that actions are co-ordinated, that inter-agency working is fostered and efficiencies continue to be created in order to ensure the best use of resources and to attain outcomes of effective policy development and service delivery. Significant initiatives have been taken with regard to putting in place structures to co-ordinate and rationalise children's policy development. The OMCYA has provided a centralised structure which has brought together the various policy development areas dealing with child care of the Department of Health and Children, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Department of Education and Science. Also the advent of the HSE has allowed greater co-ordination in the delivery of child care services in particular the creation of the HSE's National Office for Special and High Support Care has led to a more effective and efficient approach in service provision in this area.

104. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Health and Children the date, in relation to the announcement in Budget 2009 to subsume the Women's Health Council into her Department, by which this will be done; if this will require legislation; the date by which this will be published; the savings that this is expected to accrue to the Exchequer in 2008, 2009 and 2010; the basis for those savings; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42108/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): My Department's measures for the rationalisation of agencies within the health sector have been prepared primarily in the context of the OECD's recommendations in relation to the need for a more integrated public service. The measures reflect and build upon the progress to date with agency rationalisation within the sector under the overall health reform programme, and take account of experience to date with the practicalities of rationalisation. In November the Government approved the drafting of the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill which will, among other things, provide for the Women's Health Council (WHC) to be subsumed into my Department.

While there is clearly a need to secure efficiencies from the rationalisation programme, the primary aim is to streamline service delivery, professional registration and policy making in a number of areas in the health sector, through the integration and/or amalgamation of functions. Efficiencies will derive over time from economies of scale and the elimination of duplication in areas such as recruitment, procurement, payroll and ICT systems. It is too early to project what the savings expected might be.

It is expected that this rationalisation will take place during 2009. However, this is wholly dependant on the drafting, passing and enactment of the legislation.

105. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Health and Children the date, in relation to the announcement in Budget 2009 to merge the National Cancer Screening Service into the Health Service Executive, by which this will be done; if this will require legislation; the date by which this will be published; the savings that this is expected to accrue to the Exchequer in 2008, 2009 and 2010; the basis for those savings; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42109/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Government has recently approved the drafting of a Bill to subsume the National Council on Ageing and Older People and the Women's Health Council into the Department of Health and Children and to subsume the Drug Treatment Centre, the Crisis Pregnancy Agency and the National Cancer Screening Service (NCSS) into the Health Service Executive. The Bill will be published as soon as possible. The Strategy for Cancer Control, published in 2006 advocates a comprehensive cancer control policy programme. Cancer control is a whole population, integrated and cohesive approach to cancer that involves prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, and supportive and palliative care. It was in this context that the HSE National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) requested that the NCSS be brought within the HSE.

The NCSS already works closely with the NCCP and discussions will take place between my Department, the HSE and the NCSS to facilitate the transfer. I expect that the NCSS will be integrated into the HSE by the end of 2009.

The exact savings that may accrue to the Exchequer will become clearer as the transfer proceeds.

106. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Health and Children the date, in relation to the announcement in Budget 2009 to merge the National Cancer Registry Board into the Health Service Executive, by which this will be done; if this will require legislation; the date by which this will be published; the savings that this is expected to accrue to the Exchequer in 2008, 2009 and 2010; the basis for those savings; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42110/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Primary legislation is required to subsume the National Cancer Registry into the Health Service Executive's (HSE) National Cancer Control Programme. The appropriate legislation for this purpose is the Health Information Bill, which will be progressed in 2009.

The Strategy for Cancer Control, 2006 provides for a major reform programme in cancer control and the HSE established the National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) in response to the Strategy. To be successful, the programme requires accurate, timely and quality information on cancer control as an integrated element of its policy analysis, performance review and decision making. It will routinely require such data to demonstrably deliver equitable and quality services. For these reasons, the Department and the HSE agree that the data collection functions currently performed by the Registry should form an integral part of the NCCP. The Registry already works closely with the NCCP and discussions will take place between my Department, the HSE and the Registry to facilitate the transfer.

Details of savings that may accrue to the Exchequer will become clearer as the transfer proceeds.

107. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Health and Children the date, in relation to the announcement in Budget 2009 to merge the Crisis Pregnancy Agency into the Health Service Executive, by which this will be done; if this will require legislation; the date by which

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this will be published; the savings that this is expected to accrue to the Exchequer in 2008, 2009 and 2010; the basis for those savings; and if she will make a statement on the matter.
[42111/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): My Department's measures for the rationalisation of agencies within the health sector have been prepared primarily in the context of the OECD's recommendations in relation to the need for a more integrated public service. The measures reflect and build upon the progress to date with agency rationalisation within the sector under the overall health reform programme, and take account of experience to date with the practicalities of rationalisation.

While there is clearly a need to secure efficiencies from the rationalisation programme, the primary aim is to streamline service delivery, professional registration and policy making in a number of areas in the health sector, through the integration and/or amalgamation of functions. Efficiencies will derive over time from economies of scale and the elimination of duplication in areas such as recruitment, procurement, payroll and ICT systems.

The Government has recently approved the drafting of a Bill to subsume the National Council on Ageing and Older People and the Women's Health Council into the Department of Health and Children and to subsume the Crisis Pregnancy Agency, the Drug Treatment Centre and the National Cancer Screening Service into the Health Service Executive.

I am not in a position at this point to say when exactly the Crisis Pregnancy Agency will be subsumed into the Executive. The process will be subject to the enactment of the relevant legislation and negotiations with the parties involved.

108. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Health and Children the date, in relation to the announcement in Budget 2009 to merge the Drug Treatment Centre into the Health Service Executive, by which this will be done; if this will require legislation; the date by which this will be published; the savings that this is expected to accrue to the Exchequer in 2008, 2009 and 2010; the basis for those savings; and if she will make a statement on the matter.
[42112/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): My Department's measures for the rationalisation of agencies within the health sector have been prepared primarily in the context of the OECD's recommendations in relation to the need for a more integrated public service. The measures reflect and build upon the progress to date with agency rationalisation within the sector under the overall health reform programme, and take account of experience to date with the practicalities of rationalisation.

While there is clearly a need to secure efficiencies from the rationalisation programme, the primary aim is to streamline service delivery, professional registration, regulatory activity and policy making in a number of areas in the health sector, through the integration and/or amalgamation of functions. Efficiencies will derive over time from economies of scale and the elimination of duplication in areas such as recruitment, procurement, payroll and ICT systems.

The Government has recently approved the drafting of a Bill to subsume the National Council on Ageing and Older People and the Women's Health Council into the Department of Health and Children and to subsume the Crisis Pregnancy Agency, the Drug Treatment Centre and the National Cancer Screening Service into the Health Service Executive.

I am not in a position at this point to say when exactly the Drug Treatment Centre will be subsumed into the Executive. The process will be subject to the enactment of the relevant legislation and negotiations with the parties involved.

109. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Health and Children the date, in relation to the announcement in Budget 2009 to subsume the National Social Work Qualification Board, the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council and the Opticians Board into the Health and Social Care Professional Council, by which this will be done; if this will require legislation; the date by which this will be published; the savings that this is expected to accrue to the Exchequer in 2008, 2009 and 2010; the basis for those savings; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42113/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): My Department's measures for the rationalisation of agencies within the health sector have been prepared primarily in the context of the OECD's recommendations in relation to the need for a more integrated public service. The measures reflect and build upon the progress to date with agency rationalisation within the sector under the overall health reform programme, and take account of experience to date with the practicalities of rationalisation.

The National Social Work Qualifications Board (NSWQB) was established in 1997 under the Health Corporate Bodies Act, 1961 and is the designated authority for the profession of social work in Ireland under EU Directive 2005/36/EC. The Health and Social Care Professionals Council (H&SCPC) was established in March 2007, under The Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 for the purpose of protecting the public by promoting high standards of professional conduct, education and competence. The Council, currently in start up mode, will initially register twelve separate professions for statutory registration including Social Workers. Part 8 of the Health & Social Care Professionals Act 2005 already provides for the dissolution of the NSWQB and its rationalisation into the H&SCPC and work has commenced on the transfer of all Board staff, functions, assets and liabilities to the Council not later than May 2009.

The Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) is also to be integrated into the H&SCPC. PHECC was established in April 2000 by SI No 109 of 2000 under the Health Corporate Bodies Act 1961, as amended. PHECC's primary function is to develop appropriate standards in pre-hospital emergency care. It concerns itself with the development of professional and performance standards for the ambulance services and for ambulance services personnel, in addition to the registration of emergency care practitioners and the accreditation of institutions providing training for them. As a registration body, PHECC has a role in protecting the public. It also fulfils this function by laying down, promoting and monitoring standards for the delivery of pre-hospital emergency care. With the establishment of the H&SCPC, and its responsibility for registration and fitness to practise arrangements in relation to twelve separate health and social care professions, it is considered appropriate that in due course the Council should assume responsibility for these functions in relation to pre-hospital emergency care practitioners also. This will put the arrangements for pre-hospital emergency care practitioners on the same footing as for other health and social care professionals and will ensure consistency and uniformity of practice in relation to the regulation of those professions. My Department is examining in detail the nature of the legislative changes required to give effect to the transfer, as appropriate, of PHECC's functions to the H&SCPC, and it is anticipated that primary legislation will be required. Having regard to the planned timescale for the registration of the twelve professions named in the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005, it is envisaged at this stage that the transfer of PHECC's functions to the H&SCPC will take place within a three-year timeframe.

The Opticians Board is also to be integrated into the H&SCPC to ensure consistency and standardisation in the regulation of health and social care professionals. The function of the Opticians Board is to provide for the registration and control of optometrists and dispensing

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opticians. The Opticians Board was established under the Opticians Acts 1956 and 2003. Primary legislation will be required to provide for the dissolution of the Board and for the transfer of its functions to the H&SCPC. The immediate priority for the H&SCPC is to establish statutory registration for the twelve health and social care professions designated for registration under the 2005 Act. The H&SCPC has examined which professions from within the designated twelve are most suitable for early registration and has recently decided to appoint the first two of twelve statutory Registration Boards, the Social Work Registration Board and the Physiotherapist Registration Board, to be established by end of 2008. The H&SCPC will continue to work to establish additional Registration Boards from within the designated 12 professional grades during the course of 2009, in the context of available funding and resources. While the transfer to the Council of the functions currently exercised by the Opticians Board is dependent on progress made in the initial registration of the other twelve professions, it is anticipated at this stage that this will also happen within a three-year timeframe.

While there is clearly a need to secure efficiencies from the rationalisation programme, the primary aim is to streamline service delivery, professional registration and policy making in a number of areas in the health sector, through the integration and/or amalgamation of functions. It is envisaged that efficiencies and savings will derive over time from economies of scale and the elimination of duplication in areas such as recruitment, procurement, payroll and ICT systems.

110. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Health and Children the date, in relation to the announcement in Budget 2009 to merge the Postgraduate Medical and Dental Board into the Dental Council, the Medical Council, and the Health Service Executive, by which this will be done; if this will require legislation; the date by which this will be published; the savings that this is expected to accrue to the Exchequer in 2008, 2009 and 2010; the basis for those savings; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42114/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Arising from the Government decision of 8 July 2008 on expenditure measures, a comprehensive programme of agency rationalisation is to be implemented across the public service.

A programme of agency rationalisation in the health sector involves a total of fifteen agencies which includes the Postgraduate Medical and Dental Board. It currently has a staff of 13 (whole time equivalents) and a budget of €9.862m for 2008.

The Medical Practitioners Act 2007 provides for the dissolution of the Postgraduate Medical and Dental Board and the transfer of its functions to the HSE, the Medical Council and the Dental Council. The preparation of a commencement order is in train and it is planned that the transfer of functions will be effective from 1 January 2009.

While there is clearly a need to secure efficiencies from the rationalisation of the Postgraduate Medical and Dental Board and other agencies, the primary aim of the rationalisation programme is to streamline service delivery, professional registration and policy making through the integration and/or amalgamation of functions. Efficiencies will derive over time from economies of scale and the elimination of duplication in areas such as payroll, administration etc. It is too early to project at this point in time what savings the rationalisation will generate.

111. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Health and Children the date, in relation to the announcement in Budget 2009 to merge the National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery into the Health Service Executive and An Bord Altranais, by which this will be done; if this will require legislation; the date by which this will

be published; the savings that this is expected to accrue to the Exchequer in 2008, 2009 and 2010; the basis for those savings; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42115/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Arising from the Government decision of 8 July 2008 on expenditure measures, a comprehensive programme of agency rationalisation is to be implemented across the public service.

A programme of agency rationalisation in the health sector involves a total of fifteen agencies which includes the National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery. It currently has a staff of 11.5 (whole time equivalents) and a budget of €4.473m for 2008.

My Department has drafted heads of a new Nurses and Midwives Bill, which has already been published as part of the public consultation process. The proposed new Bill provides for the dissolution of the National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery and the transfer of its functions to the HSE and An Bord Altranais. The draft heads of Bill are currently being revised following the public consultation. The Bill is expected to be published early in 2009 and the rationalisation of the National Council will follow the enactment of the legislation.

While there is clearly a need to secure efficiencies from the rationalisation of the National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery and other agencies, the primary aim of the rationalisation programme is to streamline service delivery, professional registration and policy making through the integration and/or amalgamation of functions. Efficiencies will derive over time from economies of scale and the elimination of duplication in areas such as payroll, administration etc. It is too early to project at this point in time what savings the rationalisation will generate.

112. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Health and Children the date, in relation to the announcement in Budget 2009 to create a new body, the Public Health and Medicines Safety Authority to replace the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, the Office of Tobacco Control and the Irish Medicines Board, by which this new body will be established and the other bodies abolished; if this will require legislation; the date by which this will be published; the savings that this is expected to accrue to the Exchequer in 2008, 2009 and 2010; the basis for those savings; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42116/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Arising from the Government decision of 8 July 2008 on expenditure measures, a comprehensive programme of agency rationalisation is to be implemented across the public service. As part of this programme, three agencies, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, the Irish Medicines Board and the Office of Tobacco Control will be amalgamated to form a new Public Health and Medicines Safety Authority.

Primary legislation will be required to give legal effect to the creation of this Authority. It is expected that the Authority will be established by 2011.

This Department's measures for the rationalisation of agencies within the health sector have been prepared primarily in the context of the OECD's recommendations in relation to the need for a more integrated public service. The measures reflect and build upon the progress to date with agency rationalisation within the sector under the overall health reform programme, and take account of experience to date with the practicalities of rationalisation.

While there is clearly a need to secure efficiencies from the rationalisation programme, its primary aim is to streamline service delivery, professional registration and policy making in a

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number of areas in the health sector, through the integration and/or amalgamation of functions. Efficiencies will, however, derive over time from economies of scale and the elimination of duplication in areas such as recruitment, procurement, payroll and ICT systems.

Regional Airports.

113. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Transport the grant aid allocated to a regional airport (details supplied) in each of the past five years and to date in 2008, providing details of the reason for each category of funding. [41969/08]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Grant aid paid in each of the last 5 years in respect of Ireland West Airport Knock (IWAK) is as follows:

	Capital grants	Operational subvention
	€	€
2003	2,030,996	400,000
2004	0	400,000
2005	321,218	400,000
2006	529,365	0
2007	699,465	0

Prior to 2006, capital grant funding at the regional airports was made available under the National Development Plan 2000 to 2006. From 2007 onwards, grant aid relates to the programme of capital grants for these airports which was approved by the Government in February 2007 providing for grants amounting to €86 million from within the Transport 21 envelope in the period up to the end of 2010. In 2008, IWAK has already received €2,422,472.

Grants in respect of operational expenditure were formerly provided under a scheme relating to marketing, safety and security at the regional airports. This was superseded in 2006 by a new Core Airport Management Operational Expenditure Subvention Scheme conforming to new EU mandatory guidelines. Based on a contract with each airport, this scheme aims to subvent operational expenditure on the provision of core airport services where this cannot be fully covered by the airport's total revenue streams. IWAK has been trading profitably in recent years, and therefore has not received payments under the scheme.

114. **Deputy Brian O'Shea** asked the Minister for Transport further to Parliamentary Question No. 131 of 13 November 2008, when decisions will be reached in regard to the application for funding by Waterford Regional Airport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42028/08]

Minister for Transport, Deputy Noel Dempsey: The question of priorities for funding in respect of Waterford and the other regional airports in 2009 is under consideration at present. I would hope to be in a position to respond in the near future.

Public Transport.

115. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Transport further to Parliamentary Question No. 280 of 29 October 2008 the progress that has been made in his engagement with the parties concerned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42030/08]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The Deputy will be aware that a company that holds a bus route licence in respect of a public bus passenger service between Cork and Galway ceased to operate that service with effect from 3rd November 2008. Since it received notification of that cessation, my Department has been in regular contact with the company in question for the purpose of facilitating the possible re-instatement of the service. Resulting from those contacts the company has submitted proposals to re-introduce the service based on a revised routing and timetable. This submission is being considered as a matter of urgency by my Department with a view to giving an early decision.

Dublin Transport Authority.

116. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Transport the date, with regard to the establishment of the Dublin Transport Authority to incorporate the Dublin Transport Office, the Commission for Taxi Regulation and the public licensing function of his Department as announced in Budget 2009, by which this body will be established; the status of the legislation required to give effect to this announcement; the savings that this is expected to accrue to the Exchequer in 2008, 2009 and 2010; the basis for those savings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42105/08]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): It is my intention to establish the Dublin Transport Authority as early as possible in 2009 once I am satisfied that it has the financial and staffing resources necessary to enable it discharge effectively the functions assigned to it by the Oireachtas under the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008.

Discussions are currently taking place between my Department and the Department of Finance on the financing and staffing of the Authority against the background of the difficult position faced by the Exchequer as outlined in the recent Budget.

Part 6 of the Dublin Transport Authority Act provides for the dissolution of the Dublin Transportation Office and the transfer of its employees and a small number of employees of the Railway Procurement Agency to the Dublin Transport Authority (DTA) in accordance with the detailed arrangements provided for in that Part.

The agreed programme for Government includes a commitment to improving bus services under Transport 21 by reforming the bus licensing provisions of the Road Transport Act 1932, to facilitate the optimum provision of services by providing a level playing field for all market participants, both public and private.

It is my intention that proposals for the new bus licensing regime will be contained in a Public Transport Regulation Bill which will deal with the replacement of the Road Transport Act 1932 and the provisions of the Transport Act 1958 that relate to the provision of bus services by the State bus companies. It is intended that responsibility for bus licensing and public transport service contracts nationwide will be assigned to the DTA under this Bill. It is also proposed that the Commission for Taxi Regulation will be absorbed into the DTA under this Bill.

The overall impact of these proposals is that the expanded DTA will absorb the DTO and the CTR as well as the functions envisaged in the Programme for Government for a National Transport Regulator. It is my intention to seek Government approval to a General Scheme of the Public Transport Regulation Bill before the end of the year with a view to publication in 2009.

