

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 9, inclusive, answered orally.

Promissory Note Negotiations

10. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Finance if in the event of no deal being reached on the issue of the promissory note, that it is his intention to pay IBRC the €3.1 billion promissory due on 31 March 2013 and Bank of Ireland the sum due on the one year bond acquired in 2011 by that bank as part of that year's €3.1 billion promissory note payment to IBRC. [50519/12]

57. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Finance the date on which payments are due in 2013 to Irish Bank Resolution Corporation and Bank of Ireland arising from the Anglo Irish Bank promissory note schedule of payments of 2011 and 2013. [50515/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 10 and 57 together.

As the Deputies are aware, the Irish Government has been working extremely hard to secure a deal on the Irish bank debt, including the IBRC Promissory Notes and detailed work will continue to ensure that the positive moves in Europe are harnessed to maximise the benefit to the Irish taxpayer. This is on the back of the Euro Area summit statement of 29 June of this year. All options for restructuring the notes are being considered including the terms of the source of funding, the duration of the notes, the interest rate etc. The future payment of the State under the Promissory Note arrangements will be dependent on the outcome of the on-going discussions and the work undertaken in this area is one of the Government's key priorities.

With regard to the 2012 IBRC Promissory Note payment which was by way of Irish Government Bonds, the repurchase agreement with Bank of Ireland was for one year, ending 19 June 2013.

I may remind Deputies that the Government, together along with all other 26 member States at the Euro Summit in October last year committed that: "As far as our general approach to private sector involvement in the euro area is concerned, we reiterate our decision taken on 21 July 2011 that Greece requires an exceptional and unique solution. All other euro area Member States solemnly reaffirm their inflexible determination to honour fully their own individual sovereign signature and all their commitments to sustainable fiscal conditions and structural reforms. The euro area Heads of State fully support this determination as the credibility of all their sovereign signatures is a decisive element for ensuring financial stability in the euro area as a whole."

The Irish Government will honour this commitment and will ensure that we work with our EU partners to address the situation in relation to the overall cost to the State of resolving the difficulties in our banking sector. This Government has consistently worked towards a consensual approach to decisions made with our European colleagues.

Black Economy Issues

11. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated loss to the Exchequer of tax returned in the years 2011 and to date in 2012 from black market activities; the sectors that have been identified as the main offenders; the action that has been adopted to date to curtail black market activities; the return on such activities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50235/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that they are very mindful of the unfair competitive advantage to be gained by those businesses that do not fulfil their tax obligations. Revenue's tax and duty compliance programmes are under constant review to ensure that they are focussed on the areas of greatest risk, including risks from the shadow economy. Regarding the estimated loss to the Exchequer in 2011 and to date in 2012, I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that given the nature of the shadow economy, there is no reliable system to measure the tax loss due to shadow economy activities. I am further informed that Revenue tackles the problem of the shadow economy through a range of compliance and audit interventions including targeted special projects. A variety of methodologies are used by Revenue to identify those who are operating in the shadow economy including covert surveillance, cold calls to businesses and venues as well as prearranged aspect queries on specific items. In addition, joint operations are conducted with the Department of Social Protection using Joint Investigation Units and there is a strong focus on cash businesses, given its potential high-risk nature.

I am confident that the Revenue Commissioners are pursuing a programme that is dealing in a very determined way with tax evasion in all its forms. In 2011, Revenue committed additional resources to tackling tax evasion in high-risk sectors and carried out over 11,000 audits and more than 546,000 assurance checks which between them yielded more than €483 million. Included in these numbers are the results of a particular focus on shadow economy activity in certain sectors:

- Construction: 1,833 audits yielding €58.8m
- Bars and restaurants: 613 audits yielding €16.9m
- Legal activities: 142 audits yielding €4.6m
- Landlords/rental properties: 908 audits yielding €35.1m
- Professionals (accountants, doctors, dentists): 350 audits yielding €8.9m.

Revenue also prioritises the tackling evasion of taxes and duties in the oil and tobacco sectors. In 2012 to date, eleven oil laundries have been detected and in excess of one hundred and ninety nine thousand litres of fuel have been seized from these. Also, to date this year, thirty-eight filling stations have been closed down. During 2011, Revenue's Customs Service seized a total of 109m cigarettes from 10,581 seizures. Commercial quantities in maritime freight traffic accounted for 76.4m cigarettes. Revenue also seized 11,158kg of tobacco in 2011.

Finally, I am further advised by the Revenue Commissioners that they hold regular meetings

with trade and representative bodies through The Hidden Economy Monitoring Group where the risks posed by shadow economy activities are discussed. The Deputy should also note that changes are frequently made in tax legislation aimed at counteracting shadow economy activity. Two recent examples are the introduction of the electronic Relevant Contracts Tax regime and an enhanced penalty regime for employers who fail to operate PAYE regulations fully.

Ministerial Meetings

12. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Finance if he will report on any recent discussions he has had with troika officials. [43026/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware review missions to Ireland by the three external partners, the EU, the ECB and the IMF (the Troika) take place each quarter as part of the regular review process of our EU-IMF programme. The eighth review mission took place from Tuesday October 16th to Thursday October 25th 2012. In line with each of the previous quarterly reviews, Ireland has met all of the commitments and our continued strong programme implementation has been recognized by the Troika. My colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Mr Brendan Howlin T.D., and I met with the EU-IMF delegation during the recent quarterly review of the EU / IMF Programme of Financial Support for Ireland. These meetings were also attended by senior officials from both Departments. A wide range of topics was covered at these meetings, including financial reforms, structural reforms, economic developments and the progress of the Programme. In addition, the nature of the review mission is that it involves a large number of technical meetings which were attended by officials from my Department, and when appropriate from other Departments, the Central Bank and the NTMA.

The quarterly review process is an integral part of our EU-IMF support programme. The process starts with a review mission and ends with consideration and approval by the EU (Commission and Council) and the IMF Executive Board. Following each review mission the external partners and the Irish authorities agree updated programme documents, specifically the Letters of Intent, the Memorandum of Understanding on Specific Economic Policy Conditionality, the Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies and the Technical Memorandum of Understanding. Once finalised, the Letters of Intent are signed jointly by the Minister for Finance and the Governor of the Central Bank and are issued to the EU and the IMF, along with the accompanying programme documents. These documents are laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas and placed on the Department of Finance website following their transmission. The process is expected to conclude in December.

I would also point out that contacts at official level between the Irish authorities and the EU, the ECB and the IMF concerning the support programme continue between review missions.

Mortgage Applications Approvals

13. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Finance if he is concerned by reports of delays to processing of mortgage applications at Allied Irish Banks in view of the upcoming end of mortgage relief for first-time buyers and the significant financial cost that buyers will face if their transactions are not completed by 31 December 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50499/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): AIB has informed me that it is well aware of this impending deadline on the cessation of mortgage relief for First Time Buyers and

will continue to work with customers seeking to avail of this relief to ensure that, where possible, transactions are completed in a timely manner. AIB is currently approving seven out of ten mortgage applications and is well ahead of target in terms of its aim to provide new mortgage lending of at least €1 billion sanctions in 2012. In addition, AIB's mortgage rates for new business remain the most competitive in the market.

AIB's share of mortgage loans drawn in quarter three 2012 is estimated at 43% compared to 25% in quarter three 2011. It has sanctioned 5,922 mortgages in the year to Sept 2012, a rise of 90% on the same period last year. AIB's share of the broker market is now estimated to be 66%.

First Time Buyers form a significant part of AIB's mortgage business with market share of 49% in quarter 3 2012, compared to 27% in Q3 2011. AIB's improved turnaround time for completed applications has been central to this market performance.

As potential buyers need to complete the purchase of a property by 31st December 2012 to avail of Tax Relief for Mortgage Interest Paid, all aspects of the transaction must be finalised including Legal, conveyancing, Life Assurance and mortgage drawdown.

Any new home buyer who is concerned about any issue in relation to their mortgage application should contact their Relationship Manager or Mortgage Co-ordinator who are always available to support customers in this major financial and personal decision.

Equality Proofing of Budgets

14. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will introduce equality proofing into the budgetary process here and in particular if he will address the core arguments made in the TASC research publication of May 2012, *Untold Story of the Crisis*, which specifically calls for equality proofing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50233/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): With regard to budgetary matters, when focusing on the primary objectives of reducing the deficit and returning sustainability to the public finances, while there are currently no plans to specifically equality and gender proof Budget 2013 it has been of vital importance to the Government to spread the burden of the adjustments made in as fair and equitable a manner as possible, while also seeking to minimise their negative impact on economic growth. The Deputy might be aware that the Programme for Government does contain a clear commitment requiring all public bodies to take due note of equality and human rights in carrying out their functions. I would also remind the Deputy that the State and its bodies must, of course, comply with all provisions of equality legislation in the development and delivery of policies and services.

Furthermore, cabinet procedures require that proposals put to Government indicate clearly whether there is any impact of the proposal on, amongst other things, gender equality, persons experiencing or at risk of poverty or social exclusion and people with disabilities. The Deputy might also be aware that a distributional analysis of proposed budget measures is performed each year based on income levels.

European Stability Mechanism

15. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Finance when he will next be raising the issue of legacy debt in the pillar banks with his counterparts in Germany, Finland and the Netherlands and if his recent comments on the issue of the ESM's capacity to run banks at the

joint finance committee dealing with the forthcoming ECOFIN meetings represents a shift in position away from seeking ESM funds to recapitalise pillar banks retrospectively. [50517/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The European Council in October reaffirmed that “the Eurogroup will draw up the exact operational criteria that will guide direct bank recapitalisations by the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), in full respect of the 29 June 2012 euro area Summit statement. It is imperative to break the vicious circle between banks and sovereigns.” As the Deputy will be aware, the Taoiseach and Chancellor Merkel spoke together following the October European Council and discussed the unique circumstances behind Ireland’s banking and sovereign debt crisis, and Ireland’s plans for a full return to the markets. They reaffirmed the commitment from June 29th to task the Eurogroup to examine the situation of the Irish financial sector with a view to further improving the sustainability of the well performing adjustment programme. They recognised, in this context, that Ireland is a special case, and that the Eurogroup will take that into account. The Taoiseach also had a good discussion of these issues with President Hollande on 22 October.

When my colleague, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Brendan Howlin, and I met with German Federal Minister for Finance, Dr. Wolfgang Schäuble, on 29 October in Dublin, this was also discussed, with Minister Schäuble publicly echoing his support for the communiqué issued by the Taoiseach and Chancellor Merkel.

I also had the opportunity to meet the incoming Minister for Finance of the Netherlands at this week’s Ecofin meeting.

With regard to my comments at the Joint Finance Committee in relation to the ESM, the fund is to be given the capability of recapitalising banks directly. However the primary decision that was made at the meeting on June 29 was for banking union, which will involve the establishment of an effective Single Supervisory Mechanism across the Euro area.

The establishment of this new supervisory mechanism is a prerequisite for direct banking recapitalisation, and so it has become obvious that reaching an outcome here will take longer than our discussions in relation to the promissory notes. Aside from the issue of when this new instrument will become available, there is a host of other issues that have yet to be worked through such as how the ESM would run these banks, what governance arrangements would be put in place between the fund and the banks themselves and indeed between the ESM and Member State governments. We need to consider these wider considerations in the months ahead and this is what I was referring to at the recent Finance Committee.

Directors’ Loans

16. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of loans outstanding from Directors at the State owned banks; if they are continuing to rigorously collect these loans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50506/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the State owned banks that the total amount of loans outstanding from Directors at 31 December 2011 was €1.5 million. Comprehensive disclosure on the amounts of loans outstanding to Directors is provided in the Annual Reports of the relevant institutions. As the Deputy is no doubt aware Bank of Ireland is not a State owned bank. The total amount of loans outstanding from Directors of the State owned banks and Bank of Ireland combined is €8.1 million.

I am informed by the banks that where there are loans and facilities to current Directors that all these loans and facilities are fully performing. I am informed by IBRC that it has no

loans outstanding to current Directors. However it has been necessary for it to record provision against loans to former directors and former management as noted in its Annual Reports.

Credit Unions Regulation

17. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide an update on the lending restrictions being placed by the Registrar of Credit Unions on credit union lending including the total number of credit unions to which these restrictions apply and the nature of the restrictions currently being applied. [50521/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The imposition of lending restrictions is the responsibility of the Registrar of Credit Unions, who is the independent regulator for credit unions. Within his independent regulatory discretion, the Registrar acts to support the prudential soundness of individual credit unions, to maintain sector stability and to protect the savings of credit union members. As Minister for Finance, my role is to ensure that the legal framework for credit unions is appropriate for the effective operation and supervision of credit unions.

The Registrar of Credit Unions advises me that it has been necessary to put lending restrictions in place in credit unions where there are regulatory concerns about the operation of these individual credit unions and the resultant risk to members' savings. The number of lending restrictions is a reflection of the Registrar's concerns about lending practices in the sector.

The Registrar has advised that currently about 57% of all credit unions are subject to lending restrictions. Almost all credit unions with a lending restriction in place have a maximum individual loan size restriction. Of the credit unions with lending restrictions, over 68% can lend €20,000 or more to an individual member which is a sizeable amount and should cover most circumstances.

Fewer than 2.5% of credit unions are restricted to issuing loans of less than €10,000 to an individual member, and fewer than 1% of credit unions are restricted to issuing loans of less than €5,000 per member. These are the cases where the Registrar has more significant concerns in terms of risk to members' savings.

Commercial lending restrictions apply to approximately 40% of credit unions reflecting the need to limit credit union exposure to higher risk lending where skills and expertise are not adequate.

The Registrar has also advised that individual credit union lending restrictions currently in place are reviewed on a regular basis to determine whether they are still set at appropriate levels.

Mortgage Interest Rates Issues

18. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Finance the meetings he or his officials has had; the correspondence he or his officials have had; the action he or his officials have taken in the past two months with respect to those banks that are either refusing to pass on European Central Bank interest rate reductions to their variable rate mortgage holders or increasing the rate on these mortgage holders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50238/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): During the past two months, neither I nor my officials have had meetings or correspondence with banks regarding the European Central Bank interest rate reductions or increases in the rates applied to mortgage holders by

lending institutions. I have no statutory role in relation to the issues raised by the Deputy. It is a commercial matter for each bank concerned. The Central Bank has responsibility for the regulation and supervision of financial institutions in terms of consumer protection and prudential requirements and for ensuring ongoing compliance with applicable statutory obligations. However, the Central Bank has no statutory role in the setting of interest rates charged by regulated entities apart from the interest rate cap imposed on the credit union sector in accordance with the provisions of the Credit Union Act, 1997.

The lending institutions in Ireland are independent commercial entities. Ultimately the pricing of financial products, including, interest rates and products is a commercial decision for the management team and board of each lending institution, having due regard to their customers and the impact on profitability, particularly where the cost of funding to each lending institution, including deposit pricing, is under pressure.

Notwithstanding the fact that the State is a significant shareholder in some banks, it is imperative that the banks are run on a commercial, cost effective and independent basis to ensure the value of the banks as an asset to the State.

Pension Provisions

19. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Finance if he is considering introducing legislative provisions along the lines of a public service pension deduction in the case of pensions being paid to senior executives in State supported banks whose pension funds have also received substantial transfers since State support commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50494/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Government shares the abhorrence of the public at these extravagant pensions but its scope for action to claw back or reduce such entitlements is limited due to constitutional and legal reasons which are well known to the members of the House. The Deputy will be aware of the action taken by Allied Irish Banks requesting a cohort of former senior executives to consider taking a voluntary reduction in their pension entitlement with one former CEO now agreeing to do so. The Government will seek to explore any other avenues and options to address this issue subject to the necessary legal constraints.

Credit Unions Regulation

20. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the concerns expressed by the Irish League of Credit Unions with respect to the proposed provisions in the Credit Union Bill 2012 relating to term limits and exclusions from credit union boards and the impact of these proposals on smaller credit unions; and if he will consider amendments to the relevant section of the Bill. [50522/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Credit Union Bill 2012 is consistent with the Final Report of the Commission on Credit Unions, which was agreed over a nine-month period by all Commission members, including the Irish League of Credit Unions. The Credit Union Bill delivers on over 60 of the recommendations in the Commission Report. I am aware of the concerns expressed by the Irish League of Credit Unions on the provisions of the Bill regarding term limits and board membership, notwithstanding that the Bill implements the Commissions agreed recommendations on these issues. I will reflect on the matters raised during the second stage debate on the Bill, including those raised on behalf of the Irish League

of Credit Unions. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss constructive amendments from Deputies at Committee stage.

Banking Sector Remuneration

21. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Finance in view of the fact that 30 persons in Irish Bank Resolution Corporation earn more than €300,000, the collective payment in base salary for the highest paid 30 employees as of end of 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and the number in 2011 and 2012 who have seen an increase in base salary, pension and expenses; and if he will itemise same. [50514/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised that there are currently 7, and not 30, employees of IBRC whose base salaries are above €300,000 per annum. The total of the highest 30 base salaries from end 2008 to 2012 is outlined in the following table

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
€10,279,397.88	€7,845,471.13	€8,875,847.91	€8,801,292.68	€8,160,352.94

From 2008 to 2012 there has been a 21% reduction in the collective 30 highest base salaries in the Bank. In more detail there has been:

- A decrease of 23% from 2008 to 2009 following the departure of former Anglo Irish Bank senior management.
- An increase in 2010 in line with the process of recruiting a new Group Executive team.
- Further reductions since 2010 as the organisation structure is further rationalised.

I have been advised that during the two years in question, a small number of employees have received an increase in remuneration in line with increased responsibilities following the Bank's staffing rationalisation.

The responsibilities of the Board, management and staff of IBRC are onerous and the experience and skills required to manage the wind down and mitigate the cost to the State are critical to achieve an appropriate outcome.

Equality Proofing of Budgets

22. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Finance if he supports the concept of equality budgeting; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the Scottish Government provides an equality budget statement alongside each annual budget; his plans to provide an accompanying equality statement along with budget 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50247/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): With regard to budgetary matters, when focusing on the primary objectives of reducing the deficit and returning sustainability to the public finances, it has been of vital importance to the Government to spread the burden of the adjustments made in as fair and equitable a manner as possible, while also seeking to minimise their negative impact on economic growth. The Deputy might be aware that the Programme for Government does contain a clear commitment requiring all public bodies to take due note of equality and human rights in carrying out their functions. I would also remind the Deputy that the State and its bodies must, of course, comply with all provisions of equality legislation in the

development and delivery of policies and services.

Furthermore, cabinet procedures require that proposals put to Government indicate clearly whether there is any impact of the proposal on, amongst other things, gender equality, persons experiencing or at risk of poverty or social exclusion and people with disabilities.

The Deputy might also be aware that a distributional analysis of proposed budget measures is performed each year based on income levels. I also feel that is important to highlight the progressive nature of the Irish taxation system when discussing these matters. Research by the ESRI has shown that, when analysing the impacts of policy changes since the beginning of the crisis, losses imposed by policy changes in tax and welfare have been greatest for those on the highest incomes, and smaller for those on low incomes. In other words, the measures have been progressive in nature.

The research also acknowledged the overall distributional pattern of Irish austerity measures as among the most progressive in 6 EU countries examined in a recent study by the European Commission.

It is also worth acknowledging that Ireland has been consistently assessed highly by the OECD for the progressivity of our taxation system. In the OECD rating system on the progressivity of taxation, where less than 100 is regressive and above 100 is progressive, most EU countries had a progressivity rate of between 120 and 140. Ireland, in comparison, had a progressivity rate of 182.

European Stability Mechanism

23. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Finance if he has given detailed considerations to the benefits and costs associated with the European Stability Mechanism taking equity stakes in the State owned banks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50503/12]

52. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Finance the alternatives to the European Stability Mechanism of taking a direct equity stake in the pillar banks, such that the bank debt will be reduced in a manner consistent with the declaration at the June summit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50505/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 23 and 52 together.

As you will be aware, the Euro Area Summit Statement of 29th June affirmed that it is imperative that the vicious circle between banks and sovereigns be broken. The Statement of 29th June also stated that it has been agreed that when an effective single supervisory mechanism is established, involving the ECB, for banks in the euro area, the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) could have the possibility to recapitalise banks directly. This would be dependent on appropriate conditionality, including compliance with state aid rules, which should be institution-specific, sector-specific or economy-wide and would be formalised in a memorandum of understanding.

Work is continuing at a technical level to put in place both the single supervisory mechanism, and the European Stability Mechanism’s direct banking recapitalisation facility, at the earliest possible date. Ireland is participating constructively in these technical discussions.

The most recent European Council on 18/19 October 2012 concluded that: “The Eurogroup will draw up the exact operational criteria that will guide direct bank recapitalisations by the

European Stability Mechanism (ESM), in full respect of the 29 June 2012 euro area Summit statement. It is imperative to break the vicious circle between banks and sovereigns. When an effective single supervisory mechanism is established, involving the ECB, for banks in the euro area the ESM could, following a regular decision, have the possibility to recapitalize banks directly.” It is important from Ireland’s perspective, that progress towards these goals is made as quickly as possible, and as I have already mentioned we are playing our full part in this work.

The implications of any ESM participation in Irish banking recapitalisation are being considered as part of our overall approach to these discussions. However, at this stage it is not possible to form a definitive view on this matter. The government is pursuing a twin track approach in relation to our banking related debt with the other track designed to secure a better deal on the promissory notes in IBRC. Both routes are designed to enhance our well performing adjustment programme and put Ireland’s economy and indebtedness on a more sustainable path.

Tax Yield

24. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether a 10% super-tax on all incomes in excess of €100,000 would yield more than €2 billion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50524/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the full year yield, estimated by reference to 2012 incomes, from imposing a income levy of 10% on all income that is currently liable to the Universal Social Charge (USC) would be of the order of €1,840 million. It should be noted, that the estimated yield is based on applying a 10% levy to all the income of income earners who earn in excess of €100,000, that is, to the income they earn below €100,000 as well as to the income earned above €100,000. The figure is an estimate from the Revenue tax-forecasting model using actual data for the year 2010 adjusted as necessary for income and employment trends in the interim. It is, therefore, provisional and likely to be revised.

Central Bank of Ireland Investigations

25. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance if he is satisfied with the pace of progress of investigations into the collapse of the Irish Nationwide Building Society; if his attention has been drawn to the timetable under which they will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50487/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised that an investigation is being conducted under the Central Bank’s Administrative Sanctions Procedure into historic lending practices at INBS. For legal reasons, including the Bank’s confidentiality obligations pursuant to section 33AK of the Central Bank Act 1942, no further details can presently be disclosed. An appropriate number of enforcement staff, commensurate with the investigation’s complexity, is dedicated to it. Investigation resources are kept continuously under review.

The investigation is on-going. For the reasons already explained, no further details can be disclosed. Until the investigation has concluded, no decisions may be made as regards any future potential action.

Insurance Industry Issues

26. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Finance when he expects a definitive update to be available on the cost of the collapse of Quinn Insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50489/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): At the outset the Deputy should note that the nature of insurance is such that it is not possible to provide a definitive update on the cost of the collapse of Quinn Insurance until the bulk of the claims have been paid, which is unlikely to be for several more years yet. However the Joint Administrators when presenting their 10th report to the High Court in July 2012 indicated that the potential call on the ICF could be up to €1.65bn. The Joint Administrators pointed out in their report that the projected call on the ICF now includes accounting adjustments and considerable contingencies which it is hoped will not be called upon. They indicated that if they were to remove most of the accounting adjustments and use a “*best estimate*” calculation, then the call on the fund is likely to be in the range of €1.1bn to €1.3bn rather than the €1.65bn for which they have provided.

I have been advised that the Joint Administrators have undertaken a number of actions in relation to claims settlement which can reduce the ultimate claims cost. These include as part of a new enhanced governance structure the establishment of a Claims Advisory Committee (CAC) to guide and advise them and QIL management on future claims strategy and policy.

Furthermore, to protect the Exchequer interests I have ensured that the State Claims Agency is more involved in the administration process, particularly in the claims management area, which is critical to keeping the call on the ICF down to its lowest level possible. In this respect it should be noted that, at my request, Mr Ciaran Breen, Director of the State Claims Agency has been appointed as Chair of the Claims Advisory Committee.

My Department proposes to continue to work with the Joint Administrators and to use the services of the State Claims Agency to monitor progress with a view to ensuring, in as much as it can that the most cost effective outcome to this process is achieved.

Fuel Prices

27. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether it would be advantageous for transport providers and users if he followed the example of the new French Administration and reduced excise duties on fuel; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45180/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Ireland, as with other countries, has experienced an increase in fuel prices. This increase is an international phenomenon. Fuel prices are driven by a number of factors including the price of oil on international markets, exchange rates, production costs and refining costs. The rise in oil prices over recent periods reflected additional factors such as geopolitical uncertainty in Northern Africa and the Middle East with potential supply disruptions. While fuel prices remain relatively high we have in recent times experienced a decline in prices. Any reduction in excise would give rise to significant costs to the Exchequer which would have to be met from increasing revenue in other areas.

Mortgage Arrears Rate

28. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which he continues to be updated by the various lending agencies in the matter of mortgage arrears with particular reference to the extent of arrears and of repossessions in respect of family homes,

buy-to-rent or commercial properties; if he has been apprised of how lending agencies have addressed the shortfall arising from the situation whereby properties in negative equity have been disposed of leaving a balance in some cases in excess of 50% of the current market value; if the lending agencies are known to have insured against such potential liability; if a pattern has emerged in regard to the level of repossessions or settlements as between different lending agencies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50255/12]

102. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which lending agencies have insured against bad debt; the extent to which any such claims have been made on an annual basis over the past four years and to date in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50804/12]

103. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which lending agencies have suffered a loss arising from repossessions of family homes or commercial properties in each of the past four years and to date in 2012; the extent if any to which these losses have been offset by various forms of insurance cover; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50805/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 28, 102 and 103 together.

As the Deputy is aware, the Central Bank receives quarterly submissions from all mortgage providers which detail the overall size of mortgage books and, in respect of such lending, data is also provided on:

- arrears levels;
- restructure levels;
- levels of Court proceedings and
- repossessions.

The Central Bank publishes this data, on an industry aggregate level basis, each quarter and it is available on the Central Bank's website (www.centralbank.ie). To date, the data collected and published has been on mortgages in respect of private dwellings but this is now being expanded to also cover "buy to let" mortgages and the first publication of this expanded data set will take place before the end of this year.

The Central Bank advises that the level of repossessions has been low and so has the level of disposals of properties in possession. I am also advised by the Central Bank that the general approach of banks, following disposal, is to arrange payment plans to address outstanding shortfalls. However, such matters are commercial decisions of banks and individual circumstances and situations are usually assessed on a case-by-case basis. I am also advised by the Central Bank that insurance against such potential shortfall loss is the exception rather than the norm.

Banking Sector Remuneration

29. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Finance when the report from Mercer Consultants on remuneration in the banking sector will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50492/12]

63. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Finance with regard to the ongoing review into bankers' remuneration, the date on which the review will be completed; the cost of

the review to date; the estimated final cost of the review; the level of engagement by his Department in this review in terms of the numbers of meetings and estimated staff time allowed for this purpose; the terms of reference of the review; and if any consideration is being given to an increase in the cap. [50509/12]

83. Deputy Gerry Adams asked the Minister for Finance the cost of hiring Mercer Consultants to consider the issue of pay among top executives in the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation. [50699/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 29, 63 and 83 together.

The Deputies will be aware that my Department is presently engaged in a Review of Remuneration Practices and Frameworks at the covered institutions. I have recently engaged, as I informed the Opposition Spokespersons on Finance, the services of Mercer (Ireland) Limited following a limited competitive tender competition to assist my Department in bringing this exercise to a conclusion. The estimated cost of the review, at this stage, is approximately €120,000.

The object of the review is to thoroughly review all remuneration practices at the covered institutions with the object of simplifying remuneration and compensation structures, discouraging excessive risk-taking and to better align pay and reward to long term value creation. Present Government policy on remuneration dictates that no employee, at the covered institutions may receive more than €500,000 (excluding pension contributions) per annum and remains in force.

Numerous engagements by my officials and Mercer have taken place since the awarding of the contract. I am expecting the consultant's report to be delivered by year end whereupon consultations with the various stakeholders will commence.

As I have said previously, I fully recognise that there is a real public interest in the levels of remuneration at the covered institutions and have committed to placing the details underpinning the review into the public domain.

Promissory Note Negotiations

30. Deputy Seán Crowe asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide, in tabular form, the annual interest repayments owed for the next 40 years if the maturity of all remaining promissory notes currently owed to the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation was extended out to 2052 and if annual interest on the notes was charged at 3%, 4% and 5%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50246/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am sure the Deputy will appreciate that financial crisis has had significant resource implications for my Department and as a result, I am not in a position to be able to provide hypothetical funding projections to Deputies. As set out in the repayment schedule below, there are significant capital and interest repayments pertaining to the existing IBRC Promissory Note. Any changes to the repayment scheduling of the capital balance will have an impact on the interest payments in the period as would any assumptions around how the funding was replaced, interest rate changes and other funding considerations. As the Deputy is aware, the Irish Government has been working extremely hard to secure a deal on the Irish bank debt and detailed work will continue to ensure that the positive moves in Europe are harnessed to maximise the benefit to the Irish taxpayer. This is on the back of the Euro Area summit statement of 29 June of this year. All options for restructuring the notes are being considered including the terms of the source of funding, the duration of the notes, the

interest rate etc. The on-going work is one of the Government's key priorities.

A significant item on the agenda in all discussions is the issue of the promissory note. I am glad to say that we meet with strong appreciation of our situation and we are able to have very constructive dialogue on our approach to this question. As discussions are on-going, it is not possible at this point to give a more detailed update or guide on the potential timing of any agreed approach but we will be continuing our engagement with the Troika and our partners in the European Union with a view to a satisfactory resolution of this issue and other related questions.

€bn	Total interest Paid: A	Total Capital Reduction: B	Repayments: A + B	
31/03/2011	0.55	2.51	3.06	
31/03/2012	-	3.06	3.06	**
31/03/2013	0.49	2.57	3.06	
31/03/2014	1.84	1.22	3.06	
31/03/2015	1.75	1.31	3.06	
31/03/2016	1.65	1.41	3.06	
31/03/2017	1.55	1.51	3.06	
31/03/2018	1.44	1.62	3.06	
31/03/2019	1.32	1.74	3.06	
31/03/2020	1.19	1.87	3.06	
31/03/2021	1.06	2.00	3.06	
31/03/2022	0.91	2.15	3.06	
31/03/2023	0.75	2.31	3.06	
31/03/2024	0.57	1.52	2.09	
31/03/2025	0.45	0.47	0.91	
31/03/2026	0.39	0.52	0.91	
31/03/2027	0.33	0.58	0.91	
31/03/2028	0.26	0.65	0.91	
31/03/2029	0.19	0.73	0.91	
31/03/2030	0.10	0.81	0.91	
31/03/2031	0.01	0.05	0.05	
	16.8	30.6	47.4	

* These numbers may not tot exactly as a result of rounding

** The March 2012 repayment was settled with a long term Government bond.

Banking Sector Staff Issues

31. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to review the remit of the public interest directors in the State supported banks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50508/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As I detailed in the answer to question numbers 167, 168 and 172 which were taken together on 9 October 2012, the legal position is that any director appointed to the board of the covered institutions whether under the Credit Institutions (Financial Support) Scheme 2008 or otherwise is subject to the requirements of com-

pany law in relation to the discharge of their responsibilities as a company director. As such, the director is legally bound to act in what he or she believes are the interests of the separate legal entity that is the institution itself. These are the directors so called fiduciary responsibilities. To address the scope for actual and perceived conflicts between the fiduciary duties of the directors of financial institutions under company law and the wider public interest in circumstances where those institutions have received huge financial support from the State, legal clarity, not just to the role of the public interest director but to that of the entire boards of those institutions, was provided under Section 48 of the Credit Institutions (Stabilisation) Act 2010. It provides that the overriding duty of directors of the covered institutions relates to the public interest as set out in the Act. Accordingly, public interest directors do not have a formal reporting relationship to the Minister or to the Department of Finance. As the Deputy will be aware, the terms of the Relationship Frameworks with AIB, Bank of Ireland, IBRC and Permanent TSB set out the form of the on-going relationship between the State and these institutions. We have been operating under these framework agreements since March 2012. Any changes to the Relationship Frameworks would require the approval of the Competition Division of the European Commission.

As Minister for Finance, I am strongly committed to ensuring that the boards of the covered institutions act at all times in a manner fully consistent with key public interest objectives for the banking sector.

Economic Growth Rate

32. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Finance if he concurs with the assessment of the European Commission in respect of growth prospects for 2013; the impact this potentially has on the public finances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50497/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The European Commission published its forecasts in early November and forecast real GDP growth of 1.1% in 2013. This is slightly lower than my Department's most recent forecast, published yesterday in the Medium Term Fiscal Statement (MTFS), which projected real GDP growth of 1.5% for the year as a whole. I would point out however that some domestic commentators have recently suggested growth of 2.1% next year. The consensus forecast, the median of the private sector forecasts, at the end of October was 1.5%. The achievement of fiscal targets is driven by a range of factors, including overall economic performance as well as specific developments which effect revenue and expenditure patterns in a given year.

Broadly speaking, nominal GDP developments drive revenue growth, and nominal GDP growth has been slightly above expectations this year. These developments in nominal GDP are one of the reasons why, notwithstanding lower real growth forecasts, the Commission is still projecting a similar deficit to my Department for next year.

Under the revised Excessive Deficit Procedure (EDP) Recommendation issued by the ECOFIN Council in December 2010, the State's General Government deficit must not exceed 7.5% of GDP in 2013. On the basis of the most up-to-date economic and fiscal data available, the deficit limit is viewed as being achievable on the basis of the implementation of the €3.5 billion consolidation package in 2013, as outlined in the MTFS.

Ireland is committed to implementing further consolidation in the coming years in order to correct our excessive deficit, put debt on a downward trajectory and sustain investor confidence. This should assist in keeping the cost of borrowing as low as possible so as to minimise the cost to the taxpayer of debt interest payments. Indications of the success of this approach are

already evident in the form of the lowering of bond yields since early summer and the NTMA's continuing access to the debt markets.

Promissory Note Negotiations

33. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide an update on the ongoing negotiations with the troika on the resolution of the Anglo Irish Bank promissory note; if the technical paper that was to be agreed in February 2012 has yet to be agreed; if it has not been agreed, the date on which he thinks it will be completed; the reason for the delay and the obstacles that are preventing agreement between the troika and the Government on this issue. [50516/12]

41. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Finance if there is any further update on dealing with Ireland's legacy debt following the ECOFIN meeting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50523/12]

44. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding negotiations on a deal on the Anglo Irish Bank promissory notes; the proposed timeline for reaching agreement on the promissory notes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50268/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 33, 41 and 44 together.

As the Deputies are aware, the Irish Government has been working extremely hard to secure a deal on the Irish bank debt and detailed work will continue to ensure that the positive moves in Europe are harnessed to maximise the benefit to the Irish taxpayer. This is on the back of the Euro Area summit statement of 29 June of this year. A significant item on the agenda in all discussions is the issue of the promissory note. All options for restructuring the notes are being considered including the terms of the source of funding, the duration of the notes, the interest rate etc. This on-going work is one of the Government's key priorities.

I am glad to say that we meet with strong appreciation of our situation and we are able to have very constructive dialogue on our approach to this question. As discussions are on-going, it is not possible at this point to give a more detailed update or guide on the potential timing of any agreed approach but we will be continuing our engagement with the Troika and our partners in the European Union with a view to a satisfactory resolution of this issue and other related questions.

Tax Code

34. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Finance if relevant contracts tax is to be made applicable to some minor school maintenance work and repairs; if consideration has been given to the likely heavy administrative workload to be incurred by boards of management and the possible difficulties that may arise with regards to ensuring tax liability and compliance; and if he will enter into negotiations with Revenue in order that some consideration is given to introducing a reasonable minimum threshold for RCT and distinguishing between normal maintenance or repairs and large-scale system upgrades, refurbishment or construction works. [43106/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Com-

missioners that contracts for routine maintenance work do not come within the scope of RCT. However, RCT applies to all construction works ranging from major construction projects to general repair works. Repair work includes the replacement of constituent parts of a building or structure. Maintenance on the other hand includes cleaning, removal of graffiti and the unblocking of drains, etc. The need to ensure tax compliance by subcontractors is particularly important where the Exchequer is the ultimate source of the funds being paid out by school Boards of Management and other principal contractors. RCT plays an important role in ensuring tax compliance by subcontractors in these sectors. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to introduce a threshold for this type of work.

In the light of the difficulty some school Boards of Management may be having in fulfilling their obligations under the RCT system, the Revenue Commissioners have made available detailed guidance notes specifically tailored for Boards of Management regarding the operation of RCT. These guidance notes, which clarify the position in relation to repair work and maintenance work, have been published on the Revenue website www.revenue.ie.

From 1 January 2012, the Revenue Commissioners have substantially modernised the operation of RCT following the introduction of a dedicated online facility, which offers principal contractors a fast, efficient and paper free system. This has significantly reduced the administrative burden associated with RCT.

Finally, having regard to the pressures on the public finances, it is important that the RCT system is implemented correctly in order to minimise tax evasion in the construction sector particularly where the project involves substantial State funding. The new online system introduced by Revenue has significantly simplified the RCT process for principal contractors, including school Boards of Management.