A key objective of the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 and the broader public transport regulatory reform programme is to ensure better value for money from the very substantial funds which are being made available by the Exchequer for investment in public transport

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infrastructure and to support the provision of public transport services. I am satisfied that substantial benefits will accrue as a result of the improved procurement, regulation, management and coordination of transport services. Those benefits will accrue to the travelling public, employers, taxpayers and society at large and will make an important contribution to sustaining competitiveness and addressing the increasing challenges of climate change.

Judicial Appointments.

117. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if an appointment of a permanent District Court judge in the Waterford district has been made; the reason for the delay in making such an assignment; if there is another city here that does not have a permanent District Court judge; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[41965/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I have nothing further to add to my reply to Question No. 157 of 23 October 2008.

Stardust Inquiry.

118. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position regarding a matter (details supplied). [41979/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): As the Deputy will appreciate, the management of the process to examine the case submitted by the Stardust Victims Committee is a matter for the independent person appointed to carry out that examination, Mr. Paul Coffey SC. I understand, however, that he aims to complete his work by the end of the year.

Prison Building Programme.

119. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when, with respect to the dedicated road to the site of the proposed new prison at Thornton Hall, the route of the new road was decided and by whom; the person from whom the land needed for the new road was purchased; the cost of same; when the purchases were commenced and completed; the amount of land involved; if a company (details supplied) was one of the vendors; the person from whom his Department purchased the land on which it is seeking to build the new Forensic Science Laboratory, the Garda Technical Bureau and a new garda station adjacent to the proposed Thornton Hall development; the amount of land and public money that is involved in these purchases; the tendering procedures that were involved in the procurement process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42001/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): While the existing R130 road to the Thornton Hall site was deemed to be technically adequate, the major concern expressed by local residents at meetings was the danger that would be posed to children at the local national school by both construction and operating traffic on the road to the prison site as well as the nuisance and annoyance such traffic would cause to local residents. Following meetings with the various local groups the then Tánaiste advised that while he was satisfied that the existing route was adequate, in the light of concerns expressed, he was willing to consider an alternative route provided the necessary land was offered to him at a cost less per acre than that already paid for the site at Thornton. An alternative access route, required a corridor of land from the nearest main road (R135 then the N2) to the Thornton Hall site.

Towards the end of 2006 the Irish Prison Service was approached by a representative of Korado Ltd which had recently bought land in the area. A technical examination was carried out and the advice was that a corridor comprising 8.8 acres across the lands of Korado Ltd and the Pierce family (who had previously offered land for sale) would provide a cost effective dedicated access route. The exact route was determined on the basis of civil engineering requirements and the willingness of the landowners to sell the relevant portion. The necessary land (circa 3.3 acres from Korado Limited at a cost of €495,000 and circa 5.4 acres from the Pierce family at a cost of €810,000) was purchased in 2007 for a total of €1,300,000 or approximately €150,000 an acre. The acquisitions met the procurement requirements for such purchases and an independent valuation of the land was obtained prior to purchase. I am not in a position to comment on the beneficial ownership of Korado Ltd.

In relation to the other issues raised by the Deputy, the landowners adjacent to the Thornton Hall site (Pierce family) had indicated that further land might be available for sale. The Department were looking for a secure location for a number of other Justice projects and having a prison with 24 hour /seven day security immediately adjacent offered certain security advantages. A decision was made to purchase a further 6.3 acres for approximately €900,000 because of its proximity to the prison site and the new access route.

Garda Reserve.

120. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of garda reserves who have been appointed to Cork City and county to date; the stations to which they have been allocated; and the number of reserves expected to come on stream over the period ahead in the same area. [42042/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): At 17th November 2008, there were 36 attested Reserve Gardaí attached to the following stations in Cork City and County:

	Number
Anglesea Street	11
Bandon	1
Clonakilty	1
Fermoy	2
Gurranbraher	6
Macroom	1
Mayfield	3
Midleton	4
Togher	4
Watercourse Road	3
Total	36

There are currently 7 Garda Reserve trainees in Cork City and County and it is anticipated that they will be allocated to stations in Cork following completion of their training in 2009.

The recruitment of members to the Garda Reserve is ongoing with regular intakes into the Garda College. I welcome the prospect of further assignments of Garda Reserve members to Cork as additional members from Cork become available.

Visa Applications.

121. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if a person (details supplied) in County Cork who has been allocated a class c visa can be considered for a class d visa. [42043/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): Where the person referred to by the Deputy is outside the State, a 'D' type "Join Spouse" visa application can be made.

Comprehensive details when making such a visa application is available on the website of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service — www.inis.gov.ie

Garda Deployment.

122. **Deputy Pádraic McCormack** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when a resident garda presence will be restored to Cárna Village, Connemara, County Galway following the damage to the barracks; if there are proposals to facilitate the presence of a garda in Cárna in the garda residence in Cárna; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42046/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I am advised by the Garda authorities that following an arson attack on the station on 12 October last, the Gardaí allocated to Carna are temporarily operating from Clifden Garda Station. Since the attack Garda activity in the area has been increased with additional patrols being carried out. In addition to the regular policing services provided, the area is patrolled by Galway Traffic Corps Units, District Detective Units and Crime Task Force Units and other Divisional resources will continue to be made available as required.

I am further advised that it is planned to secure an office in Carna in the near future. In addition, refurbishment work on the Garda Station commenced on the 17 November and is expected to be completed over the coming months.

The policing of Carna and its sub-district remains a priority and is kept under review by Garda management.

Garda Equipment.

123. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he has raised with the Garda Commissioner this Deputy's proposal articulated during statements on the killing of a person (details supplied) that the roll-out of secure digital radio to Limerick be brought forward to at least coincide with its roll-out to Dublin; and if so the new expected date of roll-out for Limerick. [42052/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I refer the Deputy to my Replies to Parliamentary Questions No. 287 on 18 November and 362 and 363 of 21 October last which set out the overall approach to the implementation of the National Digital Radio Service and specifically for the Limerick Division.

There are a wide range of factors that determine the roll-out plans for the national infrastructure and there is regular communication between my Department, the Garda Síochána, the Department of Finance and other agencies on the implementation plans for the service. The plans are kept under review and Garda operational requirements continue to be taken into account in determining the overall schedule.

Residency Permits.

124. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the progress to date in the application for residency and when a stamp will be renewed in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42067/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I am informed by the Immigration Division of my Department that the person in question was granted permission to remain in the State on Stamp 4 conditions on 7 November 2008. This permission is valid until 23 October 2009.

125. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position in relation to an application for family reunification in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 7; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42068/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I have been informed by the Immigration Division of my Department that a decision has been reached in relation to the application for family reunification and the person in question has been informed of same.

Deportation Orders.

126. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the current or expected residency status in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42069/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I refer the Deputy to the Reply given to his Parliamentary Question No. 536 on Wednesday 31 October 2007. The status of the person concerned remains as set out in that Reply.

The person concerned has continued to meet his presentation requirements with the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB). He is due to present again on Tuesday 2 December 2008.

The enforcement of the Deportation Order is an operational matter for the GNIB.

Asylum Applications.

127. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position regarding an application for residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42070/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The person concerned applied for asylum on 7 January 2005. Her application was refused following consideration of her case by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and, on appeal, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.

Subsequently, in accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was informed, by letter dated 29 June 2006, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of her. She was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why she should be allowed to remain temporarily in the State. Representations were received from the person concerned at that time.

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The person concerned has also submitted an application for Subsidiary Protection in the State in accordance with the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations, 2006 (S.I. No. 518 of 2006) and this application is under consideration at present. When consideration of this application has been completed, the person concerned will be notified in writing of the outcome.

In the event that the Subsidiary Protection application is refused, the case file of the person concerned, including all representations submitted, will then be considered under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. When this latter consideration has been completed, the case file of the person concerned is passed to me for decision.

128. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if leave to remain temporarily in the State will be offered to a person (details supplied) in County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42071/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The person concerned applied for asylum on 31 December 2001. Two minor children of the person concerned were included in her application. Her application was refused following consideration of her case by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and, on appeal, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.

Subsequently, in accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was informed, by letter dated 28 February 2003, that the Minister proposed to make Deportation Orders in respect of her and her two children. She was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of Deportation Orders or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why she and her children should be allowed to remain temporarily in the State. Representations were submitted on behalf of the person concerned at that time.

Following consideration of the case of the person concerned, under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement, Deportation Orders were signed in respect of the person concerned and her two children on 22 February 2005. Notice of these Orders was served by registered letter dated 23 March 2005 requiring the person concerned and her two children to present themselves at the Offices of the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) on a specified date in order to make travel arrangements for their deportation from the State.

Judicial Review proceedings were instituted on behalf of the person concerned on 24 May 2005 challenging the decisions to make Deportation Orders in respect of the person concerned and her two children. These Proceedings were subsequently withdrawn by the person concerned who was afforded the opportunity to submit fresh representations within a period of 21 days. While no representations were received in my Department within the agreed timeframe, the person concerned, through her new legal representative, has contended that this situation arose as a result of inaction on the part of her previous legal representative rather than as a result of any act or omission on her part. The person concerned, through her new legal representative, submitted fresh representations to my Department on 9 June 2008.

In light of the status of the person concerned as a person subject to a valid Deportation Order, the representations lodged on behalf of the person concerned are being treated as an application for revocation of the existing Deportation Orders, pursuant to the provisions of Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended). When a decision has been made on

this application, this decision, and the consequences of the decision, will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned.

The Deputy may be assured that the existing Deportation Orders will not be enforced pending the consideration of the Section 3(11) application referred to.

129. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the current or expected residency status in the case of persons (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42072/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The immigration case histories and up to date positions of the three persons concerned, a husband, wife and child, are almost identical. Accordingly, for the purposes of the Deputy's Question, I will deal with the three cases as one.

The persons concerned applied for asylum on 2 February 2007. Their applications were refused following consideration of their cases by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and, on appeal, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.

Subsequently, in accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended), the persons concerned were informed, by letter dated 18 February 2008 in the case of the first named person concerned and by letter dated 15 February 2008 in the cases of the second and third named persons concerned, that the Minister proposed to make Deportation Orders in respect of them. They were given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of Deportation Orders or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why they should be allowed to remain temporarily in the State. In addition, they were notified of their entitlement to apply for Subsidiary Protection in the State in accordance with the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations, 2006 (S.I. No. 518 of 2006).

The persons concerned submitted applications for Subsidiary Protection in the State in accordance with these Regulations and, following consideration of these applications, it was determined that the persons concerned were not eligible for Subsidiary Protection in the State. The persons concerned were notified of these decisions by letters dated 15 October 2008.

The case files of the persons concerned, including all representations submitted, will now be considered under Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. When these latter considerations have been completed, the case files of the persons concerned are passed to me for decision.

Residency Permits.

130. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the current or expected residency status in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Louth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42073/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The person concerned has been granted Leave to Remain in the State for a three year period, to 28 August 2011. This decision was conveyed in writing to the person concerned by registered letter dated 28 August 2008, a copy of which was sent to her legal representative on the same date. This decision also applied to the two minor children of the person concerned. This letter was subsequently returned undelivered to my Department which would suggest that the person concerned no longer resided at the address on record in my Department. The person concerned

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should, without delay, notify my Department of her current address so that this decision letter can be re-issued.

The Deputy might wish to note that it is incumbent on an applicant to notify my Department when they change address, in accordance with the provisions of Articles 11 and 18 of the Aliens Order, 1946. The person concerned was notified in writing of this requirement.

Asylum Applications.

131. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the current or anticipated residency status in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42074/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I refer the Deputy to Parliamentary Question No. 853 of Tuesday, 17 June 2008, and the written Reply to that Question.

The person concerned arrived in the State on 10 September 2003 and applied for asylum. His application was refused following consideration of his case by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and, on appeal, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.

Subsequently, in accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was informed, by letter dated 13 February 2006, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why he should be allowed to remain temporarily in the State.

Representations have been submitted on behalf of the person concerned and will be fully considered, under Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement, before the file is passed to me for decision.

132. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the current or expected residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42075/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The person concerned applied for asylum on 21 September 2006. His application was refused following consideration of his case by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and, on appeal, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.

Subsequently, in accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was informed, by letter dated 26 August 2008, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why he should be allowed to remain temporarily in the State. In addition, he was notified of his entitlement to apply for Subsidiary Protection in the State in accordance with the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations 2006 (S.I. No. 518 of 2006). The person concerned submitted an application for Subsidiary Protection in the State in accordance with these Regulations and this application is under consideration at present. When consideration of this application has been completed, the person concerned will be notified in writing of the outcome.

In the event that the Subsidiary Protection application is refused, the case file of the person concerned, including all representations submitted, will then be considered under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. When this latter consideration has been completed, the file is passed to me for decision.

Residency Permits.

133. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the current or expected residency and citizenship status in the case of persons (details supplied) in Dublin 24; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42076/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I wish to inform the Deputy that both persons in question were granted permission to remain in the State, in May 2002, under the arrangements then in place for the non-EEA parents of Irish citizen children. I am informed that the permission granted is currently valid until 17 January, 2009, in both cases.

Asylum Applications.

134. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the current or expected residency status in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Meath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42077/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The person concerned applied for asylum on 8 May 2003. Her application was refused following consideration of her case by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner. The person concerned appealed this determination to the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.

Judicial Review Proceedings were instituted by the person concerned challenging the determination of the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner. When the Judicial Review Proceedings were finalised, the asylum application of the person concerned was remitted for further consideration by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner. Following this further consideration of her case, her application for a declaration of refugee status was refused. The person concerned lodged a new appeal with the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. The Refugee Appeals Tribunal affirmed the Commissioner's determination.

The Deputy should note that the person concerned gave birth to a child in the State in early 2007 and this child was included on her asylum application.

Based on the recommendation of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal, and in accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was informed, by letter dated 18 June 2008, that the Minister proposed to make deportation orders in respect of her and her child. She was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of deportation orders or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why she and her child should be allowed to remain temporarily in the State. In addition, she was notified of her entitlement to apply for Subsidiary Protection in the State in accordance with the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations, 2006 (S.I. No. 518 of 2006). To date no application for subsidiary protection has been received.

Representations have been submitted on behalf of the person concerned and these representations will be fully considered, under Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended)

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and Section 5 of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement, before the file is passed to me for decision.

135. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position in respect of a residency application in the name of a person (details supplied) in County Meath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42078/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): It is not the practice to comment in detail on individual asylum applications.

As the Deputy will be aware, applications for refugee status in the State are determined by an independent process comprising the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and the Refugee Appeals Tribunal which make recommendations to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform on whether such status should be granted.

A final decision on each application is made following receipt of the recommendation of the Refugee Applications Commissioner or the decision of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal, as appropriate.

Drug Courts.

136. **Deputy Charles Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when he will publish the report on his Department's examination of the Drug Treatment Court; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42093/08]

Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The Drug Treatment Court, which originally operated on a pilot basis in the North inner city of Dublin, has been placed on a permanent footing and extended to the Dublin 7 area. The Court uses a multi-disciplinary approach and involves a range of Government Departments and agencies charged with dealing with various aspects of the problem of drug misuse. The Court operates with the assistance of a team which includes the judge, a probation and welfare officer, an addiction nurse, a Garda liaison officer and education/training representative and counsellors.

My Department is currently examining the operation of the court and officials are looking at best practice elsewhere to see how the Court's rather low throughput levels might be increased. It is intended to conclude this examination as soon as possible.

Foreign Conflicts.

137. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the financial aid being given to the Governments of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41971/08]

138. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the action Ireland is taking to help stop the killings of civilians in the Democratic Republic of Congo. [41972/08]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 137 and 138 together.

The continued fighting in the North Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is a matter of grave concern, both in terms of its implications for the humanitarian situation, and for the stability of the wider Great Lakes region. I am particularly distressed by reports of targeted attacks against the civilian population, and by the plight of the estimated one million people now displaced in North Kivu.

The Government fully supports the international efforts currently underway to find a solution to the crisis in eastern DRC. UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, has been heavily engaged in discussions in an effort to stabilise the situation. The appointment of the former Nigerian President, Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, an experienced mediator in regional disputes, as the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General is a particularly helpful development, and I welcome his visit to DRC over the past weekend. I welcome also the efforts of DRC's neighbours to come together to help solve this problem at the Nairobi Regional Conference on 7 November, and I urge them to persist in their efforts.

MONUC, the UN peacekeeping force, which at 17,000-strong is the UN's largest peacekeeping operation, is mandated to use all means necessary to protect the civilian population. Since 2001, three Irish Defence Forces officers have been deployed with MONUC as Military Liaison Officers. However, MONUC is now seriously overstretched, and UN officials are calling for extra troops and air assets. The UN Security Council is fully seized of the situation and has been discussing appropriate responses as a matter of urgency.

My EU colleagues and I discussed the crisis in DRC at the General Affairs and External Relations Council on 10 November 2008, and were briefed by French Foreign Minister, Bernard Kouchner, on his recent visit to eastern DRC with UK Foreign Secretary, David Miliband. We agreed on Council Conclusions, which urged all parties to respect the ceasefire and the Goma and Nairobi peace agreements. The EU is extremely concerned by the difficulties facing MONUC, but we believe it will be more effective (in terms of alleviating the crisis in the short-term) to strengthen our cooperation with MONUC rather than to initiate steps towards an ESDP military mission. In addition, the EU will, of course, continue to contribute to diplomatic efforts.

The EU already has two ESDP missions in DRC: EUSEC, which provides assistance to the DRC authorities on security sector reform; and EUPOL RD Congo, which provides assistance to the authorities on police reform. Both missions aim to address the underlying causes of the conflict and work towards a durable peace in DRC, which can only be achieved through political progress and the consolidation of the rule of law.

Ireland does not give any financial aid directly to the governments of either DRC or Rwanda. However, Ireland is a significant humanitarian donor to both countries through NGOs and through UN and Red Cross systems. Already in 2008, Ireland has committed over €12 million in humanitarian aid funding to DRC, and our support to the country since 2006 totals over €33 million. In response to this worsening crisis, the Government has promised up to €1 million in extra funding for humanitarian relief in North Kivu. Irish Aid funding to Rwanda since 2006 amounts to more than €8 million. The European Commission has also allocated an additional €6.7 million in emergency aid to eastern DRC.

State Visits.

139. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the reason the Government protested to the Czech Government regarding the meeting of Irish dissidents when its own official policy is of wanting to meet so-called opposition figures when Irish officials visit Cuba. [41978/08]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin): No protest was made to the Czech Government in relation to any meetings held by the Czech President during his recent State Visit.

Departmental Agencies.

140. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism the date, in respect of the announcement in budget 2009 to combine the Irish Museum for Modern Art, the Crawford Art Gallery and the National Gallery of Ireland while retaining separate identities, by which this will be done; if this will require legislation; the date by which this will be published; the savings that this is expected to accrue to the Exchequer in 2008, 2009 and 2010; the basis for those savings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42119/08]

Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Martin Cullen): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Questions Nos. 77 and 84 on 19th November 2008.

141. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism the date, regarding the announcement in budget 2009 to merge the National Archives and the Irish Manuscripts Commission into the National Library, by which this will be done; if this will require legislation; the date by which this will be published; the savings that this is expected to accrue to the Exchequer in 2008, 2009 and 2010; the basis for those savings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42120/08]

Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Martin Cullen): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Questions 76, 77 and 84 on the 19th November 2008.

Social Welfare Benefits.

142. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs if she will ensure that the application for assistance with mortgage payment for a person (details supplied) in County Dublin is processed. [41962/08]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The supplementary welfare allowance scheme, which includes mortgage interest supplement, is administered on behalf of the department by the community welfare division of the Health Service Executive.

Mortgage interest supplement provides short-term income support to eligible people who are unable to meet their mortgage interest repayments in respect of a house which is their sole place of residence. The supplement assists with the interest portion of the mortgage repayments only.

The Health Service Executive has advised that it has no record of an application for mortgage interest supplement from the person concerned. He should contact the community welfare service directly in order to make an application for mortgage interest supplement.

143. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will be awarded and granted jobseekers allowance. [41980/08]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The person concerned applied for jobseeker's allowance on 10 October 2008. He had been employed for a short period as a driver with a transport firm and was previously self-employed. Following an interview by a Social Welfare Inspector on 14 October, 2008, he was requested to provide documentation regarding his earnings, bank deposits and proof of address. When all of the requested information is received a decision will be made and he will be notified of the outcome.

Under Social Welfare legislation decisions in relation to claims must be made by Deciding Officers and Appeals Officers. These officers are statutorily appointed and I have no role in regard to making such decisions.

144. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs when child benefit will be granted in the case of a person (detail supplied) in County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42082/08]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): In order to qualify for a range of Social Welfare payments, including Child Benefit, applicants are required to satisfy the Habitual Residence condition (HRC), which was introduced on 1st May 2004.

The HRC requires the applicant to satisfy the Deciding Officer that they meet certain conditions, including that their centre of interest is in Ireland and that their future intentions, as demonstrated, are to remain in Ireland.

The person concerned is a Moldovan national and is still awaiting a final decision from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform on her residency application. The Child Benefit application was refused on 24th May 2008 as the Deciding Officer, having considered all the circumstances, did not consider that the person concerned satisfied the HR condition as her centre of interest and future intentions to remain here were uncertain.

The person concerned was notified of the decision in writing on 24th May 2008 and given the right of appeal. To date no appeal has been received.

Social Welfare Appeals.

145. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs if a review can or will be undertaken in the case of an application for supplementary welfare allowance or rent supplement in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; if this parliamentary question can be taken as an appeal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42083/08]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): All applicants regardless of nationality, from 1 May 2004, are required to be habitually resident in the State in order to qualify for supplementary welfare allowance. The person concerned was refused supplementary welfare allowance and rent supplement on the grounds that he is not habitually resident in the State. The Executive has advised that an appeal against this decision has been received from the person concerned. The appeal is being forwarded to the Executive's designated Appeals Officer who will contact him directly when a decision has been made on his appeal.

Social Welfare Benefits.

146. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the outcome of an application for a State non-contributory pension for a person (details supplied) in County Mayo. [42095/08]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): An application for State Pension (Non-Contributory) was received from the person concerned on 21 st August 2008 and was referred to the local Social Welfare Inspector for investigation. On receipt of the inspector's report a decision will be made on his claim and he will be notified of the outcome.

Departmental Agencies.

147. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs in respect of the announcement in Budget 2009 to integrate the Combat Poverty Agency and the Office of Social Inclusion within her Department, the date by which this will be done; if this will require legislation; the date by which this will be published; the savings that this is expected to accrue

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to the Exchequer in 2008, 2009 and 2010; the basis for those savings; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42117/08]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Government's decision to integrate the Combat Poverty Agency and the Office for Social Inclusion within the Department of Social and Family Affairs was informed by the findings of a review of the Combat Poverty Agency which was undertaken on foot of a Government Decision on the 6th of June 2007. The Department is working with the Board of the Agency in finalising a plan for the smooth integration of the Combat Poverty Agency and the Office for Social Inclusion. It is planned to hold meetings and workshops with the staff in both organisations before the plan is finalised.

As the Combat Poverty Agency is established under statute legislation changes will be required to alter its status. I intend bringing forward legislative provisions to effect those changes at the Committee stage of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, 2008. It is proposed that the legislative provisions will be brought into effect by way of a Commencement Order and it is envisaged that a period up to July 2009 will be required to complete the integration arrangements.

Arrangements regarding the position of the Agency staff will be finalised following discussions with the Department of Finance, the staff and their union representatives. Other work will involve winding up the business of the agency including finalising accounts and transferring assets.

The integration of the Combat Poverty Agency and the Office for Social Inclusion will mean a better use and allocation of funds in relation to supporting the Government's anti poverty and social inclusion strategies. There will be savings resulting from the integration, for example, in terms of accommodation and support services. The extent and timing of savings will be identified and dealt with as part of the implementation process which is underway.

148. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs in relation to the announcement in Budget 2009 to assign the Money Advice and Budgeting Service to Citizens Information Board, the date by which this will be done; if this will require legislation; the date by which this will be published; the savings that this is expected to accrue to the Exchequer in 2008, 2009 and 2010; the basis for those savings; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42118/08]

Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) is the main Government funded service which provides assistance to people who are over-indebted and need help and advice in coping with debt problems. There are 53 independent companies with voluntary boards of management and over 240 money advice staff operating the local services throughout the country. Almost €18 million has been provided in 2008 to assist the MABS in dealing with its workload and a similar allocation will be provided for the service in 2009.

Last year, MABS provided services to over 12,400 new clients throughout the country. To date this year over 13,800 new clients have approached the service. The MABS National Telephone Helpline which was launched in October 2007 has dealt to date with approximately 10,000 calls.

The MABS provides a high quality personal service to the public and makes a difference to peoples lives. However, it has been recognised for some time that the service needs a proper legislative basis and structure. The Programme for Government envisaged that such a new

structure for the MABS would involve strong national leadership and would maximise the current local voluntary involvement in the service.

The Government has decided that this can best be achieved by placing the MABS with the Citizens Information Board. The MABS and Citizens Information Centres complement each other well as both are involved in providing information, advice and advocacy services to the public. In addition, the Citizens Information Board has a long association with the MABS at both national and local level and was involved in establishing some of the original MABS pilot projects.

It is not envisaged that significant savings or additional costs will arise on the assignment of the provision of the MABS to the Citizens Information Board. Rather the intention is, in line with the Programme for Government, to provide strong management support to the local voluntary companies in the provision of a high quality service to meet the needs of people encountering debt difficulties in today's society. However cost efficiencies will be realised in the medium to longer term through the integration of support services such as administration and IT.

The legislative provisions to give effect to the proposed changes are contained in the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2008 which is before Dail Eireann at present. It is proposed that the legislative provisions will be brought into effect by way of a Commencement Order and that a six months period up to July 2009 will be required to complete the administrative arrangements for the transfer of responsibility for the MABS to the Citizens Information Board.

Departmental Expenditure.

149. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Defence the cost of the recent investigation by consultants into the possible risks posed by hazardous waste to Defence Force personnel on Haulbowline Island; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42050/08]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O'Dea): My Department engaged consultants to carry an Environmental Health and Safety Assessment in the Naval Base, Haulbowline earlier this year. RPS were commissioned to do the assessment. The cost of the review was €50,000 (excluding VAT). This cost includes some additional costs for sampling and testing which was commissioned as a result of the preliminary findings of the report.

Election Management System.

150. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the ongoing cost on a monthly and yearly basis of storing and maintaining electronic voting machines. [42091/08]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): Data in respect of the annual costs associated with the local storage of electronic voting machines are compiled by my Department. Based on figures received in my Department from Returning Officers, the total annual costs for storage of the electronic voting equipment (including the cost of insurance, service charges, rates and heating) for 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 were some €658,000; €696,000; €706,000; and €489,000 respectively. Provisional data from Returning Officers indicate that a total of some €139,000 was expended on storage in the first six months of 2008.

In 2007, over 60% of the electronic voting machines (some 4,762 in total) were moved to a central storage facility located at Gormanston Army Camp. Costs incurred to date in respect of the movement and storage of this equipment are some €328,000.

Local Authority Housing.

151. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government his plans to review the differential rent scheme for local authority accommodation; if he will review the decision to assess payments such as carer's allowance as means for the purpose of this scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41977/08]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Michael Finneran): The making and amending of rent schemes is the responsibility of local authorities as an integral part of their housing management functions, subject to broad principles laid down by my Department in Circular letter HRT 3/2002 of 6 March 2002. Decisions on whether or not to disregard either a proportion of income or particular sources of income for the purposes of calculating rents are matters for each individual local authority.

In the context of the Government's statement on housing policy — Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities — I will continue to keep existing rent determination systems under review to ensure that they remain equitable. In addition, it is proposed in the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2008 to provide that rent schemes are subject to general regulations that will allow for greater consistency in application across the country.

Election Management System.

152. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 220 of 13 November 2008, the tendering process and the storage standards specified in respect of electronic voting machines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41996/08]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): Responsibility for the security and safe storage of manual voting electoral materials (such as ballot boxes, stamping instruments and stationery) is a matter for the Returning Officers, who are statutorily responsible for conducting the polls. Accordingly, similar responsibility was assigned to Returning Officers to make the necessary arrangements in relation to the storage of the electronic voting machines and equipment. Returning Officers undertook the task of procuring suitable accommodation for the electronic voting machines and ancillary equipment, and the detailed contractual and other arrangements put in place by Returning Officers reflect the varying circumstances applying at local level. In January 2003, Returning Officers were advised by my Department to make arrangements for storage of the voting equipment in advance of delivery and, in this regard, of the need for the machines to be stored in a clean, dry atmosphere and of the space likely to be required for this purpose.

Planning Issues.

153. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 19 of 27 February 2008, the local authorities which have implemented his request on the policy of taking in charge of estates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42021/08]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): On foot of Circular Letter PD 1/08 of 26 February 2008, planning authorities were required, by the end of June 2008, to develop or update, as appropriate, their policy on taking in charge of residential developments on the basis of the framework, and wider housing and planning policy guidance, set out in the circular.

As part of the monitoring and review arrangements set out in the circular, each planning authority was advised to make available their policy on taking in charge to the public, to publish it on their website and to continue to report on it to the elected members on a regular basis and at least once annually. Planning authorities were not requested to report on their response to the policy advice to my Department; accordingly, the information requested is not available in my Department.

However, a new local government service indicator in relation to the taking in charge of estates has been introduced, and will provide benchmark data from 2009 onwards for monitoring the taking in charge process. The information to be reported will include:

- the number of requests for taking in charge of estates on hands at the start of the year in question;
- the number of estates that were taken in charge in the year in question;
- the total number of dwellings in these estates; and

the number of estates in respect of which enforcement action was taken or remedial works were carried out in the year in question.

Planning Issues.

154. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he will amend the Planning and Development Acts 2000 to 2006 in order to extend the period of planning for planning permission to facilitate delays due to the recession; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42038/08]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I refer to the reply to Question Nos. 205 and 208 of 13 November 2008. The position is unchanged.

Departmental Expenditure.

155. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the amount expended to date on investigations by consultants on site conditions on Haulbowline Island; the amount expended on removing hazardous waste from the site to date; the further amounts he expects to be expended in relation to these issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42054/08]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The amount expended to date on investigations on current site conditions on Haulbowline is €308,709.15. This comprises costs associated with sampling, analysis, topographical and fore-shore ecological surveys, project management and professional fees for the three distinct modules of work i.e. air, marine and site investigation and assessment. It is anticipated that an additional amount of approximately €50,000 will be expended, including the costs associated with a peer review, by the time all the current investigations and reports are finalised.

In 2008, a total of €42,008,184.26 has been expended on site surface clearance works, including disposal costs for solid and liquid hazardous waste. Further costs of approximately €1.1m will arise in 2008 in respect of ongoing management of the site, including in regard to site staff, security, utilities and small trade and service contracts. It is not possible to quantify the further amounts that may be required in respect of future works pending decision-making on the

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preferred future use of the site, as this will determine the level and extent of any further necessary works.

Offshore Exploration.

156. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of exploration wells drilled off the Irish coast to date in 2008; the locations of the drilling operations; the names of the exploration companies in question; if there has been any indication given to his Department of the results arising from same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42002/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Seán Power Ryan): The Department is provided with well results data on a daily real time basis as each well is being drilled and also receives a comprehensive report on the outcome of each drilling operation after drilling has been completed. This information, however, remains confidential for a period of up to five years after drilling has been completed in the case of exploration wells drilled under an exploration licence granted before 1 January 2007 and for 4 years in the case of licences granted after that date.

Details of the exploration wells drilled during 2008 are as follows:

Area	Operator	Authorisation	Rig Release Date
Rockall Basin	Shell E&P Ireland Ltd	EL2/94	28 July 2008
Erris Basin	Statoil Exploration Ireland Ltd	EL5/94	08 July 2008
North Celtic Sea Basin	Providence Resources Plc	EL2/07	01 September 2008
North Celtic Sea Basin	Providence Resources Plc	EL2/07	28 September 2008

Grant Payments.

157. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a decision will be made on a 2008 single payment scheme application on behalf of a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary. [41963/08]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2008 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 29 April 2008. Initial processing of the application revealed an issue concerning forestry planting. This has now been satisfactorily resolved, allowing processing of the application to be finalised. Payment will shortly issue to the person named.

158. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will investigate the case of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41964/08]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The matter in question, the receipt by my Department of an application form under the 2008 Single Payment Scheme, is being investigated and an official of my Department has already been in direct contact with the person named. It should be noted, however, that the letter referred to, dated 28 July, which the person named has indicated was received in an envelope with a postmark of 23 October, was a copy of the initial letter which had issued to the person named on 28 July. Furthermore, this copy letter sent by my Department in October was accompanied by a covering letter, asking that the initial letter be responded to without further delay; the copy letter

was included with the reminder letter for the ease of reference of the person named — this is standard procedure.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme.

159. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will be awarded the disadvantaged area scheme payment. [41970/08]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2008 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 8 May 2008.

One of the primary provisions of the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme is that applicants must maintain a minimum stocking density on their holding of 0.15 livestock units per forage hectare for at least three consecutive months. However, where the holding of an applicant is identified as potentially not meeting this minimum stocking density requirement, the applicant is invited to submit evidence of satisfactory stocking i.e. Flock Register, Horse Passports.

Alternatively, the applicant may be considered for derogation from the minimum stocking level of 0.15 livestock units per hectare where the holding in question consists of mountain-type grazings. As this case has been identified as qualifying for derogation, payment will issue shortly to the person named.

Food Labelling.

160. **Deputy Rory O’Hanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if new labelling arrangements are being introduced here or in the European Union regarding poultry meat imported from Third World countries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41983/08]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The Minister for Health & Children has overall responsibility for the general food labelling legislation. Under the general labelling Directive (2000/13/EC), the place of origin of the foodstuff must be given only if its absence might mislead the consumer to a material degree. The European Commission is currently undertaking a major review of all food labelling legislation.

Regarding the labelling of poultry meat, there are EU Regulations which provide for the labelling of unprocessed poultry meat at retail level. The Regulations require such poultry meat to be labelled with the information regarding class, price, condition, registered number of slaughterhouse or cutting plant and, where imported from a Third Country, an indication of country of origin.

My Department, in conjunction with the Department of Health and Children, drafted regulations that would require the country of origin to be indicated on pigmeat, poultry and sheepmeat. This was notified to the EU Commission in December 2007 as required by legislation. The Commission was not prepared to adopt the draft regulations in their present format on the grounds that the proposed legislation is not in compliance with EU food labelling regulations. In March, the EU Commission delivered a negative opinion on the regulations but afforded Ireland an opportunity to provide further information in support of them. In the meantime, the Department provided additional details including the current misleading labelling practices and evidence of consumers’ desire for country of origin labelling. The EU Commission has considered this additional information in the context of the EU Labelling Directive but considers that it does not justify the introduction of national legislation. At the relevant

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standing committee meeting on food law on 13th October, the EU Commission outlined its decision not to agree to Ireland's proposed regulations.

The European Commission is currently carrying out an overall review of food labelling legislation. In this context Ireland has proposed that origin labelling for meat products should be mandatory.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme.

161. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the number of applicants approved for benefit under the REP scheme four; if his Department has a ceiling on the number of applicants that will be approved under this scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42003/08]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The number of REPS 4 applications currently recorded on my Department's computer system is approximately 12,700 and my officials are currently carrying out the administrative checks which are required before these can be approved for payment.

There are still over 48,300 farmers in REPS 3, and some 2,000 in the last months of their REPS 2 contracts. I expect that the majority of those now in REPS 2 and REPS 3 will apply for REPS 4 in due course. The Programme for Government envisages a participation level of 70,000 in REPS.

Fish Quotas.

162. **Deputy Pádraic McCormack** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the proposals he has for the allocation of the 3% increase in the mackerel quota; the way this increase in quota will be distributed; if he will ensure that at least 50% of the initial quota be allocated to a fleet (details supplied) in view of the fact that the fleet is committed to land at least 90% of their allocation here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42022/08]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The overall Total Allowable Catch for mackerel will increase by 33% in 2009. However, Ireland's mackerel quota will not be fully determined until such time as the current EU/Norway Fisheries negotiations are completed over the coming weeks.

My colleague, Minister Tony Killeen has already received a range of diverse views from industry representatives and operators regarding how any additional mackerel quota should be allocated. In that context, he is consulting with the Federation of Irish Fishermen with a view to establishing whether an agreed industry approach to this matter can be found.

Harbours and Piers.

163. **Deputy Brian O'Shea** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when decisions will be reached following the cost benefit analysis of the proposed development at Dunmore East Fishery Harbour Centre, County Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42027/08]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): My Department has this year allocated funding of €470,000 towards works at Dunmore East Fishery Harbour Centre under the Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme for 2008. These include Repairs to the East Pier (Phase II), Safety & Maintenance, Upgrading of the slipway and access to the West Wharf.

The cost benefit analysis of the proposed development at Dunmore East is as previously advised currently under consideration. My Department is however currently in the initial stages of drafting the 2009 Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme and consideration will be given to the Dunmore East development subject to available exchequer funding and overall national priorities.

Grant Payments.

164. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receiver their REP scheme payment. [42045/08]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): Where a valid REPS 4 application has been submitted, advance payments of 75% under the EU regulations governing REPS 4 can issue only when all administrative checks on all 2008 applications for REPS 4 and the Single Payment Scheme are completed. The balancing 25% payment will follow when all 2008 REPS on-farm inspections have taken place.