Mortgage Arrears Proposals

35. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Finance if he will request the banks to make information on options available to customers in financial distress in an easily accessible manner on their websites; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50485/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised by the Central Bank that banks must comply with the requirements of the Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears. Provision 12 requires that ‘A lender must prepare and make available to borrowers, an information booklet providing details of its Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process, which must be drafted in accordance with the requirements set out in provision 10 and must include:

a) an explanation of its MARP, including the alternative repayment measures available to borrowers and outline in general terms, the lender’s criteria for assessing requests for alternative repayment measures;

b) a statement that the borrower will not be required to change from an existing tracker mortgage to another mortgage type;

c) information about the potential availability of relevant State supports such as mortgage interest relief or Mortgage Interest Supplement;

d) relevant contact points (i.e., the dedicated arrears contact points not the general customer service contact points); and

e) reference to relevant website(s) operated by the Money Advice and Budgeting Services.

Furthermore, Provision 13 requires that ‘A lender must have a dedicated section on its web-site for borrowers in, or concerned about, financial difficulties which must include:

- a) the information booklet required under provision 12;
- b) information on the level of charges that may be imposed on borrowers that do not co-operate with the lender; and
- c) a link to any website operated by the MABS that contains information about mortgage arrears.

The information on the web-site must be easily accessible from a prominent link on the lender’s home page’. Some lenders have developed budgeting tools, videos to help customers complete the Standard Financial Statement and FAQ sections on mortgage arrears and forbearance arrangements on their websites.

The Central Bank recently wrote to all lenders to remind them of these Provisions and that their MARP booklet and websites should be updated to include the longer term options as they are rolled out and to make reference to the Government initiatives in this area.

A copy of the “Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears” and of the “Mortgage Arrears - a Consumer Guide to Dealing with your Lender”, is available at www.centralbank.ie.

General Government Debt

36. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the level that the general Government deficits from 2008 to 2009 would have been excluding deficit increasing direct payments to the banks from the general Government sector and excluding deficit reducing direct receipts from the banks to the general Government sector and what this is expected to be for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50237/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Although the previous Government issued a Guarantee to the banks in September 2008 there was no negative impact on the General Government Deficit in that year. Fees from the covered institutions for the Guarantee lowered the General Government Deficit by €110 million and €439 million in 2008 and 2009 respectively. In addition the receipt of preference share dividends from Bank of Ireland and Allied Irish Banks lowered the General Government Deficit in 2009 by €387 million. In 2009 the General Government Deficit was worsened by the €4 billion capital injection into the then Anglo Irish Bank. In addition, the National Pensions Reserve Fund invested €3.5 billion each in both Bank of Ireland and Allied Irish Banks. However, these payments did not affect the General Government Deficit.

The General Government Deficits for 2008 and 2009 were €13.1 billion and €22.5 billion respectively. Excluding the effects of these interventions, GGB would have been €13.3 billion and €19.3 billion in 2008 and 2009 respectively. The *Medium Term Fiscal Statement* published yesterday, 14th November, shows an expected General Government Balance for 2012 of €13.5 billion, or 8.3% of GDP.

Tax Code

37. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Finance the basis on which the plans for a financial transactions tax have been initiated under enhanced cooperation; if he has included

the residence and issuance principles in his analysis of the proposal, whereby all firms globally will have to pay the FTT if they serve the EU market, suggesting that relocation risks from Dublin would be low as relocation could make less difference in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50234/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Under Article 329(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), Member States which wish to establish enhanced co-operation in a policy area shall address a request to the Commission specifying the scope and objectives of the enhanced co-operation proposed. Eleven Member States (Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia and Slovakia) have addressed formal requests to the Commission indicating that they wish to establish enhanced cooperation between themselves in the area of a common system of Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) and that the Commission should submit a proposal to the Council to that end. On 23 October 2012 the Commission submitted its proposal for a Council Decision to authorise enhanced cooperation in the area of financial transaction tax. The European Parliament will have to consent to the use of “enhanced co-operation” in this area. It is for the Council Presidency and the European Parliament to decide when they will take their respective votes on the issue. The “enhanced co-operation” member states have requested that the scope and objectives of the revised FTT proposal should be based on the Commission’s original proposal of September 2011, although the Commission may decide to adjust some elements to reflect the fact that the FTT will be implemented by fewer than 27 Member States.

The original EU Commission FTT proposal was a residence based tax – that is, a transaction would be subject to the tax if one of the parties was a financial institution which is resident in one of the Member States. I requested the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and the Central Bank to prepare an assessment of the Commission’s original FTT proposal to implement an FTT in the EU. Sections 2 and 3 of the ESRI/Central Bank report, which was circulated to Oireachtas Members earlier this year, discuss the residence basis of the tax. The Commission proposal did not envisage that the FTT would be charged on an issuance basis – that is, by reference to whether the company whose shares were being transferred, or whose shares were subject to a derivative transaction, was resident or registered in an EU Member State.

The European Parliament has proposed that the FTT should operate on both a residence basis and an issuance basis, so that a transaction would be liable to an FTT if it was carried out by a financial institution in an EU Member State or if it involved a transfer of shares or a derivative transaction related to shares in a company registered in an EU Member State. While the Council (comprising representatives of the EU member state Governments) is obliged to consult the European Parliament before adopting a final position on Commission proposals, the European Parliament specifically does not have co-legislator status for proposals in the taxation area, as it would for example with co-decision proposals in other areas.

There is no revised FTT proposal from the Commission at this point – only a proposal to introduce an FTT by enhanced co-operation, rather than a proposal outlining the shape of the FTT itself. It is therefore not yet clear what form the “enhanced co-operation FTT” will take. I do not propose to request a further analysis unless and until the Commission issues a revised proposal, and any decision to request a further analysis will depend on the form that proposal takes. I do not propose to request an analysis of a measure which has not yet been formally proposed.

As the Deputy is aware, Ireland will not be one of the enhanced co-operation countries but we will continue to monitor discussions on the FTT to ensure the compatibility of any proposed measure with the internal market and with existing taxes on financial transactions, including our Stamp Duty; and with a view to protecting our existing financial services business.

Property Taxation Collection

38. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Finance the current state of logistical planning by Revenue in respect of the proposed property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50507/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy is aware, the Government decided that, without prejudice to the policy decisions, the Revenue Commissioners will be responsible for collecting the Local Property Tax when it is introduced. In line with that decision, I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that they are now actively planning for the implementation of the tax. This includes preparing a specification for the operation of the tax, assessing the impact on Revenue systems, including payment systems of its implementation, assessing the IT and other infrastructure requirements, beginning to develop a property and property owners register etc. Work is also underway to prepare the necessary legislation. Revenue is engaging with a wide range of Government Departments and Agencies and other service providers in planning the implementation of the tax.

Personal Debt

39. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Finance if he is satisfied with the manner in which banks operate the standard financial statement for customers in financial distress; if there is commonly applied definition of necessary living costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50483/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised by the Central Bank that one of the recommendations of the Expert Group on Mortgage Arrears and Personal Debt was that “a Standard Financial Statement (SFS) should be developed for use by all lenders and MABS, to assess a borrower’s financial position and to identify a best course of action”. A standard format for the SFS was developed by the IBF and MABS and approved by the Central Bank in 2011. All lenders are required to use this SFS when dealing with consumers under the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process (MARP) as set out in the Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears (CCMA). The SFS is a key component to the effectiveness of the MARP as it requires consumers to objectively assess their incomings and outgoings, assets and liabilities and it provides the lender with valuable information regarding the financial position of the borrower. The standard format for the SFS requires a comprehensive review of the borrower’s financial position and brings increased consistency to the process and ensures that all assessments of a borrower’s case are based on a common analysis of their financial circumstances.

Guidance has been prepared for consumers by MABS and the Central Bank which informs the borrower of the importance of completing the SFS and also the commitment of their lender to assist them with the process.

The Central Bank has undertaken to conduct a review of the CCMA to commence in 2013, and any operational issues that arise with this standard SFS will be addressed on this basis.

There is currently no commonly applied definition of necessary living costs in use by mortgage lenders. Each case is different and has to be examined on its own merits and circumstance of the person or family involved.

Banking Sector Remuneration

40. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff that are on a total remuneration package including pension payments, allowances and benefits of between €100,000 and €200,000, between €200,000 and €300,000, between €300,000 and €400,000 and the number with more than €500,000 at Allied Irish Banks. [50510/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): AIB has provided me with the following information on current annual total remuneration packages:

Total remuneration €	Number of Employees*
100,000 – 200,000	1,159
200,000 – 300,000	85
300,000 – 400,000	8
400,000 – 500,000	10
500,000+	-

* AIB had 14,501 members of staff at the end of 2011

AIB fully recognises the absolute requirement to reduce staff costs across all areas of the business as they seek to return the bank to viability and drive value for the State as shareholder. The bank has taken, and continues to implement, changes to its pay and benefits structure within the confines of contractual obligations and seeking agreement with the Unions.

AIB has taken the following specific actions to address remuneration levels: reductions in pay and benefits of higher earners ranging from 7.5% to 15% implemented in H2 2012; defined benefit pension scheme to close from end 2012 for future service; other long standing staff benefits have been withdrawn. For other staff a pay freeze has been in operation since 2008 and the bank is in discussion with the IBOA to extend this to 2014.

A voluntary severance program aimed at reducing staff numbers by 2,500 by 2014 is ongoing. This program is weighted to candidates exiting under early retirement as this population of staff, given their length of service, would typically be amongst the highest historical earners. AIB is on track to meet its target of 2,500 voluntary departures and this is expected to result in annual savings to the bank in excess of €200m.

AIB is fully participating in the Government's review of remuneration levels in the Covered Institutions. Including pensions and all other applicable benefits there are no staff members in AIB earning in excess of €500,000 per annum.

Excluding benefits and pensions, as of November 2012, c. 5% of staff have a base salary in excess of €100,000. Of these staff members, c.59% earn a base salary of between €100,000 - €125,000 and c. 91% earn a base salary of between €100,000 and €175,000. The number of staff earning more than €100k on a base salary basis has reduced by 15% since Dec 2011 and 31% since end 2008. By end 2012 the number of staff on base salaries of greater than €100,000 is projected to decrease to 700 staff, or a reduction of 18% from end 2011 or 33% from end 2008.

AIB is in the process of implementing changes to staff pensions and benefits with discussions ongoing with staff and the Unions. AIB is committed to ensuring that all elements of pay, including base pay and benefits, are in line with the bank's operating performance and recognise the materially altered environment for Bank's operating in Ireland. All changes need to be made against a backdrop of historical contracts that were put in place in a different operating and ownership environment.

Question No. 41 answered with Question No. 33.

State Investments

42. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Finance the value of cash reserves and all other investments held by the National Treasury Management Agency and the National Pensions Reserve Fund at the end of September 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50245/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Cash reserves and other balances held by the National Treasury Management Agency on behalf of the State at 30 September 2012 were as follows:

NTMA Cash Reserves/other balances	30 Sept 2012
	€ billion
Exchequer Account	23.70
Capital Services Redemption Account	0.05
Deposits	0.30
Housing Finance Agency Guaranteed Notes	3.88
Dormant Accounts Fund	0.17
Other Ministerial balances	0.64
	28.74

The figures include cash held in the Exchequer Account in the Central Bank, cash held by the NTMA on deposit with commercial banks, Housing Finance Agency Guaranteed Notes held by the NTMA, the assets of the Dormant Accounts Fund and other Ministerial funds.

The Housing Finance Agency Guaranteed Notes are not immediately callable as they provide funding to the Housing Finance Agency.

In the April Stability Programme Update (SPU) prepared by my Department it is estimated that the cumulative Exchequer deficit over the years 2013-2014 would be close to €25 billion. In addition to these day-to-day costs, there are large debt redemptions that are scheduled from early 2013, including a €5.6 billion bond repayment in April 2013 and a €7.6 billion bond repayment in January 2014. The continuing budget deficits and debt redemptions must be adequately and prudently funded.

Exchequer cash reserves are an important component in bolstering investor confidence in Ireland as it continues on the path to full independent market access at sustainable interest rates. The EU/IMF programme ends in 2013 making such market access of critical importance.

In relation to the cash assets of the National Pensions Reserve Fund (NPRF), I am informed by the National Treasury Management Agency, as Manager of the Fund, that the total value of the Fund on 30 September 2012 was €14.032 billion.

The Directed Portfolio (investments in Irish financial institutions made for public policy reasons at the direction of the Minister for Finance) was valued at €8.057 billion (57.4% of total).

The Discretionary Portfolio, the investment of which remains the Commission's responsibility, was valued at €5.975 billion (42.6% of total).

Cash reserves were valued at €0.801 billion (13.4% of the Discretionary Portfolio).

The detail of all other investments in the Discretionary Portfolio is set out in the following table:

NPRF Asset Allocation	€m	% of Discretionary Portfolio
Large Cap	1,474	24.7%
Small Cap	333	5.5%
Emerging Markets	633	10.6%
Total Quoted Equity	2,440	40.8%
Eurozone government bonds		0.0%
Eurozone inflation linked bonds	112	1.9%
Eurozone corporate bonds	394	6.6%
Cash	801	13.4%
Total Financial Assets	1,307	21.9%
Private Equity	769	12.8%
Property	474	7.9%
Commodities	280	4.7%
Infrastructure	368	6.2%
Absolute Return Funds	238	4.0%
Total Alternative Assets	2,129	35.6%
Equity Put Options	99	1.7%
TOTAL DISCRETIONARY PORTFOLIO	5,975	100.0%

EU-IMF Programme of Support Issues

43. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which he continues to receive support from his EU colleagues for the principle of improved terms for interest and repayments of bailout debt which in turn would create the prospect of some economic growth leading to an improvement in debt GDP ratio and economic recovery; if the issue of historical debt remains to be resolved; when he expects ongoing discussions to conclude in this regard; the degree to which members of national parliament throughout the EU are familiar with the desirability of such progress and the ultimate benefit for all member states particularly those within the Eurozone; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50256/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As you will be aware, Ireland's implementation of the EU/IMF Programme has been recognised, and indeed lauded, both at the ECOFIN and at Eurogroup meetings. There has been wide-spread acknowledgement of our commitment to the Programme, a commitment evidenced by the fact that we have met all of our Programme conditions to date. Ireland's exit from our programme of financial support will represent a success for both Ireland and the broader Euro-zone. Continuation of our strong implementation record to date is critical to such a successful exit.

There is a very keen awareness, by Member States, of the difficulties faced by programme countries, and the efforts being made are well recognised and acknowledged.

Our strong performance has already been recognised in a tangible way. The agreement on 21 July 2011 by the Euro-area Heads of State or Government to reduce to reduce the interest rates to close to the cost of funding and extend the maturity of the EFSF loans, has been reflected in similar changes to the terms of the EFSM loans. They were also reflected in the interest rates for the bilateral loans from the UK, Sweden and Denmark.

The Euro-area Heads of State or Government agreed on 29th June this year that "*it is im-*

perative to break the vicious circle between banks and sovereigns". The Statement of 29th June also stated that it has been agreed that when an effective single supervisory mechanism is established, involving the ECB, for banks in the euro area, the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) could have the possibility to recapitalise banks directly. The establishment of a single supervisory mechanism for euro area banks is a prerequisite for any direct recapitalisation facility.

Discussions are continuing at a technical level to put in place both the single supervisory mechanism, and the European Stability Mechanism's direct banking recapitalisation facility, at the earliest possible date. Ireland is participating constructively in these technical discussions.

The most recent European Council on 18/19 October 2012 concluded that:

"The Eurogroup will draw up the exact operational criteria that will guide direct bank recapitalisations by the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), in full respect of the 29 June 2012 euro area Summit statement. It is imperative to break the vicious circle between banks and sovereigns. When an effective single supervisory mechanism is established, involving the ECB, for banks in the euro area the ESM could, following a regular decision, have the possibility to recapitalize banks directly."

Given that the establishment of the single new supervisory mechanism is a pre-requisite for direct banking recapitalisation, it has become obvious that reaching an outcome here will take longer than our discussions in relation to the promissory notes. Aside from the issue of when this new instrument would become available, there is a host of other issues that have yet to be worked through such as how the ESM would run these banks, what governance arrangements would be put in place between the fund and the banks themselves and indeed between the ESM and Member State governments. We will need to examine these wider considerations in the months ahead.

It is important from Ireland's perspective, that progress towards these goals is made as quickly as possible, and as I have already mentioned we are playing our full part in this work.

We take every opportunity to promote Ireland's case for improved terms on the cost of our banking support measures, through contacts at Ministerial, Diplomatic and official level.

Question No. 44 answered with Question No. 33.

Mortgage Arrears Report Implementation

45. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Finance if he will detail individually each of the recommendations arising out of the Keane report on the mortgage crisis that he or his Department have implemented since the report was published 12 months ago; if he will provide a detailed outline of the actions taken to date with respect to each of these recommendations; if he will detail individually each of the recommendations arising from the Keane report that he or his Department have not implemented; and if he will provide an explanation for the non-implementation of these specific recommendations. [50239/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Report of the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Mortgage Arrears (the 'Keane Report') was published in October 2011. The key strategic conclusion of the Keane Report was that there should not be a blanket debt forgiveness approach but that instead the focus should be on the development, by both lenders and the State, of measures that will be of assistance to those mortgage holders, having regard to individual circumstances, experiencing genuine difficulty with their mortgage commitments. The Government is now actively progressing the implementation of the main recommendations

contained in that Report and to that end a Government committee, chaired by An Taoiseach, continues to meet. Also a high level Steering Group, chaired by my Department, coordinates work at official level across the relevant Departments and the Central Bank. The Government has accepted the overall recommendations of the Keane Report and a number of significant milestones have now been achieved in their implementation:

- Personal insolvency reform was identified in the Report as a central catalyst for the resolution of the mortgage arrears problem and it was stated that, without effective legislation in this area, the mortgage arrears problem will not be resolved. As the Deputy will be aware, the Personal Insolvency Bill was published last June and the Bill has been progressed by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence and Dáil Report stage on the Bill has recently concluded. It is hoped to complete all stages of the parliamentary process before the end of the year;

- The Report was also of the view that Mortgage Interest Supplement is not an appropriate long term housing support and instead it recommend, as a social housing response, the establishment of two schemes, “mortgage to rent” and “mortgage to lease”, for eligible households. On foot of the recommendations, the primary focus has been on the progression of the former and a “mortgage to rent” scheme was launched on a pilot basis in February and this scheme was subsequently extended nationally by the Minister for Housing and Planning in June 2012. This option is now available in appropriate cases and will be of benefit to low income families whose mortgage situation is unsustainable to allow that family remain in their home;

- The recommendations of the Keane Report also included, in addition to standard forbearance, a range of possible solutions such as “trade down mortgages”, “split mortgages” and “sale by agreement” that could be explored and offered by lenders if suitable to borrower and lender. A case by case approach is required in this matter and the area of sustainability will be a key factor when considering an appropriate solution in this area. The Central Bank under its MARS project has been intensively working with lenders to ensure that they have a range of longer term options, such as those outlined in the Report or other appropriate options as may be developed by lenders, and that they have the capacity to implement effectively. The rollout of these options commenced in the final quarter of this year with Central bank oversight;

- An extensive independent mortgage advice framework has now been put in place by the Minister of Social Protection comprising (i) an enhanced website www.keepingyourhome.ie (ii) a Mortgage Arrears information helpline, and (iii) the provision of free independent ‘one-to-one’ professional financial advice to borrowers when considering a long term forbearance/ resolution offer from their lender. The list of accountants providing this service is located on the www.keepingyourhome.ie website.

Mortgage Interest Relief Extension

46. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Finance if he will outline the benefits to extending the current rate of mortgage interest relief for first-time buyers; the projected cost of extending the scheme to the Exchequer, and his rationale for the possible cessation of the scheme in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50254/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): If mortgage interest relief was extended to allow for loans taken out in 2013 by first-time buyers to qualify for mortgage interest relief at the current rates of relief and interest ceiling applicable to first-time buyers, and assuming that the interest payments would reach the interest ceilings available to first-time buyers, the maximum benefit to such buyers would be as follows:

Single Individuals

Year	First Time Buyer Interest Ceiling	Rate of Mortgage Interest Relief	Maximum Relief Due
2013	€10,000	25%	€2,500
2014	€10,000	25%	€2,500
2015	€10,000	22.5%	€2,250
2016	€10,000	22.5%	€2,250
2017	€10,000	22.5%	€2,250

Married Couples

Year	First Time Buyer Interest Ceiling	Rate of Mortgage Interest Relief	Maximum Relief Due
2013	€20,000	25%	€5,000
2014	€20,000	25%	€5,000
2015	€20,000	22.5%	€4,500
2016	€20,000	22.5%	€4,500
2017	€20,000	22.5%	€4,500

If it is assumed that any extension of mortgage interest relief to new borrowers in 2013 would include both first-time and non first-time buyers in that year, I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the full year cost to the Exchequer of an extension on that basis, assuming current rates, is estimated to be of the order of €5 million.

It is also tentatively estimated that two thirds of this cost would relate to first time buyers.

It should be noted that, the position is, as I stated in my Budget day speech on 6 December 2011, and on many occasions in this House since, that mortgage interest relief for principal private residences will no longer be available to house purchasers who purchase after the end of 2012 and will be fully abolished from 2018. This means that a loan will have to be drawn down on or before 31 December 2012 in order to qualify for this relief. I have no plans to review this decision and I believe that more than adequate notice of this decision has been provided.

As you will appreciate, I receive numerous requests for the introduction of new tax reliefs and the extension of existing ones. You will also appreciate that I must be mindful of the public finances and the many demands on the Exchequer given the current significant budgetary constraints. Tax reliefs, no matter how worthwhile in themselves, reduce the tax base and make general reform of the tax system that much more difficult.

Official Engagements

47. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Finance if he has met with Germany's Finance Minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, and the issues that were raised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48417/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Together with my colleague, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Brendan Howlin, I met with the German Federal Minister for Finance, Dr. Wolfgang Schäuble, on 29 December in Dublin.

We discussed with him our plans to emerge from the EU/IMF programme next year and to make a full and sustained return to the markets. We briefed him on the outcome of the latest

troika review which showed that over 160 commitments were fulfilled on time and some 80% of the funding had been drawn down. We also covered the challenges facing Ireland including how the sustainability of the Irish programme could be improved.

In addition, we set out the objectives of our Presidency of the European Union and discussed a range of other issues including with regard to the EU jobs and growth agenda, the restoration of the EU's competitiveness, and the proposals for Banking Union.

We also discussed the need for timely implementation of the conclusions of the European Council, including the examination of Ireland's well performing adjustment programme as re-affirmed by the Taoiseach and Chancellor Merkel on 21 October 2012.

The following revised reply was received on 20 February 2013:

Together with my colleague, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Brendan Howlin, I met with the German Federal Minister for Finance, Dr. Wolfgang Schäuble, on 29 October in Dublin.

We discussed with him our plans to emerge from the EU/IMF programme next year and to make a full and sustained return to the markets. We briefed him on the outcome of the latest troika review, which showed that over 160 commitments were fulfilled on time and some 80% of the funding had been drawn down. We also covered the challenges facing Ireland, including how the sustainability of the Irish programme could be improved.

In addition, we set out the objectives of our Presidency of the European Union and discussed a range of other issues, including the EU jobs and growth agenda, the restoration of the EU's competitiveness, and the proposals for Banking Union.

We also discussed the need for timely implementation of the conclusions of the European Council, including the examination of Ireland's well performing adjustment programme as re-affirmed by the Taoiseach and Chancellor Merkel on 21 October 2012.

State Banking Sector Regulation

48. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the discussions he has had with banks to address the comments of the Central Bank director of credit institutions and insurance supervision that the banks lacked the appropriate culture and skill set to deal with the mortgage crisis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50481/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): My Department maintains frequent contact with banks, in particular the covered institutions, on a wide range of issues, including the issue of mortgage arrears. However, the Central Bank, in the exercise of its statutory role as independent regulator and supervisor of credit institutions, has continuous involvement with all the banks from both prudential and consumer protection perspectives. In that context, the points made by the Central Bank Director of Credit Institutions and Insurance Supervision in her speech at the Irish Banking Federation 2012 National Conference warrant particular attention. In particular, she noted shortcomings on the part of banks in their capacity, and to some extent willingness, to fully address the mortgage arrears problem, although it should also be noted that she also indicated certain areas of progress. The Central Bank has over the past year had intensive engagement with all mortgage lenders on the development of mortgage arrears resolution strategies. As indicated by the Director, the Central Bank has led on this issue and I support the Bank in this leadership role as it continues to actively engage with banks on this process and in particular now that the process has reached implementation and roll out phase.

This has inevitably involved the upskilling of staff to deal with the mortgage arrears issue and this area will, I expect, continue to attract close scrutiny from the Central Bank.

I also expect lenders, many of which now have also had significant leadership change, to respond to the challenge made by the Director and to work with the Central Bank in the roll out of measures to assist their customers who are experiencing genuine and real mortgage distress.

Compact for Growth and Jobs

49. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the progress made to date on implementing the compact for growth agreed at EU level; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43412/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Heads of State or Government in the EU agreed on a compact for growth and jobs at the European Council on 28th and 29th June. This involves action by Member States and at EU level in order to boost growth, investment and employment. The compact rests on three pillars. First, sustainable growth depends on sound public finances. Second, sustainable growth requires a stable financial system that allows for financing of valuable economic activity. Finally, the dedication of EU funds for investment purposes complements the growth potential-enhancing structural reforms. In ensuring progress, measures continue to be taken at European and Member State levels.

Therefore, measures to be implemented at the national level include the full implementation of the country-specific recommendations from the European Semester as well as pursuing differentiated and growth-heeding fiscal consolidation. From an Irish point of view, I want to assure the Deputy that Ireland's fiscal consolidation strategy is on track and fully appreciative of the need for growth. At the euro area level, important institutional innovations in support of Member States undertaking adjustment strategies have been implemented, notably the establishment of the European Stability Mechanism or the ECB's announcement of Outright Monetary Transactions, which can complement ESM assistance.

Further, important progress has been made at both Member State and European levels to ensure financial stability. Scrutiny of EU financial institutions has been enhanced and they continue to increase their capital ratios in line with the European Banking Authority's capital requirement. Member States have also contributed to bolstering the capital position of banks. The ECB's refinancing stance also has been supportive in this process. Ireland's progress in regard to financial stability initiatives is well-documented.

Aside from growth potential enhancing structural measures, a number of initiatives are to be implemented at EU level in order to boost growth. I believe the cumulative impact of all of these measures will have a positive impact in terms of supporting economic activity in the EU at this difficult juncture. This, in turn, can be expected to benefit Ireland, including given the importance of the EU as a trading partner.

Initiatives announced at EU level also include a deepening of the Single Market and reducing the regulatory burden. Another important measure is the mobilisation of EUR120 billion - about 1 per cent of EU gross national income - to boost European growth. These funds will be made available via EU structural funds, European Investment Bank lending, and the 2020 Project Bonds initiative, which entered its pilot phase this November. Constituting part of these efforts is a EUR10 billion paid-in capital increase for the EIB, a substantial boost to its lending capacity.

From a national perspective, we continue to make progress in terms of maximising the

amount of funding that can be made available to Ireland in these regards. For instance, the EIB is an important source of funding to Ireland. Funds have amounted to an average of EUR500 million per annum covering commercial semi-states, local authorities, public private partnerships, and loans to banks for on-lending to SMEs. The Exchequer can also borrow directly from the EIB in respect of capital projects such as school-building. So far this year, the EIB has provided funding for a EUR100 million project for the purpose of building 550 classrooms across Ireland. The Bank also approved loan financing of EUR155 million for Bord Gais Energy. A further up to EUR200 million of part-financing of major Irish water supply and wastewater infrastructure investment for the period of 2012-15 was approved in late October and is due to be signed off on at the end of November. Projects currently under appraisal include EUR200 million for use in SME and mid-cap investment via AIB. On Friday 9 November the latest PPP project, Schools Bundle 3 was signed off on by all parties including the EIB which provided around EUR45 million loan funding for 8 new schools.

The Taoiseach, Ministers Noonan and Howlin, and EIB President Hoyer agreed during the EIB's official visit to Ireland on 6th July to set-up a joint High Level Working Group (HLWG). The HLWG will explore how to ensure an enhanced contribution from the Bank by identifying concrete and flexible mechanisms to enhance the Bank's support for Ireland's growth agenda. This joint commitment to collaboration and a structured dialogue builds on existing EIB activity in Ireland, while also recognising the opportunities presented by the forthcoming increase in the Bank's capital resources of EUR10 bn.

These opportunities will be used to help Ireland move beyond the crisis management of recent years and to plan for the creation of growth in the economy through key strategic investments in infrastructure and growth-enhancing initiatives, specifically those covered in the Government's Infrastructure Stimulus package which was launched last July.

Question No. 50 answered with Question No. 7.

Tax Code

51. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Finance if he will outline the projected implications of introducing a higher rate of tax on income earners over €100,000 on industry and competitiveness here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50253/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy is aware, the Programme for Government states that as part of the Government's fiscal strategy we will maintain the current rates of income tax together with bands and credits and not increase the top marginal tax rates. In addition, the Deputy will also be aware that competitiveness is a crucial factor in achieving sustainable growth in a small open economy, such as Ireland's. The economy's competitiveness is the result of a wide number of factors, with the National Competitiveness Council's Scorecard analysing Ireland's international competitiveness using 127 individual indicators. These range from measures such as economic growth and quality of life, to the policy inputs that will drive future competitiveness, such as the education system and the delivery of infrastructure. Taxation is one element of this policy-mix, as taxation rates impact upon the attractiveness of an economy as a place to do business and work.

It is the standard practice for the Minister for Finance to review taxation policy in the run up to the annual Budget. It is also a longstanding practice of the Minister for Finance not to comment, in advance of the Budget, on any tax matters that could be the subject of Budget decisions.

However, speaking generally, the marginal tax rate, which is described as the tax rate that applies to the last euro of the base, is an important consideration in the formulation of tax policy. Marginal tax rates are important because they influence individual decisions to work more. The OECD in its working paper ‘Tax and Economic Growth’ points to the “*possibility that high top marginal rates will increase the average tax rates paid by high-skilled and high-income earners so much that they will migrate to countries with lower rates resulting in a brain drain which may lower innovative activity and productivity*” .

Question No. 52 answered with Question No. 23.

Public Sector Staff Increment Payments

53. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide details of the full remuneration packages currently being paid out to the previous four Secretaries General of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50242/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The following table sets out the annual gross pension (after application of the Public Service Pension Reduction) being paid to two of the four most recent Secretaries General of the Department of Finance and the last two Secretaries General, Public Service Management and Development (PSMD).

Tom Considine	€125,379.93
David Doyle	€125,379.93
Eddie Sullivan (PSMD)	€112,697.06
Ciarán Connolly (PSMD)	€112,697.06

In the case of Mr. John Hurley, he moved from the position of Secretary General to the governorship of the Central Bank. His pension, which is paid by the Central Bank, is based on his position at retirement and his entitlement from his service in the Civil Service would have transferred to the Central Bank under the pension transfer arrangements applying in the public sector. He is not in receipt of a pension based on his position as Secretary General.

In the case of Mr. Kevin Cardiff, as he moved to a position in an international body viz the EU Court of Auditors, he is not currently in receipt of a pension and no enhanced superannuation terms will apply when he becomes entitled to a preserved pension at age 60.

Budget 2013

54. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide an estimate of the impact of the planned fiscal adjustment to be contained in budget 2013 on GDP employment and Government revenue projections for 2013; if any assessments of the impact of the adjustment on these matters has been undertaken or is due to be undertaken by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50236/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Each year as part of the budget, a table is published showing the impact of the planned budgetary adjustment on the fiscal position. In Budget 2012, this analysis was presented in Table 5. It compares the post budget position, following the implementation of the consolidation measures, with the pre budget (or white paper) position which is published the weekend prior to the budget.

The white paper for 2013 will be published the weekend before the budget and a table show-

ing the impact of the budget on the fiscal position in 2013 will be published as part of the budget documentation on the 5th of December.

It should be acknowledged that while restoring the public finances to a sound footing is crucial for Ireland's future, consolidation can have a negative short-run impact on the economy. However, I want to assure the Deputy that the Government is conscious of the need to minimise the impact of consolidation on the labour market and in this regard is framing Budget 2013 in such a way as to make it as job-friendly as possible.

The short term impact on GDP as a result of the fiscal adjustment in 2013 was factored into my Department's forecasts released last December at Budget time, and no substantial change to estimates of this specific impacts were made in the MTFs forecast of 14 November. The downward revision to real GDP growth for 2013 to 1.5 per cent contained in the MTFs is a primarily a result of a realisation of downside risks highlighted at the time of SPU in relation to weaker international growth, and its pass-through to domestic demand.

Credit Unions Regulation

55. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Finance in view of the fact that the Irish League of Credit Unions has money available for investment, if he will consider availing of these funds in order to invest in the economy here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50480/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I assume that the question refers to money held by credit unions, rather than those funds held by the Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU). The ILCU has stated that the Credit Union Bill 2012 should enable credit unions to provide funding to Government-backed or Government-guaranteed schemes and projects with a social benefit.

The Commission Report recommends that this role needs to be carefully designed to integrate prudently with the basic credit union business of savings and lending services for individuals. The Commission also recommends that a formal process of engagement be established between the credit union representative bodies and Government to determine safe ways to invest collective credit union funds into community projects, employment initiatives and small co-operatives. I remain open to proposals from the credit union movement on this front and it does not appear that primary legislation is required in order to facilitate this.

Fuel Rebate Scheme

56. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the request by the haulage industry for the introduction of an essential user rebate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45163/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy is aware a working group was set up between officials of my Department, the IRHA and members of the Oireachtas. This working group had a series of meetings to discuss issues of concern to the haulage industry including the matter of an essential users rebate. I have received a submission from the group. I have also recently met with representatives of the IRHA. I am considering matters raised by the IRHA and the report from the group.

Question No. 57 answered with Question No. 10.

Bank Guarantee Scheme Bond Repayments

58. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide detail of the remaining schedule of payments of unsecured and unguaranteed bonds held by all of the covered institutions detailing the cost of each of these payments. [50520/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The table sets out the schedule of payments of unsecured and unguaranteed bonds held by the covered institutions.

Senior Unsecured Unguaranteed Bonds	2012€000	2013€000	2014€000	2015€000	2016€000	2017€000	2018+€000	Total€000
IBRC		87,782		20,000	4,000	10,148	2,000	123,930
PTSB	21	212	185	82	24	50	68	642
AIB	34,021	45,267	815,000	19,000	55,000			968,288
BOI*								

*While the BOI Group has issued and redeemed senior debt since the original bank guarantee of September 2008, such debt is treated on a pari passu basis with depositors (there being no distinction in law between the two) and as such the bank has declined to show this.

Departmental Strategies

59. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance if he will detail individually the action that he has taken since March 2012 on each of the 50 recommendations made by the Wright report, Strengthening the Capacity of the Department of Finance, and to detail individually those recommendations which have not been implemented and the reason for doing so; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50241/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy may be aware, the Secretary General of the Department of Finance, Mr John Moran, attended the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform (JOC) on November 7th. During the course of the meeting, Mr Moran committed to writing to the JOC to give further detail on the issues raised by members of the Committee. One of these commitments related to providing an update of the Department's progress in implementing recommendations put forward by the Wright Report. At the outset, it is worth noting that the Wright Report was related to the Department of Finance before a split of its functions was enacted. As you are aware 2011 was a year of significant change for my Department – the former Department of Finance was split into two Departments, the new Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. As such, a number of the recommendations are the responsibility of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. At the JOC, the Secretary General outlined the Department's Statement of Strategy. The five major goals associated with the new Strategy are to deliver:

1. A resilient Irish economy founded on sustainable and balanced growth and leading to significant increases in employment numbers.
2. A sustainable macroeconomic environment and sound public finances.
3. An improvement in the living standards of our citizens.
4. A return by Ireland to international debt markets so as to achieve an exit from the EU/IMF funding programme at the earliest possible date.

5. The completion of the restructuring of the banking system and a vibrant, secure and well regulated financial sector.

In light of the revised responsibilities and the new focus for the Department of Finance, the senior management team looked at the internal structures, reviewed how other Treasury Departments operate and sought to refine the organisational structures in order to position the Department correctly to achieve our ambitious goals. Many of the changes implemented go beyond the recommendations of the Wright Report. For example, the Management Advisory Council (MAC) has a new improved agenda. Rather than four similar meetings per month, now there is one in-depth meeting per month (more like a monthly board meeting) with three shorter focussed meetings on the week's events.

Also, four new subcommittees of the MAC, risk, policy, transformation, and people and culture allow for greater in-depth analysis than could occur during MAC meetings. They are supplemented by staff working groups from within and outside the MAC to look at and make recommendations of what we might improve in areas such as internal communications or use of IT.

I am hugely supportive of the work being done by senior management in my Department, and indeed staff at all levels. This work will ensure that the Department of Finance continues to develop in a way that further improves its ability to assist Government in implementing important policy initiatives.

Please find in the annex an excerpt from the draft letter specifically related to the Wright Report that will be sent to the JOC in the coming days.