Work on the administrative checks is at an advanced stage but cannot be completed until industrial action in a number of my Department's local offices is resolved. I am hopeful for an early resolution of the issues affecting the release of REPS 4 payments.

Special Educational Needs.

165. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Education and Science if the value for money audit into special needs assistants has been completed; if so, when the review will be made publicly available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41991/08]

166. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Education and Science if a policy decision has been taken on foot of a value for money audit into special needs assistants to reduce the number of special needs assistants in the system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41992/08]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 165 and 166 together.

The Value for Money and Policy Review of the Special Needs Assistant Scheme is currently underway and it is expected to be completed during 2009. The final report, once approved, is laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas, submitted to the appropriate Oireachtas Select Committee and published on the Department's website.

As the review is not at completion stage, it would be premature of me at this point to anticipate the conclusions that will emerge from the review. Meanwhile, the National Council for Special Education continues to allocate additional teaching and care resources for children with special educational needs in the context of the Department's criteria for allocating such support.

School Staffing.

167. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he will support a matter (details supplied). [41997/08]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe): In line with the requirements of Sustaining Progress, agreement has been reached between the parties to the Teachers' Conciliation Council in relation to the standardisation of the breaks at Christmas, Easter and mid-term in the first and second terms for the school year.

[Deputy Batt O’Keeffe.]

Once schools adhere to the agreed standardisation, they have local flexibility in determining how they make up the required number of teaching days, 183 days in respect of Primary and 167 days in respect of Post Primary Schools. My Department does not centrally determine whether or not a school opts to have a closure for any particular event, once, the overall number of teaching days is delivered by the school over the course of the year. This approach aims to strike a balance between allowing schools some local discretion while at the same time ensuring that pupils get their full entitlement to education. It is of course important that there be the greatest possible consultation with parents and that sufficient notice is given in relation to any school closure.

Schools Refurbishment.

168. **Deputy Ulick Burke** asked the Minister for Education and Science if, in the interest of the safety of students, staff and parents attending a school (details supplied) in County Galway he will provide funding for a school car park in view of the fact that a suitable site has been provided by the local dioceses. [41999/08]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The school referred to by the Deputy applied for works under the 2008 Summer Works Scheme.

Since the Summer Works Scheme was introduced in 2004, over 3,000 projects costing in excess of €300 million have been completed. With so many smaller projects having been completed over the past few years, the particular emphasis in 2008 is on providing sufficient school places in developing areas, while also showing the Government’s commitment to delivering improvements in the quality of existing primary and post-primary school accommodation throughout the country. Accordingly my Department has focussed on delivering as many large projects as possible in 2008 and there is no Summer Works Scheme this year.

However, I recognise the benefits of the scheme in addressing the needs of schools and I have previously informed the house of my intention to have a Summer Works Scheme in 2009. The details of the operation of the scheme in 2009 and the level of funding to be made available under the scheme in 2009 are currently being considered.

Higher Education Strategy.

169. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science the persons who will be members of the steering group tasked with developing a new national strategy for higher education; the reason they were chosen; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42006/08]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): I intend to bring proposals to Government shortly in relation to the process to develop a new national strategy for higher education. It is envisaged that the process will be led by a high level steering group, who will be able to provide a business, wider community and international perspective. Membership of the steering group is currently under consideration.

Higher Education Budgets.

170. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science the cases in which a university’s governing authority has informed the Higher Education Authority of expenditure in excess of their allocated budget, as in line with Section 37 of the Universities Act 1997; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42007/08]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The Higher Education Authority has advised my Department that five of the universities have notified the Authority that their expenditure will be in excess of their 2008 budget. The universities concerned are University College Dublin, University College Cork, NUI Maynooth, Trinity College Dublin and University of Limerick.

The HEA is in continuing correspondence with all the universities in relation to recurrent funding levels and is satisfied that the universities are taking action to address their budgetary deficits. The HEA will continue to monitor the levels of deficits to ensure these are addressed.

Higher Education Strategy.

171. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science the way the doubling of the output of PhD students from the higher level sector by 2013 is, in and of itself, a quantifiable step towards the development of a knowledge economy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42008/08]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The OECD 2004 Review of Higher Education in Ireland stated that the lack of a sufficient supply of doctoral students could seriously hinder Ireland’s aim to create a research intensive higher education system and to stimulate much higher levels of industrial research and development. One of its recommendations in this area was that steps should be taken to double the numbers of post graduate students.

The Government’s Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (SSTI) is committing €8 billion to research and development and strives towards ensuring that Ireland will be internationally renowned for the excellence of its research and at the forefront in generating and using new knowledge for economic and social progress, within an innovation driven culture.

The two overarching goals of the SSTI are to build a sustainable system of world class research teams in terms of people and supporting infrastructures and to double our output of PhDs. These goals are interlinked as the quality of both research and post graduate formation is dependant on access to world class principal investigators to lead teams of post doctoral and post graduate researchers.

The transfer of people and knowledge from higher education institutions into the market place has been identified as a key objective in the SSTI. The outputs of the investment in research will increase the availability of highly qualified and talented people working in industry and other areas of the economy, increasing the level of innovation and productivity, and contributing towards the development of a knowledge economy.

School Placement.

172. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science the primary schools and the number of places available in each school in the Dublin 2, Dublin 4 and Dublin 6 areas. [42009/08]

174. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science the secondary schools and the number of places available in each school in the Dublin 2, Dublin 4 and Dublin 6 areas. [42011/08]

175. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science the secondary schools and the number of teachers in each school in the Dublin 2, Dublin 4 and Dublin 6 areas. [42012/08]

178. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science the number of pupils who attend private, fee-paying primary and secondary schools and if he will provide these figures in a table which lists each school individually; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42015/08]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 172, 174, 175 and 178 together.

The information available to my Department in relation to the matters raised by the Deputy relates only to post primary schools. My Department publishes this information annually in ‘List of Post Primary Schools’. I have requested my officials to forward the most recent copy of this publication, relating to the school year 2007/2008, to the Deputy for his information.

Private fee paying primary schools do not hold recognition by my Department. In relation to the number of teachers in each school, my Department will be advising individual schools in the normal way in relation to their staffing allocations. The preparatory work for this has commenced with the processing of enrolment data that has been received from schools. The staffing allocation processes including notification to schools will commence early in the New Year. The allocation process includes appellate mechanisms under which schools can appeal against the allocation due to them under the staffing schedules. In addition to the mainstream classroom teachers my Department also allocates teaching resources to schools for special needs and language support.

At this time the priority for my Department within the resources available to it is to carry out those processes in a timely manner. Diverting resources in order to compile either historic information or to create staffing profiles for the individual schools requested by the Deputy, could not be justified and would in fact impede the process.

School Staffing.

173. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science the primary schools and the number of teachers in each school in the Dublin 2, Dublin 4 and Dublin 6 areas. [42010/08]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): Statistics on primary schools are published annually by my Department on a county by county basis. The information is currently being collected from schools for the 2008/09 school year and this will be published when completed.

My Department interacts with over 3,200 primary schools on many day to day issues including their staffing allocation and grant payments and it is not possible to compile the information requested by the Deputy at individual school level given the inordinate amount of time it would take and balanced against the many other competing demands on my Department’s resources.

Questions Nos. 174 and 175 answered with Question No. 172.

176. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he will provide a breakdown of the amount spent on paying the salaries of teachers in each individual private, fee-paying secondary and primary school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42013/08]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): I am checking what information can be provided in my Department without creating an undue administrative burden and will be forward such information directly to the Deputy.

177. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science the number of teachers employed in each individual, private fee-paying primary and secondary school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42014/08]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): My Department will be advising individual schools in the normal way in relation to their staffing allocations. The preparatory work for this has commenced with the processing of enrolment data that has been received from schools. The staffing allocation processes including notification to schools will commence early in the New Year. The allocation process includes appellate mechanisms under which schools can appeal against the allocation due to them under the staffing schedules. In addition to the mainstream classroom teachers my Department also allocates teaching resources to schools for special needs and language support.

At this time the priority for my Department within the resources available to it is to carry out those processes in a timely manner. Diverting resources in order to compile either historic information or to create staffing profiles for the individual schools requested by the Deputy, could not be justified and would in fact impede the process.

Question No. 178 answered with Question No. 172.

Residential Institutions Redress Scheme.

179. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science if the Residential Institutions Redress Board will extend its remit to those who were abused in institutions up to 21 years of age in view of the recent High Court ruling; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42016/08]

180. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he will allocate additional funds to the Residential Institutions Redress Board in view of the expected increased numbers of claims, due to the recent High Court ruling; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42017/08]

181. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he has plans to renegotiate the deal whereby the State would pay the costs of the claims incurred by the Residential Institutions Redress Board in return for a once-off €128 million payment by the Church in view of the recent High Court ruling and the possibility of new claims; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42018/08]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 179 to 181, inclusive, together.

I refer to the recent High Court Judgement given in the case of JD -v- The Residential Institutions Redress Review Committee, Ireland and the Attorney General. I wish to advise the Deputy that the content of the judgement, together with its implications, is currently being considered by my Department in conjunction with its legal advisors. Consequently, it would not be appropriate for me to comment any further at this time.

182. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science if the transfer of 64 church properties to the State, as agreed in the 2001 deal signed by the Government in return for meeting the costs of the Residential Institutions Redress Board has been completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42019/08]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): Under the terms of the Indemnity Agreement reached with the Religious Congregations on 5th June 2002, the Congregations agreed to make a contribution of €128 million towards the cost of the Redress Scheme. This sum was broken down as follows:

- Property Transfers €76.86m;
- Cash Contribution €41.14m;
- Provision of Counselling Services €10m.

In actual terms, whilst the overall figure of €128 million has not altered, the form in which it has or is to be transferred to the State has altered somewhat in terms of the property and cash contributions. This is because the Indemnity Agreement allows for cash to be substituted for property. The composition of the €128million has changed to the following:

- Property Transfers €66m;
- Cash Contribution €52m;
- Provision of Counselling Services €10m.

I can confirm that the full cash contribution of €52m has been received, including that which was accepted in lieu of properties. My Department has also received confirmation that the contributing congregations have provided counselling services to the value of €10m.

As a result of the Indemnity Agreement, my Department agreed in principle with CORI that a total of 64 properties would be accepted, subject to good and marketable title and agreed valuations. Valuations of the individual properties were fully agreed and fixed at 2002 values.

Given the complex and time consuming nature of property transfers, it is difficult to state with any degree of certainty when the entire portfolio of property will be fully and finally transferred to the State. However, I am anxious to point out that whilst the legalities have not been finalised in all cases, with the exception of two, the properties are currently in use or are available for use by the transferee. Currently, properties to the value of €26.79m have been fully transferred and a further €7.475m worth of properties have been handed over where legal arrangements are almost finalised. This leaves a balance of properties valued at €31.735 where the legal transfer remains to be completed. However, in the vast majority of the properties, good and marketable title has been fully established or the properties have been physically transferred to and are in possession of the State or 3rd Parties but there are some legal formalities to be finalised. In a small number of cases, consideration may have to be given to accepting an alternative property or cash where good and marketable title cannot be established.

Every effort will continue to be made by officials of my Department, through the State’s legal representatives, together with the representatives of the congregations and recipient bodies, to ensure that all outstanding matters are finalised.

School Transport.

183. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science if it costs more for a child to use the LUAS to travel to school than using the DART because the school transport scheme does not apply to the LUAS; if this practice is unfair at best and discriminatory at worst; when his Department will rectify this issue; if all public transport, be it LUAS, DART

or bus should be available to all school-children at a subsidised rate as a matter of principle; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42020/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science (Deputy Seán Haughey): I indicated in replies to recent Parliamentary Questions from the Deputy that my Department has requested Bus Éireann, which operates the school transport scheme, to review the issues in question. My Department has no plans, however, to extend school transport services to children who are not eligible for transport and who use public scheduled bus and train services.

If the Deputy has any particular case in mind or has information regarding the extent of the demand from eligible children to use the LUAS, my Department will be glad to have their transport arrangements investigated.

DEIS Programme.

184. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Education and Science the schools (details supplied) which are included in the DEIS programme; the benefits of participation in this programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42047/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science (Deputy Seán Haughey): Details of all schools included in the DEIS programme are below for the Deputy's information.

DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the action plan for educational inclusion, is being rolled out on a phased basis over the period 2005-10, and focuses on addressing the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school through second-level education (3 to 18 years).

The action plan provides for a standardised system for identifying levels of disadvantage and a new integrated School Support Programme (SSP). It brings together, and builds upon, a number of existing interventions in schools with a concentrated level of disadvantage. There are 876 schools in DEIS. These comprise 673 primary schools and 203 second-level schools.

DEIS provides various supports for both primary and post primary schools. In urban areas with the highest concentrations of disadvantage, known as Urban Band 1, primary schools benefit from a reduced pupil teacher ratio. Urban schools in DEIS also receive the following supports:

- additional non-pay/capitation allocation based on level of disadvantage;
- financial allocation under schools books grant scheme;
- access to numeracy/literacy supports and programmes at primary level;
- access to Home School Community Liaison services;
- access to School Completion Programme;
- enhanced guidance counselling provision at post-primary level;
- access to the Junior Certificate Schools Programme and the Leaving Cert Applied;
- provision for school library and librarian support for the post primary schools with highest concentrations of disadvantage.

[Deputy Seán Haughey.]

Post-Primary

Roll No.	Name	Address	County
70420R	Carlow Vocational School	Kilkenny Road, Carlow	Carlow
70430U	Vocational School Muine Beag	Muine Bheag, Carlow	Carlow
70360C	St. Mogue's College	Bawnboy, Co Cavan	Cavan
70380I	Cavan Vocational School	Cootehill Rd, Cavan	Cavan
70830N	Ennis Community College	Ennis, Co Clare	Clare
91448K	Kilrush Community School	Kilrush, Co Clare	Clare
62530F	North Monastery Secondary School	Our Lady's Mount, North Monastery Road, Cork	Cork
62540I	Deerpark C.B.S.	St Patrick's Road, Cork	Cork
70910L	St. Brogan's College	Kilbrogan, Bandon, Co Cork	Cork
70970G	Cobh Community College	Carrignafof, Cobh, Co Cork	Cork
70990M	Coláiste an Chraoibhin	Duntaheen Road, Fermoy, Co Cork	Cork
71020G	Davis College	Annabella, Mallow, Co Cork	Cork
71030J	McEgan College	Macroom, Co Cork	Cork
71040M	St Fanahan's College	Mitchelstown, Co Cork	Cork
71050P	St Colman's Community College	Youghal Road, Middleton, Co Cork	Cork
71080B	Mannix College	Charleville, Co Cork	Cork
71090E	Rossa College	Skibbereen, Co Cork	Cork
71123Q	Terence Mac Swiney Community College	Hollyhill, Knocknaheeny, Cork	Cork
76067L	Colaiste Pobail Naomh Mhuire	Cill na Mullach, Co Cork	Cork
91397T	Bishopstown Community School	Bishopstown, Co Cork	Cork
91400F	Mayfield Community School	Old Youghal Road, Cork	Cork
62621I	North Presentation	Farranree, Cork City	Cork City
62650P	Ursuline Secondary School	Blackrock, Cork City	Cork City
62730N	St Patricks College	Gardiner's Hill, Cork City	Cork City
71110H	Nagle Community College	Mahon, Cork City	Cork City
62770C	Scoil Mhuire	St. Oran's Road, Buncrana, Co Donegal	Donegal
71140Q	Crana College	Crana Road, Buncrana, Co Donegal	Donegal
71200I	Letterkenny Vocational School	Windyhall, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
71220O	Mulroy College	Milford, Co Donegal	Donegal
71230R	Deele College	Raphoe, Co Donegal	Donegal
71240U	Vocational School	Main Street, Stranorlar, Co Donegal	Donegal
71242B	Gairm Scoil Chú Uladh	Béal an Átha Móir, Co Dhun na nGall	Donegal
71244F	Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada	An Leadhgarbh, Co Dhun na nGall	Donegal
76084L	Moville Community College	Carrownaff, Moville, Co Donegal	Donegal
81011L	The Royal and Prior School	Raphoe, Co Donegal	Donegal
91406R	Carndonagh Community School	Carndonagh, Co Donegal	Donegal
91407T	Rosses Community School	Dungloe, Co Donegal	Donegal
60440R	O'Connell School	North Richmond Street, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
60853T	Mount Carmel Secondary School	Kings Inn Street, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
76077O	Larkin Community College	1 Champions Avenue, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
60490J	C.B.S. Westland Row	Westland Row, Dublin 2	Dublin 02
60390F	St Josephs C.B.S.	Merville Ave, Fairview, Dublin 3	Dublin 03
70250S	Marino College	14-20 Marino Mart, Fairview, Dublin 3	Dublin 03

Roll No.	Name	Address	County
60500J	Marian College	Ballsbridge, Dublin 4	Dublin 04
70200D	Technical Institute	Cambridge Road, Ringsend, Dublin 4	Dublin 04
60471F	St. David's C.B.S.	Malahide Road, Artane, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
60550B	Chanel College	Coolock, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
60871V	Mercy College Coolock	St Brendans Drive, Coolock, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
60430O	St Pauls C.B.S.	Christian Brothers, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
60843Q	St Josephs Secondary School	Stanhope St., Dublin 7	Dublin 07
70150O	Coláiste Éanna	Kilkieran Road, Cabra, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
60410I	C.B.S. James Street	James's Street, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
60470D	Christian Brothers	Synge St, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
60792C	Presentation College	Warrenmount, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
60872A	Mercy Secondary School	Goldenbridge, Inchicore, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
60400F	St Vincents C.B.S.	Glasnevin, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
70310K	Plunkett College	Swords Road, Whitehall, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
70321P	Margaret Aylward Community College	The Thatch Road, Whitehall, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
81017A	Trinity Comprehensive School	Ballymun Road, Ballymun, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
91344V	Rosmini Community School	Grace Park Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
60510M	St Johns College De La Salle	Le Fanu Rd, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
60720A	Saint Dominic's Secondary School	Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
60732H	Caritas College	Drumfinn Road, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
70240P	Kylemore College	Kylemore Road, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
60511O	Beneavin De La Salle College	Beneavin Road, Finglas, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
60571J	Patrician College	Deanstown Ave, Finglas West, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
60581M	St Kevins CBS	Ballygall Road East, Finglas, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
60741I	St Michaels Secondary School	Wellmount Road, Finglas, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
60852R	Mater Christi	Cappagh, Finglas, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
70180A	Coláiste Eoin	Cappagh Road, Fingals, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
60800V	Loreto College	Crumlin Road, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
60841M	Rosary College	Armagh Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
60990G	Meanscoil Chroimghlinne	314/318 Crumlin Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
60991I	Our Lady Of Mercy Secondary School	Mourne Road, Drimnagh, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
70130I	Greenhills College	Limekiln Avenue, Greenhills, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
70160R	St. Kevins College	Clogher Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
70020B	Grange Community College	Grange Road, Donaghmede, Dublin 13	Dublin 13
91318U	The Donahies Community School	Streamville Road, Dublin 13	Dublin 13
70081V	Riversdale Community College	Blanchardstown Rd North, Dublin 15	Dublin 15
91316Q	Blakestown Community School	Blanchardstown, Dublin 15	Dublin 15
91305L	Ballinteer Community School	Ballinteer, Dublin 16	Dublin 16
91343T	St. Tiernan's Community School	Parkvale, Balally, Dublin 16	Dublin 16
70330Q	Coláiste Dhúlaigh	Barryscourt Road, Coolock, Dublin 17	Dublin 17
60262T	St Laurence College	Loughlinstown, Dublin 18	Dublin 18
91302F	Phobailscoil Iosolde	Palmerstown, Dublin 20	Dublin 20
70040H	Deansrath Community College	New Nangor Road, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
70041J	Collinstown Park Community College	Neilstown Rd., Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22

[Deputy Seán Haughey.]