Wright Report on Strengthening the Capacity of the Department of Finance

Budgetary and Other Processes

1) After Cabinet review of Budget strategy in June, and consistent with its April submission to the European Commission, the Government should release for public and parliamentary review:

- the Department's economic and fiscal forecast,
- the Department's assessment of the economic and fiscal risks to this outlook,
- related sectoral analysis by the Department and
- the Government's proposed quantum for fiscal action in new spending and tax expenditures.

The Minister and the Department should consult widely on this framework, particularly with the relevant Oireachtas Committee.

The Department is firmly committed to openness and transparency and an example of this is provided by the thorough level of engagement with committees such as the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Department of Finance currently produces three sets of published economic and fiscal forecasts every year:

1. at end-April for the Stability Programme Update (SPU);
2. in October/November for the Pre-Budget Outlook/Medium-Term Fiscal Statement, and

3. the annual Budget forecasts in December.

In addition White Paper (i.e. no policy change) fiscal forecasts for the Budget year are also prepared shortly in advance of the Budget.

This is currently seen as an appropriate number of published forecasts. Publication of an additional set of forecasts just over 2 months after the publication of the SPU forecasts has not been deemed necessary in recent years. It is fair to say also that the published forecasts could be more evenly spread over the course of the year, for example in April, September and December.

Of course the “2-pack” of draft EU regulations concerning budgetary frameworks will most likely mean the publication of draft budgetary plans, including economic and fiscal forecasts, by mid-October each year. The MTFS, which was released yesterday, and the draft budgetary plans that will be required under the “2-pack” is published at a stage in the budgetary process that greatly informs the public and political debate. This document outlines the Department’s latest view on the macroeconomic and fiscal outlook as well as the risks affecting this. It also provides aggregates for the fiscal stance that is considered as appropriate for the following Budget.

Finally, it is worth noting that following discussion of the 2011 Budget Strategy Memorandum (BSM) at Cabinet in July of last year, the Minister for Finance issued a statement in which he acknowledged discussion of the BSM – a confidential, mid-year update of the emerging economic and budgetary outlook and an important part of the budgetary process – at Cabinet.

2) Departments would not seek spending enhancements beyond the spring consultations leading to the Budget review at Cabinet.

While the Department of Finance broadly supports this advice, following the split of the Department of Finance into two entities, this recommendation now falls under the remit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

3) To the extent that November tax results surprised to the upside, such revenue should be used for debt reduction, not new spending or tax relief.

The Department of Finance agrees that fiscal policy should follow a sustainable path based on sound economic fundamentals. Broadly speaking, this recommendation advises that fiscal policy should be cognisant of underlying trends as opposed to one-off factors such as an upside surprise in November tax receipts.

Under the terms that Ireland has negotiated with our funding partners in the EU-IMF Programme of Financial Support, Ireland has committed that “Any additional unplanned revenues must be allocated to debt reduction” (Permanent Condition from the Memorandum of Understanding).

Under the “six-pack”, which amended and strengthened the Stability and Growth Pact, Member States must make an appropriate annual improvement in their cyclically-adjusted budget balance, net of one-off and other temporary measures, towards their medium-term budgetary objective. Until Member States, including Ireland, reach their medium-term budgetary objective, annual expenditure growth (excluding expenditure relating to interest, co-funding for EU expenditure and non-discretionary changes in unemployment benefit expenditure) must not exceed a rate calculated on the basis of the medium-term rate of potential GDP growth. In addition, Ireland cannot make tax revenue reductions unless matched either by expenditure reductions or increases in other revenue items or both.

As a result, as any upside revenue lodged to the Exchequer cannot be used for additional

expenditure or additional tax relief, it will reduce the Exchequer Borrowing Requirement and, therefore, favourably impact on our debt situation.

4) The Panel supports the establishment of a Fiscal Council to review and publish commentary on the Department's analysis and the Government's proposed quantum for fiscal action. The Panel believes that such a Fiscal Council must be independent of Government, have qualified membership, a straight forward role and the ability to report in a timely manner. For example, following a June release of the Government's fiscal plan, the Fiscal Council could review:

- the Department's economic and fiscal outlook,

- the Department's risk assessment,

- whether the proposed fiscal framework, including provision for new Government budgetary action, entails acceptable risks for the economy.

The Irish Fiscal Advisory Council (IFAC) was established on an administrative basis in June 2011, which in effect ensures compliance with Recommendation 4. Upon passage of the Fiscal Responsibility Bill (FRB), it will put the IFAC on a statutory basis and assign it the monitoring and assessment functions required of an independent national institution under the Fiscal Compact. The FRB also provides for the funding of the IFAC. The provisions ensuring the independence of the IFAC comply with the European Commission's Common Principles.

The IFAC was established with a mandate to independently provide an assessment of, and to comment publicly on, whether the Government is meeting its own stated budgetary targets and objectives. The Council is also charged with assessing the appropriateness and soundness of the Government's fiscal stance and official macroeconomic projections, as well as an assessment of the extent of compliance with the budgetary and debt rules.

5) To the extent the December Budget exceeds the quantum of action identified in June, the Fiscal Council should reassess the risks of these further actions for the economy.

Please refer to Recommendation 4.

6) The Fiscal Council could also usefully assess the impact of future Social Partnership wage and fiscal provisions on Ireland's economic competitiveness.

Please refer to Recommendation 4.

Economic and Fiscal Forecasting

7) Forecasts in Budget Memoranda to Cabinet and for public consultations should include well-articulated scenarios of alternative outcomes, consistent with the Department's risk analysis.

Further to the information set out in respect of Recommendation 1, the Budget Strategy Memorandum (BSM), as well as other Departmental publications that provide economic and fiscal forecasts, sets out emerging risks, both positive and negative, to the emerging economic and fiscal outlook. Of course the risks to the economic outlook have implications for the public finances but there are also risks, separate to those associated with the general economic situation, which can have very serious consequences for the public finances. These too are identified in the BSM.

Quantitative Sensitivity analysis of fiscal and economic outcomes analysis to changes in global growth and the savings rate (respectively) is conducted as part of on the Department's forecasts and presented in the Medium Term Fiscal Statement (MTFS). A qualitative assess-

ment of macroeconomic and fiscal risks is also set out.

Details of engagement with economists and academics from the public and private sector that also assists in developing positions on risk analysis is provided in response to Recommendation 8.

8) In addition, the Department should provide a public work-shop, with private sector and academic interests, once a year so that the assessment of the economic and fiscal challenges can be debated before the Department finalises its forecasts.

In terms of the fiscal situation, the Department, immediately after the end-June 2011 Exchequer Returns, held a briefing session to discuss the end-June numbers and prospects for the remainder of the year. Representatives from various banks/stock broking firms etc. were invited. Unfortunately representatives from just one institution attended. However we agree this should not discourage the Department from offering such briefings in the future and this is something we will look at again.

Of course, the Department very regularly meets with and briefs, as part of its day-to-day operations, credit rating agencies, potential investors, international institutions. In recent years the Department has considerably increased its level of interaction with economists from elsewhere in the public sector and in the private sector. For example, the Economics Division has held a series of seminars over the past 18 months with private and public sector participation. Seminars have been held in the context of the Stability Programme Update in both 2011 and 2012 to discuss the macroeconomic and fiscal forecasts as well as the risks associated with those forecasts. A similar exercise was carried out in relation to last year's Medium Term Fiscal Statement. A further seminar was held on estimation of the output gap and the structural balance in January of this year.

Advice over the Budget Cycle:

9) The Department of Finance should keep a written record of advice tendered and decisions taken as part of the budgetary process.

Each year, as the Budget approaches many Pre-Budget Submissions are received by the Department primarily from individuals and from representative groups. Each Submission is recorded and filed. A copy is sent out to officials who are responsible for the relevant policy area. The Department also circulates these Submissions, as appropriate to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

A summary of the principal Submissions is also circulated as a Paper to members of the Tax Strategy Group (TSG). This Paper, along with the policy papers on Budget options which are also prepared by various Departments for the TSG, are subsequently published by the Department of Finance (further details of the TSG are at (16) below).

Written submissions on various options are prepared for the Minister. The Minister will decide, in consultation with the relevant officials, whether or not a particular option should be pursued. These decisions are recorded in writing. Options which have been approved by the Minister are then included in the Budget and Finance Bill process which, of course, is subject to Oireachtas scrutiny.

10) The Panel strongly supports the public release of substantially more economic analysis by the Department. However, policy advice to the Minister for Finance in the preparation of the Government's Budget should not be subject to release under Freedom of Information for at least five years.

The recommendation that policy advice to the Minister for Finance in the preparation of the Government's Budget should not be subject to release under Freedom of Information for at least five years has not been implemented.

The reason why the recommendation has not been implemented is because it is not consistent with the Programme for Government which seeks to enhance openness, transparency and accountability of all public authorities.

Macro-economic Risks:

11) The Panel recommends that the Department prepare comprehensive macroeconomic risk assessment for Ireland as part of its annual advice to Cabinet.

The Department has substantially increased the level of risk assessment it carries out in relation to its published forecasts as previously set out in Recommendations 1 and 7. A similar level of risk assessment is carried out in advising Cabinet.

Cabinet is more informed than ever of economic developments and risks to the outlook. For example, the Economic Management Council, which consists of the Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Ministers for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform are given a weekly update of the latest economic developments. Detailed discussions of domestic and international risks occur at these weekly meetings which are supported by senior officials from the four Government Departments.

Detailed quarterly commentaries on the macroeconomic situation and outlook are also provided by the documentation that accompanies the quarterly Troika missions. These are all available on the Department's website.

12) The Department should establish sufficient formal arrangements with the Central Bank, including its Financial Regulation function, the NTMA and NAMA and establish sufficient technical capacity internally to manage this process.

Senior officials from the Department of Finance, the NTMA, the Financial Regulator meet on a regular basis to discuss issues of strategic importance. The 'Principal's Group' consists of

- John Moran, Secretary General, Department of Finance
- Ann Nolan, Second Secretary General, Financial Services, Department of Finance
- John Corrigan, CEO, NTMA
- Patrick Honohan, Governor, Central Bank
- Matthew Elderfield, Deputy Governor, Financial Regulation, Central Bank
- Stefan Gerlach, Deputy Governor, Central Banking, Central Bank

Other senior officials attend as required depending on the issues being discussed.

On a more formal basis and in response to the internal and external recommendations on the General Government Debt consolidation discrepancy, the Department is formalising arrangements between the Department of Finance, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and the Central Bank of Ireland (CBI). The Department is in the final stages of a CBI Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), is well underway with a CSO MoU and plans to complete all MoUs by end-November.

In relation to the NTMA, the Fiscal Division of the Department of Finance is in very regular

contact and has a very good working relationship with counterparties in the NTMA on issues such as the Exchequer position, debt interest projections, funding issues etc.

The Department meets quite regularly with the Agency in that context, most recently on Monday 12 November. The meetings tend to be more regular at particular points in the year – during the EU/IMF Programme review missions, the various forecasting rounds etc.

The department's oversight of NAMA is now managed by the Shareholding Management Unit (SMU), which is staffed with banking specialists who are seconded from the NTMA's banking division. This unit is responsible for ensuring the fulfilment of the Ministerial responsibilities under NAMA legislation to ensure NAMA meets its objectives and has regular interaction with senior executives of NAMA both on a formal and informal basis and meets Directors of the Agency on a frequent basis.

13) The Government should introduce legislation to establish a coordinating committee of these financial agencies, chaired by the Secretary General of the Department of Finance, which would require the full exchange of any information that could entail fiscal or economic risks to the country, among the above agencies.

As stated above in relation to Recommendation 12, stronger ties have been established between these financial agencies particularly through the 'Principal's Group' but no legislation has been introduced to cement the status of this group.

In recent months, at an operational level the Department has also increased its engagement with other State departments and bodies on the identification and management of risk, including fiscal and economic risks. Although this engagement at this level is also not supported by a legislative mandate, it has resulted in an improvement in information sharing and risk management understanding and has also led to revisions in risk management practices at many of the Departments concerned.

Construction Policy:

14) The Department should include sectoral assessments in its annual economic analysis and forecast that is released for public consultation.

While the Department of Finance broadly supports this advice, following the split of the Department of Finance into two entities, this recommendation primarily relates to the former Sectoral Policy Division of the Department which is now under the remit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

However, the Department of Finance is clear that it has an important role to play in forming economic policy as well. The Department's revised strategic plan, published in May of this year, announced that the Department is itself undergoing significant reforms. The five major goals associated with the new Strategy are to deliver:

1. A resilient Irish economy founded on sustainable and balanced growth and leading to significant increases in employment numbers.
2. A sustainable macroeconomic environment and sound public finances.
3. An improvement in the living standards of our citizens.
4. A return by Ireland to international debt markets so as to achieve an exit from the EU/IMF funding programme at the earliest possible date.
5. The completion of the restructuring of the banking system and a vibrant, secure and well

regulated financial sector.

As a key part of this reform programme, a new, expanded Economics Division has been established in the Department. This Division is resourced by expert economists in both the macro-economic and microeconomic field with experience drawn from the private sector, international financial institutions and elsewhere in the public service. The Department's economic resources have therefore been significantly increased and the Department is now conducting additional sectoral analysis as part of its economic planning and forecasting function.

Tax Policy Advice:

15) The Department should substantially increase its analytical capacity in the tax policy area.

The Department has recently completed an open competition, under the auspices of the Public Appointments Service, for policy advisors who have been employed to work in the tax policy area. Six tax policy Graduate AOs have been recruited each of whom have a variety of tax, law and economic qualifications.

Also, the Tax Policy Unit in the Department of Finance has over the past number of years progressively sought to increase its technical skills capacity. In this regard, the Tax Policy Unit has engaged, following a competitive tender process, with the Irish Taxation Institute to provide a certified tax policy training programme for its staff. This training programme, entitled the Diploma in Tax Policy and Practice, involves well over a 100 hours of tax technical training and runs over two years. The Diploma is being progressively rolled out to all staff in the Tax Policy Unit who do not already have specific tax qualifications.

In addition, a number of staff in the Tax Policy Unit have completed or are currently undertaking professional tax qualifications (such as the AITI Chartered Tax Advisor qualification) and a number of short term secondments to external agencies (such as the European Commission's Directorate for Taxation) to increase specialist knowledge have been organised.

Separately, a specialist tax economic analysis unit has been established in the Tax Policy Unit staffed by externally recruited economists.

The Tax Policy Unit has also sought in recent years to increase its interaction with external stakeholders. One example of this is that a dedicated 'micro' website www.taxpolicy.gov.ie has been established by the Tax Policy Unit in the Department of Finance to increase the availability of information on tax policy issues to the public. The website is the main portal now being used for an increasing number of public consultation processes on tax policy issues.

In addition, the Tax Policy Unit has recently established a new Tax Training Network, membership of which is available to all staff in the Department of Finance and D/PER.

The aim is to put in place a contact group of people across the Department who are interested in tax policy and would like to be kept informed of upcoming tax research seminars, tax conferences and training opportunities being run by or involving the Department of Finance's Tax Policy Unit.

To date, approximately 50 people across the two Departments have signed up for membership of the network.

The organised events will qualify for CPD – continuing professional development – for the Irish Tax Institute and certain other accounting bodies. A growing number of staff in the Department have ITI tax qualifications.

16) The Department should organise itself to consult with tax and financial experts and prepare advice that is most appropriate to an efficient tax regime for Ireland.

The Department of Finance has engaged with the Troika as part of the EU/IMF Programme and has already implemented many of the agreed policies in relation to tax policy.

Also, as part of the annual Budget process, the Tax Policy Unit chairs and provides the Secretariat for the Government's Tax Strategy Group. The Tax Strategy Group considered 24 separate Tax Policy Papers prepared by the Tax Policy Unit in advance of Budget 2011, for example. These papers are published after each Budget and are available to read on the Department's new dedicated Tax Policy website: www.taxpolicy.gov.ie

In 2010-2011, a review of the Business Expansion Scheme was carried out and an Ex-Ante Economic Impact Assessment of the new Employment and Investment Incentive was published.

A Study on the Economic and Budgetary Impact on the introduction of a Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base in the European Union was commissioned by the Tax Policy Unit from Ernst and Young, Washington DC and was published in January 2011.

The Tax Policy Unit assisted in the preparation of the National Recovery Plan 2011 – 2014, published in 2010.

The Tax Policy Unit prepared a comprehensive review of tax expenditures in 2010 in line with the provision in Section 1 of Finance Act 2011.

In 2011, the Tax Policy Unit published an Economic Impact Assessment of Potential Changes to Legacy Property Reliefs.

By using the Department's new dedicated tax policy web portal, www.taxpolicy.gov.ie, the Tax Policy Unit has in recent times been carrying out more and more public consultation processes as part of its deliberative process. Recent consultations include:

- legacy property reliefs;
- tax relief for charitable donations;
- tax residence rules;
- VRT and Motor Tax and
- Film Relief.

Medium Term Analysis:

17) The Government should commit to the preparation of regular medium- term economic plans for Ireland at least every five years.

The Department of Finance is broadly supportive of this recommendation. The negotiated EU/IMF Programme of Financial Support provides a template for economic planning. In it we have clear targets for our public finances, timetables to implement important strategic reforms and simultaneously have introduced a Jobs Action Plan, a stimulus package and radical reform of labour market activation measures.

As part of the programme of reforms which the Department is undergoing, we plan to play a greater role in the management of our economy and to have a greater focus on strategic economic planning for the future. The Department is currently reviewing its economic planning function in order to best support the Government in the formulation of its short and medium-

term economic strategy.

Department's Interface with Other Departments:

18) The Department should integrate those sections of Public Service Management and Development Division dealing with administrative budgets into Sectoral Policy Division to create a "single window" interface with line Departments.

While the Department of Finance broadly supports this advice, following the split of the Department of Finance into two entities, this recommendation now falls under the remit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

19) Activities could be organised immediately under the Assistant Secretary level in the Sectoral Policy Division. The longer-term objective should be to establish Principal positions responsible for the interface of all activities with outside Departments.

While the Department of Finance broadly supports this advice, following the split of the Department of Finance into two entities, this recommendation now falls under the remit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Public Service Management and Development:

20) Public Service Management and Development Division should be established as a separate entity, either as an entirely separate Department or reporting directly to the Minister of State for Public Service Modernisation.

While the Department of Finance broadly supports this advice, following the split of the Department of Finance into two entities, this recommendation now falls under the remit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

21) The Secretary General of the Department of Finance and Minister for Finance should retain authority over the overall wage bill, negotiating mandates for new collective bargaining processes and manage a single window on departmental control functions.

While the Department of Finance broadly supports this advice, following the split of the Department of Finance into two entities, this recommendation now falls under the remit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Public Service Modernisation:

22) The Panel strongly supports the creation of a Private Sector Advisory Board which it understands is under consideration by the Departments of the Taoiseach and Finance.

I understand that in the context of the Wright report the Private Sector Advisory Board was recommended to assist in Public Service Modernisation particularly in relation to the Croke Park Agreement. While the Department of Finance broadly supports this advice, following the split of the Department of Finance into two entities, this recommendation now falls under the remit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

23) A full-time Task Force should be established and assigned responsibility for driving forward the reforms under the Croke Park Agreement.

While the Department of Finance broadly supports this advice, following the split of the Department of Finance into two entities, this recommendation now falls under the remit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

24) The Task Force would comprise existing staff from the Modernisation Unit of the Department. The Task Force would also include key individuals from the leading Departments along with expertise in the area of change management on secondment from the private sector.

While the Department of Finance broadly supports this advice, following the split of the Department of Finance into two entities, this recommendation now falls under the remit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

25) The Task Force's Team leader should have direct access to the Minister of State responsible for Public Service Modernisation.

While the Department of Finance broadly supports this advice, following the split of the Department of Finance into two entities, this recommendation now falls under the remit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

26) In addition, there is a need to recruit expertise in the areas of change management and business process re-engineering.

While the Department of Finance broadly supports this advice, following the split of the Department of Finance into two entities, this recommendation now falls under the remit of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Core Finance Functions:

27) With the possible exception of the Public Service Management and Development Division, no other core functions should be moved out of the Department of Finance.

The Department of Finance split has been more substantial than this. Further details on the revised structure of the Department of Finance after the split is provided below in Recommendation 28.

Structure:

28) Assistant Secretaries should report directly to the Secretary General of Finance.

Since the Wright Report was published in December 2010 there has been fundamental change to the structure of the Department with the split of the Department to DOF and DPER in July 2011. On the 10th May 2012 the Department under the leadership of a new Secretary General published the 2012 revision of the Departments Statement of Strategy 2011 – 2014. The statement sets out the revised organisational structure of the Department, which has been sent to the Deputy. This structure is based on four key policy divisions – EU and International, Financial Services Division, Fiscal Policy Division and Economic Division – and the establishment of a Corporate Office, and a Finance Office.

The Management Advisory Committee examined in detail the goals and priorities of the Department and developed a resource plan from these considerations. This involved an analysis of the skills, qualifications and experience of the existing workforce, allocating these staff across the new organisational structure and identifying the gaps by grade, skill and qualifications in each of the Department's divisions. During this process detailed division by division, area by area and grade by grade resource demands were identified, discussed and agreed.

29) Second Secretaries should cease to have divisional line management responsibilities, but should be able to call upon resources across the Department as and when necessary.

See response to Recommendation 28 above also. This issue was reviewed and addressed in the revised organizational structure. It should also be noted that the operation of MAC has changed considerably with a much greater focus at Divisional level on Business Planning, performance improvement and reporting.

30) The Second Secretary currently responsible for Sectoral Policy Division should be designated as Chief Operating Officer for the Department. The function of this post would be to lead the co-ordination across the Department of major issues, for example, to lead the interaction between the Budget and expenditure sides of the Department, and otherwise to help ensure the entire Department is connected to key policy and management issues.

The primary issue here is related to the organization of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. However, I can confirm that an MoU has been agreed between the Budget side in the Department of Finance and the Expenditure side in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to ensure that the excellent working relationships evident at this level continue in the future.

31) The Second Secretary post leading the Budget, Tax and Economic Division could focus primarily on the increasingly important role of interacting with the institutions of the European Union and other international institutions.

Response to Recommendation 28 above addresses this.

32) The Second Secretary responsible for Financial Services should retain responsibility for this function until such time as the banking crisis is considered to have abated sufficiently. At that time the post should be abolished. That Second Secretary could draw on the support of the Assistant Secretaries currently in that Division as necessary, but they would report directly to the Secretary General.

Addressed in responses above. The Second Secretary responsible for Financial Services continues to be responsible for this function, and the revised operation and functioning of MAC caters for this issue.

Management Advisory Committee (MAC):

33) The remit of the MAC should be broadened to include discussion of major strategic challenges confronting the Department.

The Department now uses an improved MAC agenda. Rather than four similar meetings per month, the Department now has one in-depth meeting per month (more like a monthly board meeting) with three shorter focussed meetings on the week's events.

For example at a recent meeting, the MAC reviewed a newly collated comprehensive set of management information for the Department. This monthly management pack provides information on the finances of the State, the finances of the Department, performance of the economy, detailed HR information and other reports from across the Department. This type of information is not totally new. However organising the presentation and review of the information in a systematic and consistent way is new and is a significant development for our operations. Other non MAC member colleagues, as necessary, present the sub-topics and hear first-hand management's views.

The Department has identified the need for greater "challenge" as one of its guiding principles and has implemented a number of initiatives here also: -

- Four new subcommittees of the MAC, risk, policy, transformation, and people and culture allow for greater in-depth analysis than could occur during MAC meetings. They are supplemented by ad hoc groupings of staff both within and outside the MAC to look at and make recommendations of what we might improve in areas such as internal communications or use of IT.

- The shorter weekly MAC's permit the Department to follow that discussion with a one to two hour peer review and challenge session whereby the management team as a whole considers the direction and focus of one of the key policy initiatives. At present, the focus is on EU strategy, performance of the economy, measures for growth and risk and funding of the State.

- In addition, divisions are starting to hold their own challenge sessions in order to validate and assess their own policy initiatives. For example, after each monthly management meeting with bank management, the shareholder management unit run peer challenge sessions (not confined to their unit) on the information presented by the bank and the steps we may need to take during the upcoming month for that bank.

34) All those that report to the Secretary General should attend MAC meetings. Given the pace of change underway, MAC meetings could usefully include a brief report by Assistant Secretaries on key issues in their area, where appropriate, as well as Secretary General and Second Secretary reports on high level issues.

Please see Recommendation 33 above.

35) Attendees at MAC should, as a matter of course, brief their own direct reports on outcomes from these meetings.

Each MAC meeting sets out a list of actions for follow up and these are discussed by staff in the relevant divisions. Divisions also hold "divisional MAC" meetings where necessary, in order to update local staff on overall developments and to discuss areas of focus for the division. The meetings help to set the priority and focus items raised at the Department's MAC meeting. In addition, quarterly "Town Hall" meetings are held where the Secretary General can update all staff on topical issues.

36) The MAC should meet more often at Budget time and during periods of major change to enhance internal communication and connect all employees to emerging issues. It should schedule regular meetings on key policy issues.

Please see Recommendation 33 in relation to the increased level of interaction at MAC level which includes the MAC subcommittee structure.

Corporate Secretariat:

37) A Corporate Affairs Unit, which should be headed by a Principal who would report directly to the Secretary General, should be established. It would bring together and enhance a number of functions which are located in different areas of the Department. The functions of the Unit would be to:

- manage the interface with the Minister's Office;
- co-ordinate briefs and draft speeches for the Minister to ensure consistency and quality;
- help ensure effective internal communications;
- manage departmental outreach and the Department's profile;
- co-ordinate, on a regular basis, the preparation of a brief for MAC on all major live issues and an early warning on significant emerging issues;
- help co-ordinate major departmental initiatives;
- co-ordinate departmental strategy statements;
- manage the activities of the Department's Press Office; and
- manage the Freedom of Information function in the Department.

A Corporate or Operations Office has been established with responsibility for the areas noted. In particular the office is responsible for improving the level of management information and knowledge sharing both internally and externally, delivering on the Department's transformation program, delivering on internal process improvement and identifying opportunities to utilize IT in order to deliver efficiencies. In addition, the office is responsible for rolling out a project management office which is tasked with taking good practice project management principles and implementing these across the Department.

Structure at the Working Level

38) The Department should examine working level structures and the devolution of responsibilities to ensure the delegation of more responsibilities to middle management levels and to create larger teams throughout the organisation.

Please see response to Recommendation 28 above.

Enhancing the Department's technical skills:

39) Even in this period of restraint, the Department must find a way to increase substantially the numbers of economists and other staff with relevant technical qualifications.

An assessment of the staffing levels was undertaken by senior management in the Department of Finance in October 2011 as part of the 2012 Estimates process. That exercise examined the staffing levels at that time following the split with DPER, the shortages in skills and expertise in a number of key areas and the challenges that faced the Department, the economy and the Government.

Two broad issues were identified as facing the Department at that time;

- i. Addressing the skills and expertise shortages
- ii. Meeting the major policy challenges which are integral to the Programme for Government including
 - the reform of the banking system,
 - meeting increasingly onerous requirements from the EU in relation to development of financial services,
 - compliance with the EU/IMF Programme and
 - a need to significantly broaden and deepen Ireland's interaction with the EU and the other international institutions

The Department received an increase in the Employment Control Framework (ECF) in the 2012 Estimates from 282 to 320, and while it has been proposed that the ECF numbers will fall from 320 in 2012 to 312 in 2013, 308 in 2014 and 304 in 2015, we are seeking to maintain the ECF at 320 for these years.

In addition to these increases, the Department received approval for 25 posts as part of the upcoming EU Presidency commencing January 2013.

40) The Department should double the number of economists, appointed through open, public competition and trained to Masters level or higher, over the next two years. These appointees should comprise a mix of recent university graduates and experienced individuals and be assigned to positions throughout the organisation. The Department should organise itself to maintain a regular inflow of new university recruits.

The Department has recruited 10 Economic AO's at Masters level or higher and these have been supplemented by a further two senior level economists seconded into the Department from the Pensions Board and the Central Bank and a campaign to recruit a Chief Economist was also

conducted.

41) The Department should work to establish a welcoming professional environment for new economists. Economists at Masters level and above should be identified and their numbers reported on annually; a champion for establishing and promoting this “community of interest” should be named.

HR have developed and streamlined the induction process for new entrants, which assists in effectively assimilating all new staff into the Department, by clarifying the roles and functions of the Department, the Statement of Strategy, the restructured Departmental Divisions and Sections, while making relevant information available to new staff, e.g. policies, procedures, circulars etc.

The three day induction programme is held over a 3 week period in order to minimise disruption to the work of the various divisions. It is intended that upon appointment, the Chief Economist will be the champion for promoting the “community of interest”, and in the meantime this role is being undertaken by an Assistant Secretary.

42) The economic seminars by external economists, which were recently introduced by the Secretary General, should be made permanent; the Department should permit the publication of professional economic analyses, by staff in the Department, that are clearly identified as not the views of the Department.

Please see response to Recommendation 8 in relation to economic seminars.

Also, the Department will publish four additional analysis papers with the MTFS in 2012.

43) The Department should expand its complement of skilled staff in other disciplines, especially accounting, analysis, banking and financial markets.

Please also see response to next question Q44 below. In addition to this the Department in 2012 have recruited 43 AO's as listed below:

Economics – 10 AOs (supplemented by a further two senior level economists seconded into the Department from the Pensions Board and the Central Bank)

Finance & Banking – 11 AOs, plus a further 4 AOs are temporarily assigned to Presidency duties

Tax – 6 AOs

Legal – 6 AOs

Accountancy – 4 AOs

Human Resources – 2 AOs

Further AOs will be recruited from these panels to fill consequential vacancies that arise on

foot of internal promotions, and/or natural attrition/movement of existing staff.

44) The Department should immediately seek the secondment of skilled personnel on a two-year rotation from the Central Bank, NTMA, ESRI and other relevant bodies.

The Department is also supplementing skills and numbers in key/critical areas through a number of secondments, on both a paid and pro bono basis from other areas of the civil/public service and private sector - including personnel from PWC, Deloitte, KPMG, the Central Bank, the Irish Stock Exchange, the NTMA, and AIB. Four pro bono staff from the 'Big Four' have also been assigned to the Tax area for the duration of the Presidency.

45) The Department should also promote exchange agreements with other Finance Departments internationally.

As part of the EU Presidency we have made arrangements to temporarily second in five staff from other Finance Ministries. Given the severe shortages of staff that we currently have, and that we are recruiting further staff to fill vacancies and thereby meet the priorities of the Department, we are not in a position to formalise two-way exchange agreements at this time. However, this is an objective we intend to pursue as part of developing our people.

Enhanced HR function:

46) A senior HR specialist should be appointed to the Department initially, at any rate, on a short-term contract. The post would be advertised and preference would be given to an individual who had managed a dynamic HR function in the private sector.

A HR manager was recruited in September 2011 on a 3 year contract. In addition to this significant shared services project is underway to provide transactional HR services for the wider Civil Service – the Department of Finance are in the first tranche of Departments to move to this new way of working in March 2013. An experienced HR AP has also been seconded in together with the recruitment of two HR AO's to supplement and improve the HR capability in the Department

47) The Department should reinforce its performance review process and require the identification of under-performance and an individualised plan to deal with problems identified.

The Department has relaunched and refocused PMDS to ensure effective management processes, and maintain a greater level of compliance and engagement with the process across all levels in the organisation. This will be an integral element of analysing and identifying training and development needs in the Department. There have been a number of comprehensive PMDS training sessions provided to management, and further workshops and briefing sessions for staff

at all levels will ensure that individual goals are fully aligned with Divisional Business Planning processes and the high level goals set out in the Department's Statement of Strategy.

48) Once each year, the MAC should take a full day to review individual performance in the Department. It should identify, of all supervisors, the top 20% on people management – those who recognise high performance and deal with poor performance. This process should also identify the bottom 20% - those supervisors who are not performing well in this area and those who are not taking a proactive approach to this issue. Plans to address under-performance should be required. A supervisor's performance in "people management" should have a material impact on consideration for promotion.

As part of the refocusing of PMDS in the wider Civil Service a calibration process in each Department is an integral part of the new process (which has been agreed with the Unions), which will facilitate a consistent and transparent review of individual, and collective performance across the Department.

In addition to this a Learning and Development strategy framework is being developed and leadership and management development together with improving performance management are key priorities in this.

Change Management:

49) The Secretary General should present a Change Management Plan to employees and report on progress in an annual accountability session to all staff.

In addition to the revised statement of strategy which sets out the goals and objectives for the Department, the Corporate Office are developing a Change Management Plan setting out the key actions and tasks to deliver on the Department's Transformation Program. The Secretary General provides regular updates through the quarterly "Town Hall" meetings.

50) He should be supported by all managers, by a champion for change management at Assistant Secretary level and by the newly recruited professional HR specialist.

The Chief Operations Officer is supported by a team of staff within the Corporate Office who are tasked with delivering on the Department's Transformation Program. The COO is also supported by a number of MAC Sub-Committee's including the People & Culture sub-committee and the Transformation sub-committee. In addition a number of working groups have been established with membership from across all staff levels to discuss and identify opportunities to deliver change within the Department.

Banking Sector Remuneration

60. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff that are on a total remuneration package including pension payments, allowances and benefits of between

€100,000 and €200,000, between €200,000 and €300,000, between €300,000 and €400,000; and the number with more than €500,000 at Bank of Ireland. [50512/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I regret to inform the Deputy that Bank of Ireland are not in a position to supply a detailed answer to the above question at this time. Due to the volume of information required to be sourced, collated and verified it was not possible to provide a response in the timeframe. Bank of Ireland have indicated that they will respond in the coming days and I will forward a response to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Tax Code

61. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Finance if he will consider raising the effective corporate tax rate to 12.5% and increasing the nominal corporate tax rate to 15%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50525/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): There are different ways of measuring the effective rate of corporation tax depending on the variables that are used. As there is no such single internationally agreed methodology to calculate the effective rate of corporation tax, there is no basis upon which to calculate the current 'effective rate' of corporate tax in Ireland without being potentially misleading. Therefore, neither I, nor my Department, would be in a position to introduce an 'effective rate' in Ireland in the way the Deputy has suggested.

Regarding the headline corporate tax rate, the Taoiseach, myself and other members of the Government have repeatedly expressed the Government's commitment to the retention of the 12.5% rate. In terms of an increase in the 12.5% rate, estimating the size of the behavioural effects is difficult but they are likely to be relatively significant. An OECD multi-country study found that a 1% increase in the corporate tax rate reduces inward investment by 3.7% on average. On this basis, it would take only a 2.5% increase in the rate (to 15%) to decrease Ireland's inward investment by nearly 10%. This assumes the average applies across the board but in fact the effect is likely to be more extreme for Ireland.

The major importance of maintaining the standard 12.5% rate of corporation tax to Ireland's international competitive position in the current climate must also be borne in mind. Ireland, like other smaller member states, is geographically and historically a peripheral country in Europe. A low corporate tax rate is a tool to address the economic limitations that come with being a peripheral country, as compared to larger core countries. Ireland's low corporation tax rate plays an important role in attracting foreign direct investment to Ireland and thereby increasing employment here. Recent research by the OECD also points to the importance of low corporate tax rates to encourage growth.

Further, it would be difficult to justify such a move in the context of Ireland's stated position that we will not change our corporation tax strategy. Even a marginal change would undermine both our long held stance on this issue and the certainty of business, domestic and international, in our resolve to maintain that position.

Tax Collection

62. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 189 and 190 of 16 October 2012, if he will make a statement on his answers which show that gross profits of companies registered in Ireland are €28.762 billion manufacturing and €41.196 billion non-manufacturing and they only paid €4.246 billion in tax; and if he will make

a statement on the matter. [50526/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that figures of the total manufacturing and non-manufacturing trading profits of companies for the tax year 2010 were provided in my replies to parliamentary question numbers 189 and 190. Such data is contained in the Statistical Reports which are published annually by the Revenue Commissioners on their website – www.revenue.ie. The most recent relevant published data from that source is for 2009 and is contained in the 2010 report. The corresponding information for 2010 was set out in the previous Parliamentary Question replies referred to by the Deputy. This will be published in the 2011 report on the website.

It may be helpful to add that these are the amounts of trading profits before certain deductions and charges are deducted to arrive at taxable profits, the figure on which the charge to tax is initially assessed on a gross before credits basis. Furthermore, it should be noted that certain credits are deducted after the calculation of gross corporation tax. Some of the main credits applicable in the tax year 2010 and deducted after the calculation of gross tax were double taxation relief, manufacturing relief, credit for withholding tax on fees and research and development tax credit.

Question No. 63 answered with Question No. 29.

European Stability Programmes

64. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Finance if he will give his understands by the use of the term special case by various European politicians when referring to the nature of the Irish Government's debt burden. [50518/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The European Council in October agreed that the “the Eurogroup will draw up the exact operational criteria that will guide direct bank recapitalisations by the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), in full respect of the 29 June 2012 euro area Summit statement. It is imperative to break the vicious circle between banks and sovereigns.” Ireland is a special case in this regard due to the unique circumstances behind our banking and sovereign debt crisis and the fact that our banking crisis emerged at a time when the full range of European mechanisms were not available to us.