Roll No.	Name	Address	County
70042L	St. Kevin's Community College	Fonthill Road, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
70141N	Jobstown Community College	Jobstown, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
91335U	Tallaght Community School	Balrothery, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
91337B	Killinarden Community School	Killinarden, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
91338D	St Aidan's Community School	Brookfield, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
60343T	St Joseph's Secondary School	Convent Lane, Rush, Co Dublin	Dublin County
70010V	Balbriggan Community College	Pine Ridge, Balbriggan, Co Dublin	Dublin County
70120F	St Finians Community College	Swords, Co Dublin	Dublin County
91310E	Cabinteely Community School	Cabinteely, Co Dublin	Dublin County
91330K	Holy Child Community School	Pearse St, Sallynoggin, Co Dublin	Dublin County
62981P	Colaiste Einde	Threadneedle Rd, Galway	Galway
63000E	Presentation Secondary School	Presentation Rd, Galway	Galway
63060W	Scoil Áine	Mainistir Na Coille Moire, Kylemore, Co Galway	Galway
63140U	St Patrick's College	Dublin Road, Tuam, Co Galway	Galway
71250A	Colaiste Cholmcille	Indreabhán, Co na Gaillimhe	Galway
71380N	Gairmscoil na bPiarsach	Ros Muc, Co na Gaillimhe	Galway
71390Q	Tuam Vocational School	Tuam, Co Galway	Galway
71400Q	Galway Community College	Wellpark, Galway	Galway
81012N	Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin	An Cheathrú Rua, Co na Gaillimhe	Galway
91411K	Scoil Phobail Mhic Dara	Carna, Co na Gaillimhe	Galway
91412M	Scoil Phobail	Clifden, Co Galway	Galway
70450D	Killarney Community College	New Road, Killarney, Co Kerry	Kerry
70460G	Community College	Killorglin, Co Kerry	Kerry
70500P	Listowel Community College	Listowel, Co Kerry	Kerry
70540E	Causeway Comprehensive School	Causeway, Co Kerry	Kerry
70550H	Tralee Community College	Clash, Tralee, Co Kerry	Kerry
61700W	St Joseph's Academy	Kildare Town, Co Kildare	Kildare
61702D	St Pauls Secondary School	Monasterevin, Co Kildare	Kildare
70650L	Athy Community College	Athy, Co Kildare	Kildare
70660O	Curragh Post-Primary School	McSwiney Road, Curragh, Co Kildare	Kildare
70680U	St Conleth's Vocational School	Station Road, Newbridge, Co Kildare	Kildare
70690A	Vocational School /	Kildare College of Further Studies, Kildare Town	Kildare
70710D	St Patrick's Community College	Limerick Road, Naas, Co Kildare	Kildare
70720G	St Farnan's Post Primary School	Prosperous, Naas, Co Kildare	Kildare
70730J	Ardscuil Rath Iomgháin	Rathangan, Co Kildare	Kildare
70590T	Duiske College	Graignamanagh, Co Kilkenny	Kilkenny
70600T	Coláiste Mhuire	Johnstown, Co Kilkenny	Kilkenny
70610W	City Vocational School	New Street, Kilkenny	Kilkenny
70620C	Coláiste Cois Siúire	Mooncoin, Co Kilkenny	Kilkenny
70640I	Grennan College	Ladywell St, Thomastown, Co Kilkenny	Kilkenny
71490U	St. Aengus Post-Primary	Limerick Road, Mountrath, Co Laois	Laois
71510A	Portlaoise Vocational School	Railway Street, Portlaoise, Co Laois	Laois
64200R	Colaiste Mhichil	Sexton Street, Limerick	Limerick
64250J	Presentation Secondary School	Sexton Street, Limerick	Limerick
64280S	Salesian Secondary School	Fernbank, Limerick	Limerick

Roll No.	Name	Address	County
64290V	Ardscoil Mhuire	Corbally, Limerick	Limerick
71790J	Desmond College	Gortboy, Newcastle West, Co Limerick	Limerick
71810M	Coláiste Pobail Mhichíl	Cappamore, Limerick	Limerick
71840V	Colaiste Chiarain	Croom, Co Limerick	Limerick
71870H	Abbeyfeale Vocational School	Abbeyfeale, Co Limerick	Limerick
71920T	St Nessan's Community College	Moylish Park, Limerick	Limerick
76070A	Coláiste Ióasef	Kilmallock, Co Limerick	Limerick
91446G	St Endas Community School	Kilmallock Rd, Limerick	Limerick
71690F	Ballymahon Vocational School	Ballymahon, Co Longford	Longford
71710I	Ardscoil Phadraig	Granard, Co Longford	Longford
71720L	Lanesboro Community College	Lanesboro, Co Longford	Longford
71730O	Templemichael College	Templemichael, Longford	Longford
71750U	Bush Post Primary School	Riverstown, Co Louth	Louth
71761C	St Oliver's Community College	Rathmullen, Co Louth	Louth
71770D	Ó Fiaich College	Dublin Road, Dundalk, Co Louth	Louth
71780G	Scoil Ui Mhuiri	Barn Road, Dunleer, Co Louth	Louth
91441T	Ardee Community School	Ardee, Co Louth	Louth
64690O	Scoil Muire Agus Padraig	Swinford, Co Mayo	Mayo
72020L	Moyne College	Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo
72050U	St. Brendan's College	Belmullet, Co Mayo	Mayo
72070D	McHale College	Achill, Westport, Co Mayo	Mayo
72100J	St. Tiernan's College	Crossmolina, Co Mayo	Mayo
72140V	Colaiste Chomain	Rosspport, Co Mayo	Mayo
72160E	Vocational School	Westport, Co Mayo	Mayo
76060U	Davitt College	Springfield, Castlebar, Co Mayo	Mayo
71970L	St. Fintinas Post Primary School	Longwood, Enfield, Co Meath	Meath
71980O	O'Carolan College	Nobber, Co Meath	Meath
72010I	Beaufort College	Trim Rd, Navan, Co Meath	Meath
91508C	Boyne Community College	Trim, Co Meath	Meath
72171J	Largy College	Clones, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
72180K	Inver College	Carrickmacross, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
72190N	Castleblayney College	Dublin Road, Castleblayney, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
72210Q	Beech Hill College	Monaghan, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
72530L	Ard Scoil Chiarain Naofa	Frederick St, Clara, Co Offaly	Offaly
72540O	Oaklands Community College	Sr. Senan Avenue, Edenderry, Co Offaly	Offaly
72560U	Tullamore College	Riverside, Tullamore, Co Offaly	Offaly
72290R	Roscommon Vocational School	Lisnamult, Roscommon Town	Roscommon
72300R	Corran College	Ballymote, Co Sligo	Sligo
72320A	Coláiste Iascaigh	Easkey, Co Sligo	Sligo
72340G	Gurteen Vocational School	Gurteen, Co Sligo	Sligo
72360M	Ballinode College	Ballinode, Co Sligo	Sligo
65350S	Patrician Presentation	Rocklow Rd, Fethard, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
72400V	Vocational School	Carrick-On-Suir, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
72420E	Clonmel Vocational School	Clonmel, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
72430H	Scoil Ruain	Killenaule, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
72450N	St Joseph's College	Newport, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
72480W	St. Alibe's School	Rosanna Road, Tipperary Town, Co Tipperary	Tipperary

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Roll No.	Name	Address	County
72490C	Vocational School	Castlemeadows, Thurles, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
64930I	C.B.S. Mount Sion	Barrack Street, Waterford	Waterford
64970U	Presentation Secondary School	Waterford	Waterford
72220T	Coláiste Chathail Naofa	Youghal Rd, Dungarvan, Waterford	Waterford
72241E	St Paul's Community College	Browne's Road, Waterford	Waterford
76066J	Meánscoil San Nioclás	Rinn O gCuanach, Co Port Lairge	Waterford
63191O	St Aloysius College	The Park, Athlone, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
71420W	Castlepollard Community College	Castlepollard, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
71430C	Columba College	Killucan, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
71450I	Mullingar Community College	Millmount Road, Mullingar, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
71600B	Coláiste Abbain	Adamstown, Co Wexford	Wexford
71610E	Bridgetown Vocational College	Bridgetown, Co Wexford	Wexford
71620H	Vocational College Bunclody	Bunclody, Co Wexford	Wexford
71630K	Vocational School	Enniscorthy, Co Wexford	Wexford
71650Q	Kilmuckridge Vocational College	Kilmuckridge, Co Wexford	Wexford
71660T	New Ross Vocational College	New Ross, Co Wexford	Wexford
71680C	Wexford Vocational College	Westgate, Co Wexford	Wexford
91431Q	Ramsgrange Community School	Ramsgrange, Co Wexford	Wexford
70740M	Arklow Community College	Coolgreaney Rd, Arklow, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
70770V	St Thomas' Community College	Novara Avenue, Bray, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
70800E	St Kevin's Community College	Dunlavin, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
70810H	Avondale Community College	Rathdrum, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
70820K	Abbey Community College	Wicklow Town, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
91376L	St. Killian's Community School	Ballywaltrim, Co Wicklow	Wicklow

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Roll No	Rural	School Name	Address	County
17096K	Rural	S N Nmh Fhingín	Garryhill, Muinebheag, Co Carlow	Carlow
17127S	Rural	St Josephs NS	Hacketstown, Co Carlow	Carlow
17555Q	Rural	Scoil Naomh Abban	Crettyard, Carlow, Co Carlow	Carlow
18265M	Rural	Bhríde N S	Ard Duach, Carlow, Co Carlow	Carlow
01356U	Rural	Kilnaleck Mixed N S	Kilnaleck, Co Cavan	Cavan
06998Q	Rural	S N Tulach A Mhíle	Corlough, Belturbet, Co Cavan	Cavan
08143P	Rural	S N Mhuire	Muileann Iarainn, Swanlinbar, Co Cavan	Cavan
14339S	Rural	Achadh An Measa	S N Achadh Easa, Achadh Easa, An Chorr Dubh, Co Cabhan	Cavan
17479D	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	Lacken, Ballinagh, Co Cavan	Cavan
19363R	Rural	Mullahoran Central N S	Kilcogy, Via Longford, Co Cavan	Cavan
03928D	Rural	Mullach N S	Mullach, Ennis, Co Clare	Clare
08241P	Rural	Scropul N S	Mullagh, Ennis, Co Clare	Clare
10191P	Rural	S N Na Coradh	Mullach, Inis, Co Clare	Clare
12848G	Rural	Doonaha N S, Kilkee, Co Clare	Clare	Clare
15221A	Rural	Annagh N S	Miltown Malbay, Co Clare	Clare

Roll No	Rural	School Name	Address	County
15968I	Rural	Baltard N S	Baltard, Doonbeg, Kilrush, Co Clare	Clare
17020A	Rural	Quilty NS	Quilty, Ennis, Co Clare	Clare
20078C	Rural	SN Realt Na Mara	Chapel St, Kilkee, Co Clare	Clare
20245S	Rural	Ennistymon NS	Ennistymon, Co. Clare	Clare
04268P	Rural	Clochar Na Toirbhirte	Doneraile, Co Cork	Cork
07101R	Rural	Inchiclough N S	Bantry, Co Cork	Cork
09815U	Rural	Tullaslease Mixed N S	Rathluirc, Co Cork	Cork
11262R	Rural	Druimne N S	Rathluirc, Co Cork	Cork
13543M	Rural	Derrinacahara N S	Dunmanway, Co Cork	Cork
13976U	Rural	St Matthias N S	Church Road, Ballydehob, Co Cork	Cork
14065H	Rural	Sherkin Island N S	Baltimore, Co Cork	Cork
14227H	Rural	Kilcoe NS	Skibbereen, Co Cork	Cork
14303U	Rural	S N Cleire	Oilean Chleire, An Sciobairin, Co Chorcai	Cork
17011W	Rural	Mocomhog N S	Cappaboy, Kealkil, Bantry, Co Cork	Cork
17112F	Rural	Ballyhea N S	Ballyhea, Rathluirc, Co Cork	Cork
17281F	Rural	Togher N S	Dunmanway, Co Cork	Cork
19501D	Rural	Cahermore New Central S	Cahermore, Co Cork	Cork
19507P	Rural	Scoil Chaitigheirn	Na Haorai, Beantraí, Co Chorcai	Cork
19525R	Rural	Mhichil Naofa	Ballinakilla, Bere Island, Bantry, Co Cork	Cork
19989N	Rural	Scoil Mhuire Na Trocaire	Cill Na Mullach (Buttavant), Co Chorcai	Cork
20004T	Rural	Scoil An Croi Ro Naofa	Castletownbere, Co. Cork.	Cork
20049S	Rural	Ringaskiddy Lower Harbour N S	Ringaskiddy, Co. Cork.	Cork
01733B	Rural	Ardara Mixed N S	Ardara, Co Donegal	Donegal
03294L	Rural	S N Caiseal Na Gcorr	Gort A Choirce, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
04809A	Rural	Scoil An Aingil Chaimheadai	An Cheididh, Burtonport, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
05164I	Rural	Scoil Naomh Cholmcille	Oilean Thorai, An Bhun Bhig, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
07143K	Rural	Monreagh N S	Monreagh, Carrigans Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
07626H	Rural	S N An Iorball Riabaigh	Baile Ui Ghormain, Lethbhearr, Tir Chonaill	Donegal
09748I	Rural	Glenmaquin No 2 N S	Knockbrack, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
10062E	Rural	Creelough N S	Creelough, Co Donegal	Donegal
13563S	Rural	S N Chill Coinnigh	Cill Choinnigh, Glenties, Co Donegal	Donegal
13755E	Rural	Gartan N S	Gartan, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
14194S	Rural	Scoil Cholmcille	An Tearmann, Co Dun Na Ngall	Donegal
14502D	Rural	Scoil Mhuire B&C	Doire Beaga, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
14631O	Rural	Scoil Cholmchille	Malin, Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
14704P	Rural	Murroe National School	Murroe, Dunfanahy, Co Donegal	Donegal
15208I	Rural	S N Na Sraithe Moire	Min A Labain, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
15532R	Rural	Croaghross N S	Portsalon, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
15554E	Rural	Gortnacart N S	Gortnacart, Ardara, Co Donegal	Donegal
15729N	Rural	Rathmullen N S	Rathmullen, Co Donegal	Donegal
15955W	Rural	SN Arainn Mhor I	Arainn Mor, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
16138S	Rural	Raphoe Central N S	Raphoe, Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
16142J	Rural	S N Min Na Manrach	An Clochan Liath, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal

[Deputy Seán Haughey.]

Roll No	Rural	School Name	Address	County
16279N	Rural	Scoil Choluim	Ballyheerin, Fanad, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
16349I	Rural	S N An Droim Mor	An Droim Mor, Killygordon, Co Donegal	Donegal
16375J	Rural	Frosses N S	Frosses, Inver, Co Donegal	Donegal
16384K	Rural	SN Arainn Mhor II	Arainn Mhor, Co Dhun Na Ngall, Donegal	
16471F	Rural	St Davadogs N S	Tamney, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
16603T	Rural	S N An Chillin	An Cillin, Inver, Co Donegal	Donegal
16671N	Rural	S N Cnoc Na Naomh	Gort A Choirce, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
16820E	Rural	SN Baile Nua An Phobail	Newtowncunningham, Co Donegal	Donegal
16823K	Rural	Min A Ghabhann N S	Lettermacaward, Donegal	Donegal
16829W	Rural	S N Loch An Iubhair	Anagaire, Leitir Ceanainn, Tir Chonaill	Donegal
16836T	Rural	Naomh Bridhid	Glenmakee, Carndonagh, Co Donegal	Donegal
16837V	Rural	S N Duchoraidh	Duchoraidh, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
16850N	Rural	St Garvan'S N.S.	Drum Halla, Rathmaolain, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
16880W	Rural	Scoil Naomh Colmchille	Craigtown, Carndonagh, Co Donegal	Donegal
16995Q	Rural	S N Naomh Colmchille	Drumoghill NS, Manorcunningham, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
17018N	Rural	Scoil Phadraig	Dobhar, An Bun Beag, Leitirceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
17130H	Rural	Scoil Naomh Dubhthach	Machaire Ui Rabhartaigh, Gort A Choirce, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
17328F	Rural	Scoil Roisin	An Clochan Liath, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
17447N	Rural	S N Crannaghe Buidhe	Crannog Bui, Ardara, Co Donegal	Donegal
17469A	Rural	Scoil Cuilm Cille	Ballindrait, Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
17503U	Rural	S N Adhamhnain	Luinneach, Doiri Beaga, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
17549V	Rural	S N Ceathru Caol	Kerrykeel, Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
17552K	Rural	Scoil Bhrighde	Porthall, Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
17553M	Rural	S N Taodhbhog	An Clochan, Leifearr, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
17564R	Rural	S N An Choimin	Clochan, Leithbhearr, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
17598L	Rural	SN An Leimbh Iosa	Coxtown, Carrigans, Co Donegal	Donegal
17704H	Rural	S N Fhionnain	Baile Chonaill, An Falcarrach, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
17716O	Rural	St Riaghans NS	Drimnacrosch, Kilraine P.O., Co Donegal	Donegal
17721H	Rural	Scoil Treasa Naofa	Malainn, Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
17729A	Rural	Scoil Naomh Proinnseas	Magherabeg, Manorcunningham, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal	Donegal
17822N	Rural	Scoil Bhrighde	Min A Chladhaigh, Gort A Choirce, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
17828C	Rural	Scoil Adhamhnain	Rathbhoth, Leithbhearr, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
17837D	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	Pettigo, Co Donegal	Donegal
18086M	Rural	Holy Trinity NS	Dunfanaghy, Co Donegal	Donegal
18114O	Rural	S N Naomh Eighneach	Diseart Eighnigh, Buncrannach, Co Dun Na Ngall	Donegal
18131O	Rural	S N Muire Gan Smal	Ard Aratha, Co Dun Na Ngall	Donegal
18151U	Rural	S N Mhuire	Baile An Ngallloglach, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal

Roll No	Rural	School Name	Address	County
18219F	Rural	SN Chonaill	Machaire Chlochair, Bun Beag, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
18241V	Rural	Scoil Naomh Cholmcille	Drumman, Ramelton, Co Donegal	Donegal
18250W	Rural	S N Baile Mor	Dunfanaghy PO, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
18286U	Rural	S N Na Hacraí	Ailt An Chorrain, Leitirceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
18295V	Rural	S N Min An Aoire	An Charraig, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
18371L	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	An Craosloch, Letterkenny, Co Donegal	Donegal
18421A	Rural	SN Dun Ceannfhaolaidh	Dun Ceannfhaolaidh, Co Donegal	Donegal
18446Q	Rural	Scoil Naomh Mhuire	Ceann Mhalanna, Ballygorman Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
18517N	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	Dristearnain, Gleneely Po Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
18611F	Rural	S N Na Carraige	Dun Na Ngall, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
18652T	Rural	S N An Chaiseal	Gleann Cholmcille, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
18710H	Rural	SN Na Croise Naofa	Dunfanaghy, Co Donegal	Donegal
18766L	Rural	Scoil Cholmcille	Dubhlin Riabach, Carraig Airt, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
19009W	Rural	Craanford N S	Craanford, Co Donegal	Donegal
19228L	Rural	S N Naomh Brid	Na Dunaibh, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
19252I	Rural	S N Umlach	Carrigart, Co Donegal	Donegal
19310T	Rural	Scoil Naomh Earnan	Baile An Tsratha, Co Donegal	Donegal
19343L	Rural	S N Dhubhthaigh	Anagaire, Leitir Ceanainn, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
19491D	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	Rathmealltain, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
19518U	Rural	S N Naomh Baoithin	Sc Naomh Baoithin, St Johnston, Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
19614Q	Rural	Naomh Bodain	Culdaff, Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
19685Q	Rural	Scoil Chartha Naofa	Chill Chartha, Co Dhun Na Ngall	Donegal
19756N	Rural	St Conals	Narin, Portnoo, Co Donegal	Donegal
19912B	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	Glenties, Co Donegal	Donegal
19693P	Rural	Mary Queen Of Ireland N S	Toberburr, Co Dublin	Dublin
09833W	Rural	S N Leitirgeis	Leitirgeis N S, Rinn An Mhaoil, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
10591I	Rural	S N An Ard Mhoir	Carna, Conamara, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
11261P	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	An Tuairin, Beal An Daingin, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
11290W	Rural	S N Muire Gan Smal	Camas, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
11373D	Rural	S N Mhuire	Turlach Beag, Rosmuc, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
12502Q	Rural	S N Eanna	Roundstone, Co Galway	Galway
13174H	Rural	St Columbas N.S.	Inishturk, Co Galway	Galway
13416F	Rural	S N Leitir Meallain	Leitir Meallain, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
13528Q	Rural	SN Oilean Droim	Leitir Mor, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
13621G	Rural	S N Muire	Letterfrack, Co Galway	Galway
13699U	Rural	S N Colmcille	Lettermore, Co Galway	Galway
13821O	Rural	S N na Naomh Uile	Cleggan, Co Galway	Galway
13927H	Rural	Inishbofin N S	Inishbofin, Co Galway	Galway
13951E	Rural	S N Leitir Mucu	Camas, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
13952G	Rural	S N Bhríde	Leitir Caladh, Lettermore, Co Galway	Galway
14420B	Rural	S N Naomh Padraig	Tully, Renvyle, Co Galway	Galway
14421D	Rural	S N Ard	Aird Thiar, Carna, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway

[Deputy Seán Haughey.]

Roll No	Rural	School Name	Address	County
14724V	Rural	Scoil Ronain	Oilean Tra Bhan, Leitir Mor, Gaillimh	Galway
16982H	Rural	S N Ath Eascrach Chuain	Beal Atha Na Sluagh, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
17095I	Rural	S N Na Cealltraighe	Kinclare, Cealltrach Ballinasloe, Co Galway	Galway
17289V	Rural	S N Caomhain	Inis Oirthir, Arainn, Gaillimh	Galway
17463L	Rural	S N Briocain	An Gort Mor, Rosmuc, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
17488E	Rural	SN An Aill Bhreach	Baile Conaola, Connamara, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
17574U	Rural	S N Naomh Ciarain	Cill Chiarain, Conamara, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
17655U	Rural	S N Caladh Na Muc	Ros Cathail, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
17660N	Rural	S N Naomh Treasa	Caiseal, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
17689O	Rural	S N Tir An Fhiaidh	Leitir Mor, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
17770U	Rural	S N Naomh Colmain	Carna, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
18121L	Rural	S N Mhuire	Carna, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
18211M	Rural	S N Ciarain Naofa	Cill Liathan Newbridge, Ballinasloe, Co Galway	Galway
18441G	Rural	Scoil Naomh Chuan	Cill Iomair, Beal Atha Na Sluagh, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
18514H	Rural	S N Choilm Chille	Baile Na Habhann, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
18608Q	Rural	S N Muire Gan Smal	Cladach Dubh, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
19290Q	Rural	Ballyconeely N S	Clifden, Co Galway	Galway
19818J	Rural	Creggs Central N S	Creggs, Via Roscommon, Co Galway	Galway
19932H	Rural	SN Mhic Dara	An Ceathru Rua, Co Na Gaillimhe	Galway
19973V	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	Clifden, Co Galway	Galway
20211B	Rural	Claregalway Educate Together NS	Cloonbaggen Rd., Claregalway, Co. Galway	Galway
20280U	Rural	Newtown NS	Newtown, Abbeyknockmoy, Tuam, Co. Galway	Galway
05348S	Rural	Scoil Eoin	Tahilla, Sneem, Co. Kerry	Kerry
08251S	Rural	Scoil Naomh Micheal	Sneem, Co Kerry	Kerry
08687J	Rural	S N Muire Gan Smal	Na Corra, Cathair Saibhin, Co Chiarrai	Kerry
11419B	Rural	Scoil Bhreanainn	Portmagee, Co Kerry	Kerry
12820H	Rural	Scoil Realt Na Mara	Killorglin, Co Kerry	Kerry
12875J	Rural	Douglas National School	Killorglin, Co Kerry	Kerry
13233U	Rural	S N Naomh Ioseph	Doon Road, Ballybunion, Co Kerry	Kerry
13542K	Rural	Cahirciveen Convent	Cahirciveen, Co Kerry	Kerry
15978L	Rural	Curraheen Mxd N S	Glenbeigh, Co Kerry	Kerry
16456J	Rural	Scoil Naisiunta Eirc	Baile An Mhoraigh, Baile Na Ngall, Tra Li, Co Chiarrai	Kerry
16702V	Rural	Sc Mhuire Na Mbraithe	Caherciveen, Co Kerry	Kerry
16744O	Rural	Boheshill Mxd	Glencar, Co Kerry	Kerry
16851P	Rural	Ballybunion B N S	Ballybunion, Co Kerry	Kerry
17161S	Rural	Kiltallagh N S	Kiltallagh, Castlemaine, Co Kerry	Kerry
17915U	Rural	Freastogail Mhuire Mxd	Killahan, Abbeydorney, Co Kerry	Kerry
18283O	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	Sc Mhuire BroSNach, Tra Li, Co Chiarrai	Kerry
18414D	Rural	S N Gleann Beithe	Glenbeigh, Co Kerry	Kerry
19483E	Rural	S N Dar Earca	Ballyhearney, Valentia, Co Kerry	Kerry
19805A	Rural	Ballyduff Central	Ballyduff, Tralee, Co Kerry	Kerry
13165G	Rural	Kilberry N S	Athy, Co Kildare	Kildare
18449W	Rural	St Conleths N S	Derrinturn, Carbury, Co. Kildare.	Kildare
19425N	Rural	Ballyroe Central N S	Athy, Co Kildare	Kildare

Roll No	Rural	School Name	Address	County
16311G	Rural	Graig Na Manach Buac	Graigenamanagh, Co Kilkenny	Kilkenny
17224Q	Rural	S N Muire Gan Smal	Graigenamanagh, Co Kilkenny	Kilkenny
17692D	Rural	Sraid Bhaile Boys N S	Sraid Bhaile, Co Laois	Laois
14898I	Rural	Drumeela N S	Carrigallen Po, Co Leitrim, Via Cavan	Leitrim
15116D	Rural	Ardvarney Mxd N S	Dromahair, Co Leitrim	Leitrim
16474L	Rural	Carrigallen N S	Carrigallen, Co Leitrim	Leitrim
16951T	Rural	S N Na Craoibheleithe	Drumkeeran, Co Leitrim	Leitrim
17125O	Rural	Differeen N S	Manorhamilton, Co Leitrim	Leitrim
18139H	Rural	S N Naomh Padraig	Tearmon Spencer Harbour, Carrick-On-Shannon, Co Leitrim	Leitrim
18741S	Rural	Faitima N S	Cluana, Carrick On Shannon, Co Leitrim	Leitrim
19365V	Rural	Achadh Na Sileann	Achadh Na Sileann, Cora Droma Ruisc, Co Liatroma	Leitrim
20203C	Rural	S N Naomh Sheosamh	Mohill, Co Leitrim	Leitrim
14305B	Rural	Ballylanders N S	Kilmallock, Co Limerick	Limerick
16713D	Rural	Scoil Na Mbraithre	Doon, Co Limerick	Limerick
17293M	Rural	Scoil Ioseph Naofa	Ballyorgan, Kilfinane, Co Luimni	Limerick
17593B	Rural	Scoil Naomh Mhuire	Cnoc Ui Coileain, Abbeyfeale, Co Limerick	Limerick
05115S	Rural	S N An Leana Mor	An Leana Mor, Co Longford	Longford
13320P	Rural	Fermoyale Mixed N S	Fermoyale, Lanesboro, Co Longford	Longford
16665S	Rural	St Marys Mixed N S	Drumlish, Longford, Co Longford	Longford
19279F	Rural	S N Naomh Treasa	Clontumper, Ballinalee, Co Longford	Longford
20124G	Rural	St Marys N.S	Edgeworthstown, Edgeworthstown, Co Longford	Longford
20128O	Rural	St Matthews Mixed N.S	Ballymahon, Co Longford	Longford
18001B	Rural	S N Naomh Lorcan	Omeath, Dundalk, Co Louth	Louth
04796R	Rural	Brackloon N S	Westport, Co Mayo	Mayo
05120L	Rural	Lehinch N S	Hollymount, Co Mayo	Mayo
06852L	Rural	Garracloon N S	Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo
11582M	Rural	S N Deirble	Beal Dearg, Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo
11725I	Rural	Beheymore N S	Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo
12373I	Rural	S N Eachleime	Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
12569C	Rural	S N Ros Dumhach	Beal Atha An Fheadha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
13222P	Rural	SN Gleann A Chaisil	Bun Na Habhna, Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
13225V	Rural	Cormaic Nfa	Garranard PO, Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo
13383Q	Rural	S N An Tsraith	Bun Na Habhann, Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
13555T	Rural	S N Faitche	Westport, Co Mayo	Mayo
13667H	Rural	SN Muine Chonallain	Beal An Atha, Co Mayo	Mayo
13684H	Rural	Beannchor N S	Bangor, Erris, Co Mayo	Mayo
13758K	Rural	Templemary N S	Templemary NS, Killala, Co Mayo	Mayo
13781F	Rural	Breaffy N S	Castlebar, Co Mayo	Mayo
13882L	Rural	S N Gleann Na Muaidhe	Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
14064F	Rural	S N Coill An Bhaile	Westport, Co Mayo	Mayo
14188A	Rural	Barnatra N S	Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo
14193Q	Rural	S N Dubh Thuama	Gaoth Saile, Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
14258S	Rural	Cill Mhor Iorrais, Beal An Mhuirthead, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo	
14290O	Rural	Scoil Naomh Brid	Ballycastle, Co Mayo	Mayo
14418O	Rural	Bofield Mixed N S	Attymass, Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo

[Deputy Seán Haughey.]

Roll No	Rural	School Name	Address	County
14671D	Rural	S N Na Craobhaighe	Carrowmore-Lacken, Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo
14863M	Rural	Achill Sound Convent NS	Achill Sound, Co Mayo	Mayo
14866S	Rural	SN Beal A Bhulain	Bun An Chorraigh, Cathair Na Mart, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
14873P	Rural	Dookinella N.S.	Keel, Achill, Co Mayo	Mayo
15014S	Rural	Corclough NS	Corchloch, Beal An Mhuirthid, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
15030Q	Rural	St Marys N S	Aghamore, Ballyhaunis, Co Mayo	Mayo
15032U	Rural	S N Muire Gan Smal	Ceathru Thaidgh, Beal Atha An Fheadha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
15113U	Rural	S N Sheamais	Barnacogue, Swinford, Co Mayo	Mayo
15539I	Rural	St JohNS NS	Lugboy, Claremorris, Co Mayo	Mayo
15866A	Rural	Carrakennedy N S	Westport, Co Mayo	Mayo
16052I	Rural	S N Naomh Padraig Saile	Gob A Choire, Acaill, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
16113C	Rural	SN Toin Na Gaoithe	Toin Na Gaoithe, Cathair Na Mart, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
16122D	Rural	Knock N S	Claremorris, Co Mayo	Mayo
16173U	Rural	Kinaffe N S	Swinford, Co Mayo	Mayo
16283E	Rural	S N Pol A Tsomais	Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
16289Q	Rural	St Johns N S	Carrowmore, Swinford, Co Mayo	Mayo
16295L	Rural	SN An Chorrain, Gob A Choire, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo	Mayo
16379R	Rural	Valley N S	Dugort, Achill, Co Mayo	Mayo
16618J	Rural	Myna N S	Westport, Co Mayo	Mayo
16811D	Rural	Killala N S	Killala, Co Mayo	Mayo
16904K	Rural	S N Lainn Cille	Cathair Na Mart, Co Mayo	Mayo
17129W	Rural	S N Naomh Padraig	Rath Na Mbeach, Crossmolina, Co Mayo	Mayo
17176I	Rural	S N Realt Na Mara	Mulranny, Co Mayo	Mayo
17321O	Rural	S N An Coill Mhor	Newport, Co Mayo	Mayo
17483R	Rural	Carraholly N S	Cathair Na Mart, Co Mayo	Mayo
17532E	Rural	S N Druim Slaod	Baile Cruaich, Cathair Na Mart, Co Mayo	Mayo
17562N	Rural	SN Oilean Eadaigh	Caislean A Bharraigh, Co Mayo	Mayo
17727T	Rural	SN Croi Muire	Beal An Mhuirthid, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
17923T	Rural	S N Beal An Mhuirthead	Beal An Mhuirthead, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
18002D	Rural	Drumgallagh N S	Ballycroy, Westport, Co Mayo	Mayo
18082E	Rural	S N Dumhach	Cathair Na Mart, Co Mayo	Mayo
18175L	Rural	S N Beannchair	Carrowmore, Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo
18594I	Rural	S N Achaidh An Ghlaisin	Beal An Mhuirthead, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
18712L	Rural	S N Cnoc Ruscaighe	Westport, Co Mayo	Mayo
18754E	Rural	SN Naomh Seosamh	Bun An Chorraigh, Cathair Na Mart, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
18848N	Rural	S N Peadair Agus Pol	Straide, Foxford, Co Mayo	Mayo
19324H	Rural	S N Teaghlaigh Naofa	SN Teaghlaigh Naofa, Killeen, Louisburgh, Co Mayo	Mayo
19451O	Rural	Newport Central	Baile Ui Bhfiachain, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
19488O	Rural	Scoil Naomh Feichin	SN Ath Ti Mheasaigh, Beal Atha An Fheadha, Co Mhaigheo	Mayo
19776T	Rural	Geesala Central School	Beal An Atha, Co Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
20037L	Rural	S N Padraig Naofa	Louisburgh, Co Mayo	Mayo
20217N	Rural	Mount Palmer NS	Kincon, Ballina, Co. Mayo	Mayo
18429Q	Rural	S N Mhuire	Cul Ronain, Baile Iomhair, Co Meath	Meath
00373P	Rural	Deravoy National School	Deravoy, Emyvale, Co Monaghan	Monaghan

Roll No	Rural	School Name	Address	County
10429W	Rural	Scoil Mhuire	Rockcorry, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
18234B	Rural	Scoil Naomh Padraig	Eo-Dhruim, Castleblaney, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
18482U	Rural	Mhuire Gransla	Leachtgallon, Cluain Eois, Co Muineachain	Monaghan
19362P	Rural	St Patricks N S	Clara, Killybrone, Emyvale, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
20055N	Rural	Gaelscoil Eois	Eanach Cille, An Chuil Darach, Co Muineachain	Monaghan
05913A	Rural	Kilcormac Convent N S	Kilcormac, Co Offaly	Offaly
12343W	Rural	Shinrone Mixed N S	Shinrone, Co Offaly	Offaly
17069H	Rural	S N Muire Naofa	Pollach, Rahan, Tullamore, Co Offaly	Offaly
17359Q	Rural	St Cormacs N S	Kilcormac, Co Offaly	Offaly
20068W	Rural	St Marys National School	Cloghan, Birr, Co Offaly	Offaly
01866U	Rural	Ballyforan Mixed N S	Ballinasloe, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
02327S	Rural	Mantua N S	Castlerea, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
07455G	Rural	Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal	Ballygar, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
12767G	Rural	S N Ronain Naofa	Cloonloo, Boyle, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
13047A	Rural	S N Lios A Cuill M	Castlerea, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
15255R	Rural	Don N S	Ballaghaderreen, Co Roscommon, Roscommon	
15425Q	Rural	Fairymount N S	Fairymount NS, Castlerea, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
15543W	Rural	Tibohine N S	Castlerea, Roscommon	Roscommon
15664L	Rural	Granlahan G N S	Ballinlough, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
17266J	Rural	Ballanagare N S	Castlerea, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
17748E	Rural	S N Padraig Naofa	Dungar, Caisleain Riabhach, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
18165I	Rural	Tisrara National School	Tigh Srathra, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
18536R	Rural	S N Mhuire Lourdes	Loch Glinne, Castlerea, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
18543O	Rural	S N Clochog	Castlealdwin, Boyle, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
19651W	Rural	Carracastle Central NS	Carracastle, Ballaghaderreen, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
19809I	Rural	Abbeycarton NS	Elphin, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
03924S	Rural	Owenbeg N S	Owenbeg P O, Ballina, Co Sligo	Sligo
12140I	Rural	Culleens N S	Culleens, Co Sligo	Sligo
13242V	Rural	Castlerock N S	Aclare, Co Sligo	Sligo
13944H	Rural	S N Naomh Atrachta	Kilmactigue, Aclare, Co Sligo	Sligo
16793E	Rural	Mary Immaculate NS	Collooney, Co Sligo	Sligo
17718S	Rural	S N Seosamh Naofa	Cul Mhaoile, Sligo	Sligo
18298E	Rural	S N Cul Fada	Cul Fada, Ballymote, Co Sligo	Sligo
19392B	Rural	Scoil Naomh Aodain	Scoil Aodain, Mainistir Readhain, Co Shligigh	Sligo
19688W	Rural	Dromore West Central	Dromore West, Sligo	Sligo
20113B	Rural	Scoil Croi Naofa	Bunninadden, Ballymote, Co. Sligo	Sligo
13210I	Rural	St Josephs National School	Ballingarry, Thurles, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
14791N	Rural	Cappawhite N S	Cappawhite, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
15299O	Rural	Gaile N S	Holycross, Thurles, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
15362S	Rural	S N Michil Naofa	Mullinahone, Thurles, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
17498H	Rural	S N Naomh Sheosamh	Toomevara, Nenagh, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
17665A	Rural	S N Gleann Guail, Thurles, Co Tipperary	Tipperary	
18343G	Rural	S N Chaoimhghin	Baile Dhaith (Littleton), Thurles, Co Tipperary	Tipperary

[Deputy Seán Haughey.]