This has been recognised by other European leaders. The Taoiseach and Chancellor Merkel spoke together on 21 October and they jointly reaffirmed the commitment from 29 June to task the Eurogroup to examine the situation of the Irish financial sector with a view to further improving the sustainability of the well performing adjustment programme. They recognised, in this context, that Ireland is a special case, and that the Eurogroup will take that into account.

Banking Sector Remuneration

65. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide in tabular form, with respect of Allied Irish Bank, the number of staff whose annual salary at 31 December 2011 fell into the bands €400,000 and above, €300,000 to €399,000, €200,000 to €299,999 and €150,000 to €199,000. [50511/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): AIB has provided me with the following information on annual salaries as at 31st December 2011:

Basic Salary €	Number of Employees*
150,000 - 199,999	134
200,000 – 299,999	44
300,000 – 399,999	8
400,000+	4

* AIB had 14,501 members of staff at the end of 2011

End 2012 – projected

Basic Salary €Number of Employees

150,000 - 199,999	96
200,000 – 299,999	24
300,000 – 399,999	11
400,000+	2

By end 2012 those employees with a base salary of over €150,000 is projected to have reduced by 52% from end 2008 and by 30% from end 2011.

AIB fully recognises the absolute requirement to reduce staff costs across all areas of the business as they seek to return the bank to viability and drive value for the State as shareholder. The bank has taken, and continues to implement, changes to its pay and benefits structure within the confines of contractual obligations and seeking agreement with the Unions.

AIB has taken the following specific actions to address remuneration levels: reductions in pay and benefits of higher earners ranging from 7.5% to 15% implemented in H2 2012; the defined benefit pension scheme is to close from end 2012 for future service and other long standing staff benefits have been withdrawn. For other staff a pay freeze has been in operation since 2008 and the bank is in discussion with the IBOA to extend this to 2014.

A voluntary severance program aimed at reducing staff numbers by 2,500 by 2014 is ongoing. This program is weighted to candidates exiting under early retirement as this population of staff, given their length of service, would typically be amongst the highest historical earners. AIB is on track to meet its target of 2,500 voluntary departures and this is expected to result in annual savings to the bank in excess of €200m. AIB is fully participating in the Government's review of remuneration levels in the Covered Institutions.

Foreign Conflicts

66. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on the actions that are currently being taken at EU and UN level to address the ongoing conflict in Mali; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50610/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The situation in Mali remains of grave concern. It has been evolving since the attempted coup in March and the *de facto* secession of much of the north of the country. The UN Security Council has adopted two Resolutions, the latest of which, on 12 October, increases the pressure on the parties in Mali to agree a political 'roadmap' for a return to democratic governance. The Resolution also endorses planning for the possible deployment of a military force by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to support the Malian authorities to regain territorial control in the north. At the meeting of the EU Foreign Affairs Council which I attended in Luxembourg on 15 October, we adopted comprehensive Conclusions reaffirming the

EU's commitment to continuing to play a constructive role in support of stabilisation efforts. The EU is working through political pressure, development and economic assistance and, when appropriate, in support for a regional military intervention and a possible Common Security and Defence Policy mission focused on training of the Malian Armed Forces. The European Council subsequently endorsed these Council Conclusions and expressed its serious concern over the continuing political, security and humanitarian crisis in Mali. EU Foreign and Defence Ministers are to continue the EU discussions on Mali when they meet in Brussels on 19 November.

A meeting involving the local Malian parties, ECOWAS, the African Union and the EU took place in Bamako on 19 October. The EU, UN and others stressed the importance of early agreement on a 'roadmap' for the transition to democratic governance and of Malian commitment to reforming the military. Once the 'roadmap' is agreed, it is anticipated that a third UN Security Council Resolution will be drafted authorising the deployment of an ECOWAS military intervention. The adoption of such a 'roadmap' would also enable the EU to resume suspended bilateral development cooperation and then to consider financial and other supports for the ECOWAS force and the possible deployment of an EU mission.

Complex crises such as this highlight the need for the EU and Member States to work together coherently and collectively, using all of the instruments available, to pursue a comprehensive approach with our international partners in the region, including ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

67. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of staff currently working in his Department by grade; the pay scale of each grade within his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50614/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table. The figures take account of officers of other Government Departments serving in our missions abroad, most notably Ireland's Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels and in Visa Offices operated within Embassies by staff seconded from the Department of Justice and Equality, except where their salaries and other costs are borne by their parent Departments. My Department received a temporary reprieve from the impact of the Government's Employment Control Framework and was also allocated 50 temporary extra posts for 2012 and 2013 in order to enable it to plan and fulfil its EU Presidency responsibilities and activities in the first half of next year. Most of the temporary additional staff are now in situ and included in the table. The table reflects the position as it was on 31 October 2012.

Grade	Number serving	Standard payscale for the grade € per annum	PPC payscale for the grade € per annum
Secretary General	1	200,000 (see note A)	-
Second Secretary	2	188,640	-
Deputy Secretary	3	168,000	-
Chief Adviser to the Tánaiste	1	168,000	-
Economic Adviser to the Tánaiste	1	155,000	-

Questions - Written Answers

Grade	Number serving	Standard payscale for the grade € per annum	PPC payscale for the grade € per annum
Assistant Secretary	30	127,796 – 146,191	-
Legal Adviser	1	127,796 – 146,191	134,523 – 153,885
Special Adviser to Tánaiste	1	83,337	-
Counsellor	43	80,051 – 98,424	84,132 – 103,472
Counsellor Higher	14	85,957 – 105,429	90,355 – 110,844
Principal Standard	11	80,051 – 98,424	84,132 – 103,472
Principal Higher	7	85,957 – 105,429	90,355 – 110,844
Principal Development Specialist	5	92,672 – 105,356	97,417 – 110,770
Senior Development Specialist	16	74,514 – 89,898	78,302 – 94,496
Assistant Legal Adviser	4.6	61,966 – 76,768	65,185 – 80,678
First Secretary	77.1	61,966 – 76,768	65,185 – 80,678
First Secretary Higher	22.6	67,913 – 84,296	71,359 – 88,598
Assistant Principal Standard	30.1	61,966 – 76,768	65,185 – 80,678
Assistant Principal Higher	13.6	67,913 – 84,296	71,359 – 88,598
Assistant Principal Standard Add ons	18	61,966 – 76,768	65,185 – 80,678
Assistant Principal Higher Add ons	7	67,913 – 84,296	71,359 – 88,598
Special Adviser to Minister of State	1	61,966	-
Professional Accountant Grade 1	3	65,247 – 80,814	68,553 – 84,935
Professional Accountant Grade 2	1	55,863 – 69,132	58,765 – 72,642
Accountant	1	61,966 – 76,768	65,185 – 80,678
Development Specialist	24.8	61,966 – 76,768	65,185 – 80,678
Irish Aid Press Officer	1	67,913 – 84,296	71,359 – 88,598
Architect	1	85,957 – 105,429	90,355 – 110,844
Third Secretary Higher	27.6	40,734 – 57,251	42,838 – 60,224
Third Secretary Standard	70	31,619 – 55,415	33,247 – 58,294
Administrative Officer	3	31,619 – 55,415	33,247 – 58,294

Grade	Number serving	Standard payscale for the grade € per annum	PPC payscale for the grade € per annum
Higher Executive Officer Higher	19	46,426 -57,251	48,831 – 60,224
Higher Executive Officer Standard	41.4	43,816 – 55,415	46,081 – 58,294
Librarian	1	43,182 – 55,967	45,411 – 58,875
HEO Systems Analyst	6	43,816 – 55,415	46,081 – 58,294
Executive Officer Higher	24.2	29,024 – 47,379	30,516 – 49,837
Executive Officer Standard	63.9	29,024 – 45,616	30,516 – 47,975
Executive Officer Trainee Systems Analyst	5	29,024 – 45,616	30,516 – 47,975
Staff Officer	38.6	33,070 – 43,906	34,771 – 46,171
Clerical Officer Higher	67.7	23,042 – 36,267	24,255 – 38,135
Clerical Officer Standard	345.6	22,015 – 35,515	23,177 – 37,341
Civilian Driver	2	32,965	-
Cleaners	14	19,868 – 23,067	20,749 – 24,282
Head Services Officer	1	27,980 – 34,954	-
Services Officer	24	20,806 – 27,739	21,732 – 29,180
Nightwatchman	3	20,868 – 25,671	21,799 – 27,022
Personal Secretary	3	23,820 – 41,285	-
Personal Assistant	4	43,715 – 56,060	-
Temporary Admin. Officers (Presidency)	10	28,457 – 49,873	-
Temporary Clerical Officers (Presidency)	8	19,814 – 30,362	22,015 – 33,735
Interns (Presidency)	7	26,122 – 41,054	-
Total	1130.8		
Local Staff	290.20		
Local Staff (Presidency)	28.00		A range of pay scales apply A range of pay scales apply
TOTAL	1449		

*Note A – The Secretary General has voluntarily surrendered €15, 590 of his total salary of €215,590

Departmental Consultations

68. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

if he will provide a list of all public consultations his Department has carried out since the start of 2012. [50752/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): My Department has undertaken one formal public consultation this year. This consultation was held between February and April and formed part of the Review of the White Paper on Irish Aid. The consultation was overseen by the independent Irish Aid Expert Advisory Group and involved over 1,000 people in Ireland and in our partner countries, including members of civil society, NGOs, the private sector, and representatives the new communities living in Ireland. Over 165 written submissions were received. The exercise also involved consultation across Government Departments and in the Houses of the Oireachtas, including through the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs. Based on this public consultation, my Department is currently developing a new policy on global development which will guide the Government's efforts in the coming years.

Apart from formal public consultations as described above, there are continual informal consultations and contacts between the Department and NGOs and other civil society representatives.

Passport Applications

69. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when a person (details supplied) will receive their renewed passport. [50772/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): A passport application was approved for the person in question on 5 November 2012. The new passport was then dispatched to our Honorary Consul in Auckland by diplomatic bag on 7 November 2012 for onwards transmission to the person in question.

Disabled Drivers Grant Eligibility

70. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Finance if a review of the qualification criteria for the primary medical certificate is required; and if there is a need to consider the inclusion of further disabilities in the qualifying criteria for the primary medical certificate in order to permit persons, suffering from such disabilities and who are forced to make adaptations to their vehicles as a result of these disabilities, to avail of the tax reliefs provided through the disabled drivers and disabled passengers scheme [50776/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concession) Scheme provides relief from VAT and VRT (up to a certain limit), and exemption from motor tax, on the purchase of an adapted car for transport of a person with specific severe and permanent physical disabilities. The disability criteria for these concessions are set out in the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations 1994. To get a Primary Medical Certificate, an applicant must be permanently and severely disabled within the terms of these Regulations.

A number of Government departments and agencies are involved in meeting the mobility needs of people with disabilities. A vehicle tax concession scheme is only part of the overall approach and its operation is reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Some 13,000 people benefited under the scheme in 2011 at an overall estimated cost of €51

million. Given the scale and scope of the scheme, any possible changes can only be made after careful consideration and with regard to the existing and prospective cost of the scheme and the available resources.

Tax Yield

71. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 270 of 6 November 2012, if he will provide details of his estimate of the extra tax revenue that would be raised by placing a 5% levy on all income in excess of €100,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50578/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I assume the Deputy has in mind a 5 percentage point increase in the rate of Universal Social Charge (USC) applying to incomes exceeding €100,000. The Universal Social Charge (USC) is an individualised charge and as such the yield is calculated for individual incomes of more than €100,000. On that basis I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the full year yield, estimated by reference to 2012 incomes, would be €321 million. The estimated yield is based on confining the 5 percentage point increase to the portion of income which is in excess of €100,000, that is, the increase is not applied to the portion of total income earned up to €100,000.

The figure is an estimate from the Revenue tax-forecasting model using actual data for the year 2010 adjusted as necessary for income and employment trends in the interim. It is, therefore, provisional and likely to be revised.

Banking Sector Remuneration

72. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Finance if it is possible to introduce legislation to reduce the pensions of professionals who were working in State funded banks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50595/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Government shares the abhorrence of the public at these extravagant pensions but its scope for action to claw back or reduce such entitlements is limited due to constitutional and legal reasons which are well known to the members of the House. Pensions are generally taken to be deferred income and any action to reduce a pension in payment needs to be comprehensively founded lest it run the risk of being considered an unjust attack by the State on the property rights of individuals affected by the proposed legislation. The Government will seek to explore any avenues and options to address this issue subject to the necessary legal constraints.

Pension Provisions

73. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if employees at the National Asset Management Agency pay a pension levy in accordance with the announcement of the previous administration on 3 February 2009. [50601/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) has no employees. Rather, under Section 42 of the NAMA Act 2009, the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) assigns staff to NAMA. The public service pension deduction is applied to all NTMA employees.

Pension Provisions

74. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if employees at the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation, in which he is the sole shareholder of 100% of the shares, pay a pension levy in accordance with the announcement of the previous administration on 3 February 2009; and if no such levy is paid to provide an explanation for this position. [50602/12]

75. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if employees at Permanent TSB, in which he is the shareholder of 99.5% of the shares, pay a pension levy in accordance with the announcement of the previous administration on 3 February 2009; and if no such levy is paid to provide an explanation for this position. [50603/12]

76. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if employees at Irish Life, in which he is the sole shareholder of 100% of the shares, pay a pension levy in accordance with the announcement of the previous administration on 3 February 2009; and if no such levy is paid to provide an explanation for this position. [50604/12]

77. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if employees at Allied Irish Banks including the Educational Building Society, in which he is the shareholder of 99.8% of the shares, pay a pension levy in accordance with the announcement of the previous administration on 3 February 2009; and if no such levy is paid to provide an explanation for this position. [50605/12]

78. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if employees at the Bank of Ireland, in which he is the share holder of 15% of the ordinary shares and controls preference shares estimated to be worth €1.493 billion, pay a pension levy in accordance with the announcement of the previous administration on 3 February 2009; and if no such levy is paid to provide an explanation for this position. [50606/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 74 to 78, inclusive, together.

The Pension Related Deduction (PRD) is known as the pension levy. This was a savings measure introduced in the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act, 2009, brought in by the Exchequer to reduce the costs of pensions to the State. It only applies to people belonging to public service pension schemes and does not apply to semi-states or the private sector. Irrespective of the Minister's shareholdings in each of the covered institutions, no public service pension schemes exist in those institutions and therefore the pension levy does not apply. Further information can be found on www.per.gov.ie/pensions where documents and FAQs on the PRD can be found.

Pension Provisions

79. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide in tabular form the estimated annual receipts to the Exchequer which would arise if employees in the following organizations were required to pay a pension levy in accordance with the announcement of the previous administration on 3 February 2009: Allied Irish Banks incorporating the Educational Building Society, Bank of Ireland, Permanent TSB, Irish Life and Bank of Ireland. [50607/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Pension Related Deduction (PRD) is known as the pension levy. This was a savings measure introduced in the Financial Emergen-

cy Measures in the Public Interest Act, 2009, brought in by the Exchequer to reduce the costs of pensions to the State. It only applies to people belonging to public service pension schemes and does not apply to semi-states or the private sector. Irrespective of the Minister's shareholdings in each of the covered institutions, no public service pension schemes exist in those institutions and therefore the pension levy does not apply. Further information can be found on www.per.gov.ie/pensions where documents and FAQs on the PRD can be found. I do not have sufficient information on pay rates and distribution to provide a full answer to the deputy's question, for example the levy would only impact Irish tax residents, and I do not have a breakdown of Irish and foreign tax residents in the employ of each covered institution, nor would I have awareness of the individual circumstances of each employee and how that would affect the bands relevant to the pension levy in each case. As the Deputy will be aware the Government has commissioned a Remuneration Review across the Covered Banks and this is designed to inform future policy recommendations in this area.

Tax Yield

80. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Finance the revenue that would be raised if a levy of 10% was imposed on all pension payments above €100,000; 12.5% on all such payments over €200,000; 15% on all such payments over €300,000, 20% on all such payments over €400,000, and 25% on all such payments over €500,000; if he will provide a breakdown of the revenues raised by such a measure on pensions paid for from the public purse and on pensions paid from other sources. [50625/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that while social welfare pensions can be separately identified from other sources of income in Revenue statistics, it is not possible to do so in respect of income from other pensions. Consequently there is no complete or reliable basis available to Revenue on which an estimate of the Exchequer yield from the changes mentioned in the question could be compiled.

IFSC Clearing House Group

81. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Finance the number of times civil servants from his Department have sat at meeting of the IFSC Clearing House and related sub groups and working groups in 2012; if he will list those staff and their duties and the meetings they attended; if he will indicate in each instance the topics of discussions and the decisions that were made; if he will release the relevant briefing notes or reports prepared before and after each meeting by Departmental staff to this Deputy and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform [50675/12]

88. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Finance the number of times that staff from the Central Bank of Ireland have sat at meetings of the IFSC Clearing House and related sub groups and working groups in 2012; if he will indicate in each instance the topics of discussion and the decisions that were made; if he will release the relevant briefing notes or reports prepared before and after each meeting by the Central Bank staff to this Deputy and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50720/12]

89. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Finance the number of times that staff from the Revenue Commissioners have sat at meetings of the IFSC Clearing House and related sub-groups and working groups in 2012; if he will indicate, in each instance, the top-

ics of discussion and the decisions that were made; if he will release the relevant briefing notes or reports prepared before and after each meeting by the Revenue Commissioners staff to this Deputy and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform [50721/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 81, 88 and 89 together.

The Department of the Taoiseach has supported the international financial services industry in Ireland since the establishment of the IFSC in 1987 by providing a forum for the exchange of views and the co-ordination of effort through the mechanism of the IFSC Clearing House Group and its related Working Groups. During this period, the IFSC has grown to employ 33,000 people and to contribute over €1 billion annually through corporation tax and payroll taxes.

These groups provide a forum in which the public sector can consult with industry representatives to discuss competitive threats facing the industry, and develop strategies for the industry to pro-actively support its own development in the global economy.

Representatives of my Department are available to meet with, and do meet with on a regular basis, representatives from many industry and civil society groups who are willing to engage in discussions on the difficult choices which need to be made in the current economic climate.

The Clearing House Group has five sub-groups, and meetings in the year 2012 have been as follows:

Clearing House Group:-

- The Clearing House Group has met on four occasions in 2012 to date. The Department of Finance was represented at all meetings, and representatives have included:-

- Second Secretary, Financial Services Division;
- One Principal Officer, Fiscal Policy Division;
- One Principal Officer, Financial Services Division;

Representatives from Revenue and the Central Bank also attended all of these meetings.

Asset Management Group:-

- The Asset Management group has met on three occasions in 2012 to date. The Department of Finance was not represented at any of these meetings. Representatives from the Revenue Commissioners attended one of these meetings, and representatives from the Central Bank attended all three of these meetings.