Roll No	Rural	School Name	Address	County
19356U	Rural	Killenaule N S	Killenaule, Thurles, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
18077L	Rural	S N Cnoc Machan	Bun Machan, Co Waterford	Waterford
01731U	Rural	Ballynacargy Mixed N S	Ballynacargy, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
17991N	Rural	Eoin Naofa N S	Ballymore, Mullingar, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
18591C	Rural	Naomh Tomas N S	Rathowen, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
06959G	Rural	Clonroche N S	Clonroche, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford	Wexford
14668O	Rural	Ballaghkeene N S	Ballaghkeene, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford	Wexford
17117P	Rural	S N Cul Greine	Coolgreany, Gorey, Co Wexford	Wexford
17194K	Rural	S N Baile Ui Coileain	Ballycullane, New Ross, Co Wexford	Wexford
17443F	Rural	S N Fionntain	Taghmon, Co Wexford	Wexford
17638U	Rural	S N Nmh Seosaimh	Dunard, Poll Na Peiste, Cluain Na Roistigh, Co Loch Gorman	Wexford
17707N	Rural	S N Rath An Iubhair	Rath An Iubhair, Iniscortaigh, Co Loch Gorman	Wexford
17734Q	Rural	S N Gallbhaile	Ballyhogue, Gallbhaile, Inis Corthaidh, Co Loch Garman	Wexford
17769M	Rural	S N Mhuire	Tagoat, Co Wexford	Wexford
17841R	Rural	SN Mhuire	Ballyhogue, Bree, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford	Wexford
19352M	Rural	Sc Nais Realta Na Mara	An Chill Mhor, Co Loch Garman	Wexford
00984V	Rural	Glenealy 1 N S	Glenealy, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
16874E	Rural	S N Naomh Iosef G	Rathnew, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
17669I	Rural	S N Treasa Naomha	Cill Teagain, Co Cille Manntain	Wicklow
18962L	Rural	St Ernans B N S	Rathnew, Co Wicklow	Wicklow

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Roll No	Urban	School Name	Address	County
08490N	Urban	St Clares Primary School	Cavan Co Cavan	Cavan
17326B	Urban	S N Naomh Feidhlim	Cavan, Co Cavan	Cavan
20277I	Urban	St. Michaels NS	Cootehill, Co. Cavan	Cavan
19559L	Urban	Christos Ri	Cloughleigh, Ennis, Co Clare	Clare
05940D	Urban	Scoil Ursula	Blackrock, Co Cork	Cork
14198D	Urban	Naomh Eoin Easpal	Mayfield, Co Cork	Cork
16680O	Urban	Scoil Colmille	Blarney St, Cork	Cork
17024I	Urban	Scoil Na Croise Naofa	Mahon, Cork	Cork
17045Q	Urban	St Patricks B N S	Ballyhooley Road, Cork	Cork
18153B	Urban	S N Padraig Naofa C	Dillons Cross, Cork	Cork
18154D	Urban	S N Padraig Naofa	Dillons Cross, Cork	Cork
18217B	Urban	Scoil Padre Pio N S	Churchfield, Cork City	Cork
18587L	Urban	Scoil Mhuire Banrion	Mayfield, Cork	Cork
18786R	Urban	Scoil Iosagain	Farranree, Cork	Cork
19426P	Urban	S N Mharcuis B	An Gleann, Corcaigh	Cork
19427R	Urban	S N Bhreannain C	An Ghleann, Corcaigh	Cork
19714U	Urban	Mhuire Ar Chnoc Haoine	Knocknaheeny, Cork	Cork
19908K	Urban	Gaelscoil Mhachan	Carraig Dubh, Corcaigh	Cork
19909M	Urban	Gaelscoil Peig Sayers	C/O Na Piarasigh C.L.G., Parklands, Corcaigh	Cork
20036J	Urban	North Presentation Primary School	Gerald Griffin Street, Cork City.	Cork
20038N	Urban	Scoil Aiseiri Christos	Farranree, Cork.	Cork

Roll No	Urban	School Name	Address	County
20140E	Urban	Scoil Mhuire Fatima	North Monastery, Cork	Cork
19438W	Urban	Scoil Colmcille Senior	Wyattville, Ballybrack, Co Dublin	Dublin
19641T	Urban	St Colmcille Jun NS	Wyattville, Ballybrack, Co Dublin	Dublin
19840C	Urban	Holy Family School	Dunedin Park, Monkstown, Co. Dublin	Dublin
19979K	Urban	St Kevins N S	Sallynoggin, Co Dublin	Dublin
20202A	Urban	Balbriggan Educate Together	Hamlet Lane, Moylaragh, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin	Dublin
20218P	Urban	Archbishop McQuaid NS	Loughlinstown, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin	Dublin
20282B	Urban	Bracken Educate Together NS	Castelands, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin	Dublin
00752A	Urban	Central Senior Mxd N S	Marlboro St, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
01795A	Urban	Central Infs School	Marlboro St, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
11776C	Urban	St Laurence O Toole Junior Boys	Seville Place, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
12448N	Urban	Gardiner Street Convent	Gardiner Street, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
15056L	Urban	S N San Vinseann Cailin	North William St, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
15816I	Urban	St Vincents Inf Boys	North William Street, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
17110B	Urban	Naomh Lorcan O Tuathail	Plas Seibhil, Baile Atha Cliath 1	Dublin 01
17881G	Urban	Scoil Ui Chonaill	Nth Richmond Street, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
19831B	Urban	Scoil Chaoimhin	Sraid Mhaoilbhríde, Baile Atha Cliath 1	Dublin 01
19895E	Urban	Scoil Mhuir S Iosaf	St Marys Place, Plas Mhuire, Off Dorset Street, Dublin 7	Dublin 01
19946S	Urban	Rutland Street N S	Lower Rutland Street, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
20228S	Urban	St Laurence O Toole Girls School	49 Seville Place, Dublin 1	Dublin 01
11578V	Urban	City Quay Boys N S	City Quay, Dublin 2	Dublin 02
19896G	Urban	Scoil Caitriona Na Mbraithre	Baggot St, Dublin 2	Dublin 02
19981U	Urban	St Marys N S	Windsor Ave, Fairview, Dublin 3	Dublin 03
03917V	Urban	Naomh Pdraig Boys	Cambridge Road, Ringsend, Dublin 4	Dublin 04
15253N	Urban	St Patricks Girls NS	Cambridge Road, Dublin 4	Dublin 04
17732M	Urban	Scoil Chiarain	Ascal Ui Choileain, Domhnach Cairne, Baile Atha Cliath 5	Dublin 05
18968A	Urban	St Malachys B N S	Edenmore, Raheny, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
18969C	Urban	St Eithnes Senior G N S	Edenmore, Raheny, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
19037E	Urban	St Monicas N S	Edenmore, Raheny, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
19297H	Urban	Cromcastle Green B N S	Kilmore Rd West, Artane, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
19298J	Urban	Scoil Nais Ide Cailini	Kilmore Road West, Artane, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
19935N	Urban	Scoil Eoin	Greendale Road, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
20064O	Urban	Our Lady Of Consolation NS	Collins Ave East, Donnycarney, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
20281W	Urban	St. Benedict's & St. Mary's NS	Grange Park, Raheny, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
05933G	Urban	Presentation Primary School	Georges Hill, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
09932B	Urban	Stanhope St Convent	Stanhope Street, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
16695E	Urban	Scoil Na Mbrathar	North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
16988T	Urban	Christ The King B N S	Cabra, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
17464N	Urban	Fionnbarra Naofa	Cabra West, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
17465P	Urban	Dominican Convent Girls	Cabra, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
17466R	Urban	St Catherines Infant School	Cabra, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
20005V	Urban	Scoil Plas Mhuire	St Marys Place, Dorset Street, Dublin 7	Dublin 07

[Deputy Seán Haughey.]

Roll No	Urban	School Name	Address	County
20035H	Urban	St Gabriels N S	Cowper Street, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
00743W	Urban	Mater Dei Primary School	Basin Lane, James Street, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
07546J	Urban	Goldenbridge Convent	Goldenbridge, Inchicore, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
13611D	Urban	Presentation Convent NS	Warrenmount, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
14556D	Urban	St Endas Primary School	St Endas Primary School, Whitefriar St, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
16786H	Urban	St Brigids Convent N S	The Coombe, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
18477E	Urban	Scoil Na Mbrathar	Francis Street, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
18519R	Urban	Scoil Seamus C B S	James Street, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
19933J	Urban	Scoil Treasa Naofa	Petrie Road, Donore Avenue, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
20104A	Urban	St Audioens NS	Cook Street, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
18910P	Urban	Bantiarna Na Mbuanna B	Baile Munna, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
18911R	Urban	Bantiarna Na Mbuanna G	Baile Munna, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
19242F	Urban	Our Lady Of Victories Infant N S	Ballymun Road, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
19302U	Urban	SN Na Maighdine Muire B	Ballymun, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
19303W	Urban	Na Maighdine Mhuire	Virgin Mary, Girls National School, Ballymun, Dublin 9	Dublin 09
18341C	Urban	SN Louise De Marillac C	Drumfin Rd, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
18342E	Urban	SN Louise De Marillac	Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
18585H	Urban	SN Banrion Na Naingéal	Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
18843D	Urban	Bainrion Na N-Aingal 2	Ballyfermot Upper, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
19661C	Urban	St Gabriels NS	Dominican Campus, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
19662E	Urban	St Michaels NS	Dominican Convent, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
19663G	Urban	St Raphaels NS	Dominican Convent, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
19766Q	Urban	Scoil Iosagain/Mhuire	Mount La Salle, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
19767S	Urban	Scoil Mhuire/Seosamh	Mount La Salle, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
20092T	Urban	St. Ultans NS	Cherryorchard, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
20139T	Urban	Inchicore NS	Sarsfield Road, Inchicore, Dublin 10	Dublin 10
18137D	Urban	S N Naomh Feargal	Finglas West, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
19015R	Urban	St Josephs G N S	Barry Avenue, Finglas West, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
19197D	Urban	St Kevins B N S	Barry Avenue, Finglas North-West, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
19208F	Urban	Holy Spirit B N S	Silloge Rd, Baile Munna, Atha Cliath 11	Dublin 11
19209H	Urban	SN An Spioraid Naiomh C	Sillogue Rd, Ballymun, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
19431I	Urban	St Josephs Jnr	Balcurris, Ballymun, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
19489Q	Urban	SN Naomh Finin	Glenties Park, Rivermount, Finglas South, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
19546C	Urban	St Oliver Plunkett N S	St Oliver Plunkett NS, St Helenas Drive, Finglas, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
19583I	Urban	St Josephs Senior N S	St Josephs Senior NS, Balcurris, Ballymun, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
19619D	Urban	St Malachys NS	Rivermount, Finglas, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
19929S	Urban	St Brigids Senior Girls	Finglas West, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
20029M	Urban	St Brigids Infant N S	Wellmount Avenue, Finglas West, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
20220C	Urban	Gaelscoil Uí Earcáin	Bóthar Uí Mahoilfosa, Fionnghlas, Baile Átha Cliath 11	Dublin 11
16964F	Urban	Scoil Mhuire Ogh 1	Loreto College, Crumlin Rd, Dublin 12	Dublin 12

Roll No	Urban	School Name	Address	County
17603B	Urban	Scoil Iosagain	Aughavannagh Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
17683C	Urban	Muire Og 2 Loreto Con	Crumlin Road, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
18386B	Urban	Marist National School	Clogher Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
19764M	Urban	Our Lady Of Wayside N S	Bluebell, Inchicore, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
19889J	Urban	Scoil Colm	Armagh Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
20014W	Urban	St Agnes N S	Armagh Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
19545A	Urban	Corduff N S	Corduff, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15	Dublin 15
19601H	Urban	St Philip The Apostle Junior N S	Mountview, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15	Dublin 15
19605P	Urban	Scoil Nais Mhuire Sois	Blakestown, Mulhuddart, Dublin 15	Dublin 15
19636D	Urban	St Patricks Senior School	Corduff, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15	Dublin 15
19643A	Urban	St Philips Senior N S	Mountview, Clonsilla, Dublin 15	Dublin 15
19694R	Urban	Scoil Mhuire Sin	Blakestown, Mulhuddart, Dublin 15	Dublin 15
19850F	Urban	Ladyswell N S	Ladyswell, Mulhuddart, Dublin 15	Dublin 15
19490B	Urban	Scoil Mhuire	Ballyboden, Dublin 16	Dublin 16
17104G	Urban	St Francis Junior National School	Priorswood, Dublin 17	Dublin 17
19454U	Urban	Darndale NS Junior	Our Lady Immac Jun NS, Darndale, Malahide Road, Dublin 17	Dublin 17
19524P	Urban	Our Lady Immac Sen N S	Our Lady Immac Sen NS, Darndale, Dublin 17	Dublin 17
19668Q	Urban	St Francis Senior N S	Priorswood, Dublin 17	Dublin 17
19913D	Urban	St Josephs NS	Macroon Road, Bonnybrook, Dublin 17	Dublin 17
19509T	Urban	Scoil Nano Nagle	Bawnoge, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19510E	Urban	Talbot Senior NS	hech, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19569O	Urban	Neillstown N S	St Peter Apostle NS, Neillstown, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19575J	Urban	St Marys Junior N S	Rowlagh, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19642V	Urban	St Peter Apostle Sen NS	Neillstown, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19647I	Urban	St Marys Sen N S	Rowlagh, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19707A	Urban	St Ronans N S	Deansrath, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19743E	Urban	St Bernadettes Junior N S	Quarryvale, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19785U	Urban	St Bernadettes Senior N S	Quarryvale, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19464A	Urban	SN Naomh Colmcille	Homelawns, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19543T	Urban	Scoil N An Croi Ro Naofa	Killinarden, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19577N	Urban	Scoil Iosa	Scoil Nais Iosa, Tymon North, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19613O	Urban	Scoil Cnoc Mhuire Sin	Knockmore Ave, Killinarden, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19652B	Urban	An Chroi Ro Naofa Sois	Killinarden, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19702N	Urban	St Thomas Junior N S	Jobstown, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19765O	Urban	St Thomas Senior N S	Jobstown, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19775R	Urban	Scoil Cnoc Mhuire Junior	Knockmore Ave, Killinarden, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19782O	Urban	St Brigids N S	Brookfield, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19834H	Urban	St Aidans NS	Brookfield, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19872P	Urban	Scoil Chaitlin Maude	Cnoc Mhuire, Tamhlacht, Baile Atha Cliath 24	Dublin 24
20173T	Urban	St Annes Primary School	Fettercairn, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
01013N	Urban	Scoil Croi Iosa	Presentation Road, Galway	Galway
04515G	Urban	Scoil An Linbh Iosa	St Francis St, Galway	Galway
12250P	Urban	Scoil Mhuire Primary Sch	Dublin Rd, Tuam, Co Galway	Galway

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Roll No	Urban	School Name	Address	County
16943U	Urban	Niochlas N S	An Cladach, An Gaillimh	Galway
17782E	Urban	S N Bride Naofa	Sean Tallamh, Gaillimh	Galway
19225F	Urban	Scoil Michil Naofa	Baile Ban, Gaillimh	Galway
19226H	Urban	Scoil Na Trionoide Naofa	Muirbheach, Gaillimh	Galway
20042E	Urban	Scoil An Chroi Naofa	Ballinasloe, Co Galway	Galway
16635J	Urban	Curragh Camp B N S	Curragh Camp, Co Kildare	Kildare
16636L	Urban	Curragh Camp G N S	Curragh Camp, Co Kildare	Kildare
19747M	Urban	Scoil Bhríde NS	Portlaoise, Co Laois	Laois
00570R	Urban	Mhuire Naofa Cailini	Mhuire Naofa, Limerick	Limerick
06936R	Urban	St Johns Convent	Cathedral Place, Limerick City	Limerick
15320C	Urban	St Michaels NS	Cbs Grounds, Sexton Street, Limerick	Limerick
16715H	Urban	St John The Baptist Boys N S	Downey Street, Pennywell, Limerick	Limerick
16910F	Urban	Scoil Iosagain	Sraid Seasain, Limerick	Limerick
17445J	Urban	Scoil Lile Naofa	Kileely, Limerick	Limerick
17737W	Urban	Our Lady Queen Of Peace School	Janesboro, Limerick	Limerick
17941V	Urban	St Munchins G N S	Ballynanty, Limerick	Limerick
17942A	Urban	Scoil Mhainchin Buach	Bothar Siolbroin, Limerick	Limerick
18177P	Urban	Scoil Aine Naofa	Rath Caola, Co Luimni	Limerick
18653V	Urban	Scoil Naomh Iosef	Rathkeale, Co Limerick	Limerick
19372S	Urban	South Hill N S	South Hill, Limerick	Limerick
19667O	Urban	Our Lady Of Lourdes N S	Rosbrien, Limerick	Limerick
19830W	Urban	Corpus Christi N S	Moyross, Limerick	Limerick
19931F	Urban	Gaelscoil Sheoirse	Clancy, An Cnoc Theas, Luimneach	Limerick
20018H	Urban	Maria King Presentation Primary	Sexton Street, Limerick	Limerick
20184B	Urban	Galvone NS	Kennedy Park, Limerick City	Limerick
20185D	Urban	St Marys Boys NS	Island Road, Limerick	Limerick
00856M	Urban	Scoil Naomh Micheal	Longford, Co Longford	Longford
18178R	Urban	St Josephs Convent	Longford, Co Longford	Longford
20101R	Urban	The Sacred Heart Primary N.S.	Granard, Co Longford	Longford
14651U	Urban	Castletown Rd Convent	Castletown Rd, Dundalk, Co Louth	Louth
16469S	Urban	St Nicholas Monastery NS	Philip Street, Dundalk, Co Louth	Louth
19215C	Urban	S N Ard Mhuire C	Balls Grove, Drogheda, Co Louth	Louth
19246N	Urban	S N An Tslanaitheora B	Ard Easmuinn, Dundalk, Co Louth	Louth
19247P	Urban	S N An Tslanaitheora C	Ard Easmuinn, Dun Dealgan, Co Louth	Louth
19479N	Urban	Rathmullan N S	Rathmullen, Drogheda, Co Louth	Louth
19673J	Urban	St Josephs N S	Avenue Road, Dundalk, Co Louth	Louth
19678T	Urban	St Pauls Senior NS	Rathmullen, Drogheda, Co Louth	Louth
20163Q	Urban	S.N Eoin Baiste	Fatima, Castletown, Dundalk, Co Louth	Louth
18506I	Urban	S N Naomh Padraig B	Ballina, Co Mayo	Mayo
20275E	Urban	Scoil Iosa	Convent Hill, Ballina, Co. Mayo	Mayo
19713S	Urban	Arden Boys NS	Arden View, Tullamore, Co Offaly	Offaly
19910U	Urban	Sligo Project School	Abbey Quarter, Sligo	Sligo
18345K	Urban	S N Iosef Naofa	Cor An Bhile, Roscrea, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
19645E	Urban	St Oliver Plunketts NS	Heywood Rd, Clonmel, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
19511G	Urban	St Saviours NS	Ballybeg, Waterford City	Waterford
07722D	Urban	St Peters N S Snr	Athlone, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
16639R	Urban	SN Deaghan O Ceallaigh	Athlone, Co Westmeath	Westmeath

Roll No	Urban	School Name	Address	County
18405C	Urban	S N Phoil Naofa	Athlone, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
08221J	Urban	St Senans National Sch	Templeshannon, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford	Wexford
19739N	Urban	Scoil Mhuire Coolcotts	Scoil Mhuire, Coolcotts, Co Wexford	Wexford
20003R	Urban	St Aidans Parish School	Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford	Wexford
07246U	Urban	Sisters Of Charity N S	Ravenswell, Bray, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
18464S	Urban	Naomh Peadar N S	Bray, Co Wicklow	Wicklow

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Roll No	Urban	School Name	Address	County
19477J	Urban	Holy Family B N S	Askea, Carlow, Co Carlow	Carlow
19478L	Urban	Holy Family G N S	Askea, Carlow, Co Carlow	Carlow
07315N	Urban	Holy Family Snr	Ennis, Co Clare	Clare
17957N	Urban	Ennis Convent Inf N S	Ennis, Co Clare	Clare
20041C	Urban	Convent Of Mercy National School	Kilrush, Co Clare	Clare
20086B	Urban	Ennis Educate Together NS	Gort Road, Ennis, Co Clare	Clare
01197D	Urban	Strawberry Hill B N S	Sundays Well, Cork	Cork
02707F	Urban	Sundays Well G N S	Cork, Co Cork	Cork
12473M	Urban	Greenmount Monastery NS	Scoil Muire Na Ngras, Greenmount, Co Cork	Cork
13031I	Urban	St Josephs Convent N S	Rathluirc, Co Cork	Cork
13696O	Urban	St Vincents Convent N S	St Marys Road, Cork	Cork
14000C	Urban	Scoil Naomh Mhuire	N Mhuire An Oileain, Sharman Crawford St, Cork	Cork
17105I	Urban	Muire Gan Smal C	Glasheen, Cork	Cork
17639W	Urban	Scoil Na Mbraithre	Mitchelstown, Co Cork	Cork
17993R	Urban	Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal B	Glasheen, Cork	Cork
18237H	Urban	Maria Assumpta G N S	Ballyphehane, Cork	Cork
18238J	Urban	Maria Assumpta Jnr Inft	Ballyphehane, Cork	Cork
18292P	Urban	Gaelscoil An Teaghlaigh Naofa	Baile Feithean, Co Chorcai	Cork
18377A	Urban	Iosef Naofa	Fermoy, Co Cork	Cork
18734V	Urban	Realt Na Maidine	Ballyphehane, Cork	Cork
19588S	Urban	Scoil Naomh Therese	Bishopstown, Cork	Cork
19977G	Urban	Bandon Boys NS	Bandon, Co Cork	Cork
16054M	Rural	St Patricks N S	Murlog, Lifford, Co Donegal	Donegal
16821G	Urban	Clochar Padraig Naofa	Carndonagh, Co Donegal	Donegal
17945G	Urban	Scoil Naomh Chaitriona	Ballyshannon, Co Donegal	Donegal
18076J	Urban	SN Muire Gan Smal	Leithbhearr, Co Dun Na Ngall	Donegal
18605K	Urban	Scoil Naomh Padraig Boys	Carndonagh, Co Donegal	Donegal
20054L	Urban	Scoil Eoghan	Moville, Co Donegal	Donegal
20235P	Urban	Letterkenny Educate Together NS	Ballyraine Halls, Ballyraine, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal	Donegal
05600C	Urban	Clochar San Dominic	Dunlaoghaire, Co Dublin	Dublin
19497P	Urban	Scoil Mhuire, Shankill, Co Dublin	Dublin	Dublin
19515O	Urban	SN Naomh Treasa	Baile Brigín, Co Ath Cliath	Dublin
19960M	Urban	St Johns N S	Ballybrack, Co Dublin	Dublin
20274C	Urban	Esker Educate Together NS	c/o Adamstown Castle NS, Adamstown, Co. Dublin	Dublin

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Roll No	Urban	School Name	Address	County
19938T	Urban	St Josephs	Tivoli Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin	Dublin
20186F	Urban	Castaheany Educate Together NS	C/O Griffeen Valley Educate Tog NS, Griffeen Glen Boulevard, Lucan, Co Dublin	Dublin
18726W	Urban	S N Seosamh Na Mbrathar	Fairview, Dublin 3	Dublin 03
19774P	Urban	St Josephs Mxd N S	East Wall, Dublin 3	Dublin 03
16567S	Urban	St Brigids Convent N S	Haddington Road, Dublin 4	Dublin 04
17279S	Urban	Scoil Muire	Haddington Road, Dublin 4	Dublin 04
18360G	Urban	Scoil Bhreandain	Coolock, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
18361I	Urban	S N Cairtriona C	Coolock, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
18362K	Urban	S N Cairtriona Naionain	Coolock, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
19920A	Urban	St John Of God N S	Kilmore Road, Artane, Dublin 5	Dublin 05
19924I	Urban	Harolds Cross N S	Harolds Cross, Dublin 6W	Dublin 06
16989V	Urban	Christ The King G N S	Cabra, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
17459U	Urban	Christ The King I G	Cabra, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
20091R	Urban	St Peters NS	Phibsboro, Dublin 7	Dublin 07
17083B	Urban	S N Muire Gan Smal B	Inchicore, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
17893N	Urban	Sancta Maria C B S	Synge St, Dublin 8	Dublin 08
19430G	Urban	Scoil An Tseachtar Laoch	Bothar Bhaile Munna, Baile Munna, Baile Atha Cliath 9	Dublin 09
20015B	Urban	Gaelscoil Bhaile Munna	187 Bothar Choultraí, Baile Munna, Baile Atha Cliath 9	Dublin 09
18682F	Urban	St Canices B N S	Finglas, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
18683H	Urban	St Canices G N S	Finglas, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
20059V	Urban	Mother Of Divine Grace	Holy Faith NS, Ferndale Ave, Ballygall, Dublin 11	Dublin 11
16983J	Urban	S N Naomh Cillin	Bluebell, Inchicore, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
17355I	Urban	Muire Na Dea Coirle G	Mourne Road, Drimnagh, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
17356K	Urban	Muire Na Dea Coirle Inf	Mourne Road, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
19669S	Urban	Lady Of Good Counsel NS	Mourne Rd, Drimnagh, Dublin 12	Dublin 12
19922E	Urban	Our Ladys N S	St Columbanus Road, Milltown, Dublin 14	Dublin 14
19939V	Urban	Scoil Naisiunta An Dea Aoire	Whitehall Road, Churchtown, Dublin 14	Dublin 14
20241K	Urban	Scoil Choilm Community NS	Porterstown Road, Porterstown, Dublin 15	Dublin 15
19723V	Urban	Queen Of Angels Primary School	Wedgewood, Dundrum, Dublin 16	Dublin 16
19566I	Urban	Our Lady Queen Of Apostles	Queen Of Apostles NS, Clonburris, Clondalkin, Dublin 22	Dublin 22
19502F	Urban	Scoil Aenghusa Jun NS	Balrothery, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19576L	Urban	S N Aenghusa	Scoil N Aenghusa Sin, Balrothery, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19582G	Urban	St Maelruains N S	Kilclare Avenue, Jobstown, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19646G	Urban	Scoil Santain	Bothar Na Habhann Mor, Tamhlacht, Ath Cliath 24	Dublin 24
19878E	Urban	Ballycragh N S	Ballycragh, Firhouse, Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
19950J	Urban	St Dominics N S	Tallaght, Dublin 24	Dublin 24
17221K	Urban	SN Colmcille	An Caislean An Gearr, Gaillimh	Galway
17282H	Urban	Scoil Na Mbraithre	Tuam, Co Galway	Galway
18042P	Urban	Presentation Convent	Tuam, Co Galway	Galway

Roll No	Urban	School Name	Address	County
19401W	Urban	S N Caitriona Sois	Renmore, Co Galway	Galway
19468I	Urban	SN Caitriona Sinsear	SN Caitriona Sinsear, Renmore, Co Galway	Galway
19795A	Urban	Tirellan Heights N S	Headford Road, Galway	Galway
13530D	Urban	Scoil Mhuire	Tobar Mui Doire, Traili, Co Chiarrai	Kerry
16703A	Urban	Scoil Na Mbraithre	An Daingean, Co Chiarrai	Kerry
16871V	Urban	S N An Chroi Naofa	Traighli, Co Chiarrai	Kerry
20013U	Urban	Gaelscoil Lios Tuathail	Lios Tuathail, Co Chiarrai	Kerry
20158A	Urban	Tralee Educate Together	Collis Sandes House, Killeen Oakpark, Tralee, Co. Kerry	Kerry
12747A	Urban	Kildare Monastery N S	Kildare, Co Kildare	Kildare
15599D	Urban	St Brigids Primary School	Kildare, Co. Kildare	Kildare
16705E	Urban	Scoil Phadraig Naofa	Lana Eoin Naofa, Ath-I, Co. Chill Dara	Kildare
18288B	Urban	Scoil Mhichil Naofa	Athy, Co Kildare	Kildare
19452Q	Urban	Scoil Mhuire	Newbridge, Co. Kildare.	Kildare
19550Q	Urban	Ballymany Junior NS	Newbridge, Co Kildare	Kildare
17108O	Urban	St Johns Infants N S	Kilkenny, Co Kilkenny	Kilkenny
20011Q	Urban	St JohNS Senior NS	Ballybough Street, Kilkenny.	Kilkenny
18822S	Urban	St Marys N.S.	Summerhill, Carrick-On-Shannon, Co Leitrim	Leitrim
00851C	Urban	Presentation Convent	Ballymakenny Road, Drogheda, Co Louth	Louth
17059E	Urban	Scoil Na Mbraithre SN	Geata An Domhnaigh, Droichead Atha, Co Lui	Louth
17949O	Urban	S N Padraig Naofa B	Bothar Brugha, Drogheda, Co Louth	Louth
18098T	Urban	S N Bhríde C	Bothar Brugha, Drogheda, Co Louth	Louth
18347O	Urban	S N San Nioclas	Nicholas St, Dundalk, Co Louth	Louth
19892V	Urban	Gaelscoil Dhun Dealgan	Muirtheimhne Mor, Dun Dealgan, Co Lu	Louth
20084U	Urban	Gaelscoil Bheal An Atha	Corrai Mhuireann, Beal An Atha, Co. Mhaigh Eo	Mayo
17969U	Urban	S N Mhuire	An Uaimh, Co Na Mi	Meath
19476H	Urban	St Oliver Plunkett NS	Navan, Co Meath	Meath
20180Q	Urban	Scoil Naomh Eoin	Clonmagadden Valley, Windtown, Navan, Co Meath	Meath
16202B	Urban	Castleblayney Convent	Castleblayney, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
16319W	Urban	Castleblaney Con Infts	Castleblaney, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
17686I	Urban	Scoil Mhuire B	Castleblaney, Co Monaghan	Monaghan
03220F	Urban	Mercy Primary School	Birr, Co Offaly	Offaly
12370C	Urban	St Brendans Monastery	Birr, Co Offaly	Offaly
13118U	Urban	Clara Convent N S	Clara, Co Offaly	Offaly
16928B	Urban	S N Naomh Philomena	Tullamore, Co Offaly	Offaly
18406E	Urban	S N Proinsias Naofa	Clarach, Co Ua Bhfailghe	Offaly
18524K	Urban	S N Naomh Brighde Buach	Tullamore, Co Offaly	Offaly
18797W	Urban	S N Naomh Seosamh	Arden View, Tullamore, Co Offaly	Offaly
13198V	Urban	St Annes Con N S	Castlerea, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
19980S	Urban	St Attractas N S	Ballaghaderreen, Co Roscommon	Roscommon
17277O	Urban	St Edwards N S	Ballytivnan, Sligo	Sligo
19985F	Urban	Our Lady Of Mercy N S	Pearse Road, Sligo	Sligo
20019J	Urban	Holy Family School	Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo	Sligo
01594N	Urban	St Johns	Roscrea, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
16729S	Urban	St Peter And Paul	Clonmel, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
16979S	Urban	Scoil Colmcille	Templemore, Co Tipperary	Tipperary

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17731K	Urban	S N Iosef Naofa	Templemore, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
18435L	Urban	Sacred Heart Primary School	Newline, Roscrea, Co Tipperary	Tipperary
15046I	Urban	St Stephens N S	Waterford, Co Waterford	Waterford
16732H	Urban	Scoil Naomh Seosamh	Dungarvan, Co Waterford	Waterford
18462O	Urban	Scoil Lorcaín BNS	Ballytruckle, Waterford	Waterford
18509O	Urban	An Teaghlaigh Naofa	Clochar Na Trocaire, Port Lairge	Waterford
18689T	Urban	Our Lady Of Mercy Senior P.S.	Military Road, Waterford	Waterford
19947U	Urban	Mount Sion Cbs N S	Barrack Street, Waterford	Waterford
19953P	Urban	St Marys NS	Dungarvan, Co Waterford	Waterford
19955T	Urban	S N Na Toirbhirte	Clocar Na Toirbhirte, Waterford	Waterford
20219R	Urban	St Pauls B N S	Lisduggan, Waterford	Waterford
20073P	Urban	St Marys NS	Gracepark Rd, Athlone, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
20188J	Urban	Mullingar Educate Together	Rathgowan, Mullingar, Co Westmeath	Westmeath
03633H	Urban	S N Bun Clóidi B	Bun Clóidi, Co Loch Gorman	Wexford
11361T	Urban	Faythe Convent	St John Of Gods Convent, Wexford	Wexford
11986N	Urban	Convent Of Mercy	Pairc An Chinneideach, Loch Garman	Wexford
12372G	Urban	Michael St N S	Michael St, New Ross, Co Wexford	Wexford
16741I	Urban	Scoil Na Mbraithre	New Ross, Co Wexford	Wexford
17457Q	Urban	Nmh Ioseph N S	New Ross, Co Wexford	Wexford
02276E	Urban	An T Inbhear Mor B N S	Arklow, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
19508R	Urban	St Fergals Junior National School	Ballywaltrim, Bray, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
19654F	Urban	St Fergals Senior NS	Ballywaltrim, Bray, Co Wicklow	Wicklow
20278K	Urban	Newtownmountkennedy Primary School	Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow	Wicklow

Special Educational Needs.

185. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Science the decision on the allocation of a special needs assistant to a child (details supplied) in County Meath; and if this child is entitled to individual or shared access support from the National Council for Special Education. [42048/08]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): As the Deputy will be aware, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers, for allocating resource teachers and special needs assistants to schools to support children with special needs. The NCSE operates within my Department’s criteria in allocating such support. I have arranged for the details supplied by the Deputy to be forwarded to the NCSE for their attention and direct reply.

All schools have the names and contact details of their local SENO. Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child’s special educational needs, using the contact details available on www.ncse.ie.

School Enrolments.

186. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he will deal with a matter in relation to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42049/08]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The question of enrolment in individual schools is the responsibility of the managerial authority of those schools and the Department does not seek to intervene in decisions made by schools in such matters. The Department’s main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking places. This may result, however, in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice.

It is the responsibility of the managerial authorities of schools to implement an enrolment policy in accordance with the Education Act. In this regard a Board of Management may find it necessary to restrict enrolment to children from a particular area or a particular age group or, occasionally, on the basis of some other criterion. This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants.

Under section 15(2)(d) of the Education Act 1998, each school is legally obliged to disclose its enrolment policy and to ensure that as regards that policy that principles of equality and the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parents choice are respected.

Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, provides parents with an appeal process where a Board of Management of a school or a person acting on behalf of the Board refuses enrolment to a student. Where a school refuses to enrol a pupil, the school is obliged to inform parents of their right under Section 29 of Education Act 1998 to appeal that decision to either the relevant Vocational Educational Committee or to the Secretary General of my Department. In the case of the latter, only where an appeal under Section 29 is upheld can the Secretary General of my Department direct a school to enrol a pupil.

The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) is the statutory agency which can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place for their child. The NEWB can be contacted at National Educational Welfare Board, National Headquarters, 16-22 Green Street, Dublin 7 or by telephone at 01-8738700.

Schools Building Programme.

187. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the position regarding the Ballinamore school building programme, County Leitrim. [42085/08]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): My Department is examining the feasibility of grouping a number of schools including Ballinamore Community School in the 3rd Bundle of school projects to be procured via Public Private Partnership. This examination is nearing completion and I will be making an announcement about the matter as quickly as possible.

188. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the progress regarding a school (details supplied) in County Roscommon. [42086/08]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The major project for the school referred to by the Deputy is at an advanced stage of architectural planning. The progression of all major building projects, including this project, through to construction phase will be considered in the context of my Department’s multi-annual School Building and Modernisation Programme.

However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department and with the level of activity in the School Building Programme, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the further progression of the project at this time.

School Staffing.

189. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Education and Science further to Parliamentary Question No. 489 of 4 November 2008, if the cost neutral early retirement scheme for secondary school teachers is still in place; the way a teacher may apply to take up the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42103/08]

Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): As I stated in my reply of 4 November last, a Cost Neutral Early Retirement Scheme is currently in operation for teachers. Circular Letter PEN 07/05 sets out the full conditions of the scheme. A teacher may apply for cost neutral early retirement by completing an application form, available from my Department, and returning it, through the teacher’s school, to my Department.