Banking and Treasury Group:-

- The Banking & Treasury Group has met on six occasions in 2012 to date. The Department of Finance was represented at all meetings, and representatives have included:-

- One Assistant Secretary, Financial Services Division;
- One Assistant Principal, Fiscal Policy Division;
- One Assistant Principal, Financial Services Division;

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- Two Administrative Officers, Fiscal Policy Division;

Representatives of the Revenue Commissioners attended all of these meetings. Representatives from the Central Bank did not attend these meetings.

Funds Group:-

- The Funds Group has met on nine occasions in 2012 to date.

The Department of Finance was represented on all meetings, and representatives have included:-

- One Assistant Principal, Fiscal Policy Division;
- One Assistant Principal, Financial Services Division;
- One Assistant Principal, Banking Division;
- One Administrative Officer, Fiscal Policy Division;
- One Administrative Officer, Financial Services Division.

Representatives from the Revenue Commissioners have attended three of these meetings, and representatives from the Central Bank attended all nine of these meetings.

Insurance Group:-

The Insurance Group has met on 6 occasions in 2012 to date.

The Department of Finance was represented at all meetings, and representatives have included:-

- One Assistant Principal, Fiscal Policy Division;
- One Assistant Principal, Financial Services Division;
- One Administrative Officer, Fiscal Policy Division;

Representatives from the Central Bank attended all of these meetings. The Revenue Commissioners are not represented on this group.

Pension Funds Group:-

- The Pension Funds Group has met on one occasion in 2012 to date.

The Department of Finance, the Revenue Commissioners and the Central Bank were not represented at this meeting.

In relation to the Deputy's request for topics of discussions and decisions taken at meetings, the Taoiseach announced in the Dail on Tuesday, 13th November, that the minutes of meetings of the Clearing House Group which have taken place during the term of this Government to the end of September this year will shortly be published on the Department of the Taoiseach's website and on merrionstreet.ie. A Report on the work of the Group during this period will also be published on the websites. Additionally, the Secretary General of the Department of the Taoiseach and Chair of the Clearing House Group is to write to the Chair of the Oireachtas Committee on Finance and the Public Service offering to brief them on the work of the Clearing House Group.

While we accept the bona fides of the Deputy's request for briefing notes or reports prepared by officials before and after these meetings, it is not practical to provide the information that the Deputy is seeking in the time available to formulate a reply to a parliamentary question. Accordingly, I suggest that following the publication of the material referred to in the previous paragraph, and the proposed briefing, the Deputy may wish to contact the individual Departments and Offices indicating what further detail he requires.

Bank Debt Restructuring

82. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons that Allied Irish Banks, Bank of Ireland and the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation respectively have sought to have declared bankrupt in court over the past two years. [50683/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised by the Banks that unfortunately it has been impossible to collate this information within this short timeframe. I will forward this information to the Deputy as soon as it is made available to me.

Question No. 83 answered with Question No. 29.

Banking Operations

84. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance if he has any plans to enforce a write-down on subordinated bondholders (details supplied) in Irish Bank Resolution Corporation; the amount paid thus far to the bondholder in interest payments; the amount likely to be paid to them when their bond matures; if he will confirm the amount the bondholder paid for their subordinated bonds in the former Anglo Irish Bank originally; and when these bonds were purchased. [50700/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Deputy is aware that under the Relationship Framework the Board of the bank is responsible for the day to day operations of the bank including the funding of the bank. I have not directed IBRC nor have I invited that institution directly to take voluntary losses on its subordinated notes other than when the named institution was invited to participate in IBRC's liability management exercise in 2010. IBRC has a contractual obligation to pay interest and principal on the notes. The US\$165m Subordinated Notes Series A due on 29 September 2015 currently bear interest at three month LIBOR plus 0.92% per annum.

Interest payments made since 29 December 2010 to date are as follows:-

- \$504,411.60 29-Dec-10
- \$504,409.95 29-Mar-11
- \$517,595.10 29-Jun-11
- \$491,557.92 29-Sep-11
- \$536,043.85 29-Dec-11
- \$623,852.39 29-Mar-12
- \$586,390.75 29-Jun-12

- \$575,825.25 29-Sep-12

The US\$35m Subordinated Notes Series B due 29 September 2017 bear interest at 4.80% per annum to 28 September 2012 and thereafter reset at three month LIBOR plus 0.93% per annum.

Interest payments made since 29 December 2010 to date are as follows:-

- \$840,000.00 29-Mar-11

- \$840,000.00 29-Sep-11

- \$840,000.00 29-Mar-12

- \$835,333.34 29-Sep-12

I have been advised that the Bank cannot confirm the amount the named institution paid for the notes, as it was not a party to the transaction, nor the date, on which the institution purchased the notes.

Universal Social Charge Payments

85. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the revenue that would be raised from increasing the universal social charge for all persons over 70 years to 7% on income over €100,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50713/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy is aware, the standard rates of Universal Social Charge are:-

- 2% on the first €10,036,

- 4% on the next €5,980, and

- 7% on the balance.

However, the maximum rate of charge for such individuals who are aged 70 years or over is 4% irrespective of the level of their income, unless they have self-employment income in excess of €100,000 for a tax year, in which case the maximum rate rises to 7% on the amount of the excess over €100,000.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the full year yield, estimated by reference to 2013 incomes, from extending the additional universal social charge of 3%, which is currently applicable to self-employed income in excess of €100,000 in the hands of income earners aged 70 and over, to all income earners aged 70 and over at this level of income would be of the order of €3 million. The Universal Social Charge (USC) is an individualised charge and as such, the estimate of yield is based on individual incomes of more than €100,000.

The estimated yield is based on confining the 3% USC surcharge to the portion of income which is in excess of €100,000, that is, the increase is not applied to the portion of total income earned up to €100,000.

The figure is an estimate from the Revenue tax-forecasting model using actual data for the year 2010 adjusted as necessary for income and employment trends in the interim. It is, therefore, provisional and likely to be revised.

Universal Social Charge Payments

86. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the revenue that would be raised from extending the universal social charge to social protection payments, excluding child benefit, that are currently exempt; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50714/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): To estimate the potential yield from applying the universal social charge (USC) to social protection payments it would be necessary to identify certain details in respect of each recipient of social protection payments such as the individual amount of these payments received, the amount of any other income potentially liable to USC, the age of each individual and whether there was an entitlement to a medical card. This information would be essential to determine whether a charge to USC applied or not at individual level, and at what rate if it did. It is possible in many cases that the rate could be low or even nil. In addition, as the Deputy will be aware, a number of social protection payments would be below the current exemption threshold for USC which is currently €10,036 per annum. I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that as they do not maintain such a database of social protection payments there is no basis on which an estimate of the yield from the change mentioned in the question could be compiled.

By way of illustration, if for example a 1 per cent levy was imposed on social protection payments, the full year yield to the Exchequer would be €180 million on the basis that the estimated provision for such payments in 2012, excluding child benefit, is approximately €18 billion. The figure of €18 billion excludes administration and other administration expenses but may include certain non-departmental operational costs. The estimate of Exchequer yield assumes that there is no exemption threshold, allowance or personal reliefs that could be used to offset against some of the levy.

Banking Sector Regulation

87. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 64 of 12 July 2012, if Ulster Bank has made a formal application to change its regulatory or legal status or indicated its plans in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50715/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Further to Parliamentary Question No. 64 of 12 July 2012, the Central Bank has informed me that since that time it has not received a formal application, or formal plans, from Ulster Bank Ireland Limited to change its regulatory or legal status from that of a subsidiary of Royal Bank of Scotland Group.

Questions Nos. 88 and 89 answered with Question No. 81.

IFSC Clearing House Group

90. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether it is appropriate for staff from the Central Bank of Ireland to sit on the IFSC Clearing House group when it is the regulatory authority for many of the banks and financial institutions located in the IFSC; if he is concerned at the potential for regulatory capture and previous mistakes being repeated by the Central Bank of Ireland being represented on a formalised lobbying forum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50726/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Membership of the Clearing House

Group is comprised of public and private sector representatives and reflects a wide range of experience and expertise so that its objectives of identifying opportunities to develop sustainable business and employment in the various sectors of the international financial services industry can be achieved. The primary focus of the group is to identify and consider issues of importance to the long-term development of the international financial services industry in Ireland in line with the Programme for Government which states that the Government “*supports the future development of the IFSC as a source of future employment growth, subject to appropriate regulation*” and commits to the development of the financial services sector to maximise employment opportunities.

Since the inception of the IFSC, close cooperation between industry and the public sector has been a foundation of its success. It is entirely appropriate that the public sector works with companies that employ tens of thousands of people in Ireland, with a view to protecting and creating jobs and maintaining Ireland’s competitive position as a leading centre for international financial services.

The Central Bank participates in the IFSC Clearing House Group at the invitation of the Department of the Taoiseach. The Central Bank of Ireland makes a useful contribution to IFSC debates on the development of financial services policy based on its experience of regulation and knowledge of the technical matters under discussion. The Central Bank is satisfied that it conducts its regulatory and supervisory functions in an independent manner.

The IFSC strategy, which the Clearing House Group is tasked with implementation, sets out the very clear policy that “*our future as an international financial services industry centre depends on having a credible, responsible and proper regulatory regime,*” and a regime “*that has the capacity to deal with the most complex international institutions and the increasing volume of EU and international requirements.*”

Banks Recapitalisation

91. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Finance the action he has taken at a European level to address the recent revelation that Spanish banks have been securing funds at a lower risk premium than their Irish counterparts. [50741/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As this is a Eurosystem issue relating to the application of the collateral framework rules, it is not under the direction of the Minister. However, please see below the comments from President of the ECB, Mario Draghi, when asked about the matter at the ECB press conference following the Governing Council meeting on 8 November; “Let me first make a clarification, because there has been a lot of press on this point in the last week. The first clarification is purely factual: the nominal amount of collateral being posted was not EUR 80 billion, but EUR 10 billion. The second clarification is that all this had no impact at all on our lending. So nobody received more than they should have received because of this mistake – because it was a mistake. The impact of this is zero, but we take this mistake very seriously. And so the Governing Council has mandated the Eurosystem Audit Committee, which is chaired by Governor Liikanen, to assess the implementation of the collateral framework in the Eurosystem and we will have an initial assessment of this at our next Governing Council meeting and then we will discuss whether further analysis or further action is needed and I will keep you posted on that.”

Departmental Consultations

92. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide a list of all public consultations his Department has carried out since the start of 2012. [50751/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Consultations are taken as a matter of course within the Department with industry groups, professional bodies, trade unions and social partners. I will set out the consultations that have taken place since the beginning of the current year. On foot of the Mazars report on SME lending demand, and in order to understand the situation on the ground and stimulate further ideas to get movement from the bottom up, a series of seven regional meetings with local representatives, including the banks and small business representatives, was undertaken, hosted by the Minister of State with responsibility for small business, Deputy Perry, supported by Mr. John Moran, who is the Secretary General of the Department of Finance. These meetings took place between February and April. The aim of the meetings was to examine further the actions which might be taken to improve access to credit for SMEs. A report on these meetings was published on 5 July on my Department's website, at www.banking.finance.gov.ie/presentations-and-latest-documents. The Financial Services Division had a consultation on the SEPA end date regulation in March 2012 and on the Credit Institutions Resolution Fund Levy in July 2012. Further information is available at www.finance.gov.ie/documents/publications/consultation2012/sepaconsult.pdf and at www.finance.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=-1&CatID=77&UserLang=EN&m=31. The Fiscal Policy Division has had consultations on the following:

1. Public consultation on Review of Section 481 Film Tax Relief. Consultation paper was published by the Minister on 28 May 2012. Submission Deadline was 31 August 2012.
2. The Tax Implications of Appointing a Receiver - July 2012
3. Public Consultation on Tax Residence Rules - 1 May 2012 to 1 August 2012
4. Public consultation on Donations to Approved Bodies - 8 February 2012 to 11 May 2012.

A list of all public consultations carried out by the Tax Policy Unit of my Department and EU originated consultations can be viewed on my Department's tax policy website, www.tax-policy.gov.ie.

European Banking Sector

93. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance arising from his recent discussions with fellow Ministers within the eurozone, if there is specific recognition of the need to ensure a Europe-wide regime and agreement in respect of debt repayment which recognises the need for each member State to be treated equally and that repayment terms and conditions are not such as to inflict long-term damage on programme countries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50795/12]

94. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance if there is a general acceptance throughout the EU and particularly the eurozone of the need to encourage economic recovery by way of improved terms in respect of interest and the period within which borrowings can be repaid as opposed to current expectations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50796/12]

104. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance if at EU level, having regard to his discussions with his EU and eurozone colleagues, there is a recognition by each member state of the Union and within and without the eurozone for the need for a co-ordinated

unified approach to economic and fiscal issues throughout the European Union as opposed to the tendency to impose increasing burdens in terms of conditions and interest repayments arising from debt relief; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50807/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 93, 94 and 104 together.

European Union Member States, in general, and euro area Member States, in particular, are obliged, under the treaties, to treat each others' economic and financial affairs as matters of common interest. Further, Member States have committed themselves to undertake measures necessary to correct harmful imbalances. In a consultative process, typically a co-ordinated and unified approach emerges naturally and extends to economic and fiscal issues. This is also in the interest of even-handedness. While I cannot speak for each and every Member State, the need and desire to protect the common EU and euro area good is felt generally. This includes reducing fiscal deficits and consolidating debt with an aim to reducing the high interest rates resulting from high levels of indebtedness. Since the onset of the financial crisis and the subsequent entry of Greece, Ireland and Portugal into Programmes of Financial Assistance, the EU and the eurozone have taken measures to reduce the cost of programme funding.

The interest rates on EU funding mechanisms (the EFSF and EFSM) were reduced significantly in 2011 and are now provided at rates close to the cost of funding. These rates apply equally to all countries availing of these mechanisms. The maturities of these loans were extended at the same time. For example, the Euro Area Heads of State or Government agreed on 21 July 2011 to reduce the cost of the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) to interest rates equivalent to those of the EU Balance of Payments facility i.e. close to, without going below, the EFSF's cost of funding. Lengthening of maturities provides benefits in terms of phasing of loans and ensuring that the profile of redemptions is more orderly, avoiding as far as possible exceptionally large amounts in particular years. By contrast, money borrowed at longer maturities is generally more expensive. However, on balance, savings arising from maturity extension are significant though complex to calculate. The interest rate reductions for the EFSF and the EFSM have also been reflected in the rates charged on Ireland's bilateral loans from the UK, Sweden and Denmark.

As noted above, our EU programme funding is being provided at, or close to, the cost of funds for the lenders. The scope for further changes to our programme interest payments is therefore very limited. However, we are also seeking ways to alleviate the burden on the sovereign of assisting the banking sector. Arising out of the 29 June 2012 statement by the Euro Area Heads of State or Government that "it is imperative to break the vicious circle between banks and sovereigns", work is continuing at a technical level to put in place the single supervisory mechanism and the European Stability Mechanism's direct banking recapitalisation facility at the earliest possible date. In short, every effort has been and is being made at EU and eurozone level to ensure the burden placed on Programme countries is reduced in order to support the success of their programmes.

Tax Yield

95. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the areas in respect of which Revenue for the current to date is not up to expectations; those sectors which have exceeded expectations or have shown greater potential for the future; the extent to which he can expect to see any improvement in performances where necessary in the coming year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50797/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As detailed in the supplementary information published with the end-October Exchequer statement on 2 November, income tax, VAT, corporation tax, stamp duty and capital gains tax are all ahead of profile. Excise duty, capital acquisitions tax and customs duty are behind profile. The supplementary information contains a table which shows the exact performance of each tax head, both compared to profile and as a year on year basis, and on both a monthly and cumulative basis. It is encouraging that three of the big four tax sources of revenue are ahead of expectations at end-October. As outlined in the medium-term fiscal statement published yesterday, the Department of Finance is of the view that tax revenues for the year as a whole will be broadly in line with profile, with the possibility of a marginal surplus, of the order of €0.2 billion (0.5%) being recorded. Much will depend on the performance of tax revenues in November. It is the most important month of the year for income tax and corporation tax and it is also the last VAT “due” month of the year. All told, close to €5.7 billion or 16% of the total tax expected this year is profiled for collection in the month. Good performances are required from each of these three taxes if the annual aggregate target for taxes is to be achieved. As regards 2013, we expect that the minor 2012 tax revenue surplus will have beneficial impacts for the base going into next year which will largely offset the negative impact of weaker economic growth.

Job Initiatives

96. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which incentives or inducements will be provided to encourage those with substantial savings to invest in job creation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50798/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): It is a long-standing practice of the Minister for Finance not to comment, in advance of the Budget, on any tax matters that might be the subject of Budget decisions. However, I draw the Deputy’s attention to the following existing incentives in the tax code to encourage individuals to invest in schemes which can lead to job creation:

The Employment and Investment Incentive (EII)

The EII is a tax incentive that provides tax relief for investors who purchase new ordinary shares in small and certain medium-sized companies carrying on a trade, and who hold those shares for a minimum of three years. The incentive is designed to help companies to raise new risk capital to expand their activities. An individual investor can obtain income tax relief on investments up to a maximum of €150,000 per annum, subject to the high income individuals restriction, in each tax year up to 2013. The maximum amount that may be raised by a company in any 12-month period is €2.5 million, subject to a lifetime limit of €10 million. The maximum rate of tax relief available to an individual who subscribes for new ordinary shares is 30% of the amount invested. A further 11% tax relief may be available at the end of the holding period, however, provided the company concerned has either increased its number of employees or spent at least 30% of the investment raised on research and development.

The Seed Capital Scheme (SCS)

The SCS provides that an employee, who leaves employment and invests by means of shares in a qualifying new venture, may claim a refund of income tax paid in previous years. An unemployed person may also avail of this facility. The maximum investment that can be set against taxable income in any year of assessment is €100,000. This means that the maximum total investment that can be made under the Seed Capital Scheme is €600,000, as the individual may set up to €100,000 against the taxable income of each of the previous six years. By way

of example, an individual who invests €10,000 under the scheme would be entitled to a refund of income tax already paid of €4,100 provided they had paid income tax at the higher rate in the relevant tax year.

Film Relief (Section 481)

The film relief scheme was introduced to promote the Irish film industry, by encouraging investment in Irish made films. Tax relief on the full amount of the investment is available to individual investors at their marginal rate of tax (41% for top rate taxpayers). Individual investors can invest up to €50,000 under the scheme in any year of assessment. The maximum amount which can be raised by a film production company, under the scheme is 80% of the total cost per production, subject to a maximum of €50,000,000.

Consumer Prices Data

97. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent, if any, to which he and or his Department has observed inflationary or deflationary tendencies throughout the economy with a view to utilising opportunities for economic growth and recovery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50799/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The latest data show that consumer price inflation remains moderate, with prices in October 1.2 per cent higher than in the same month in 2011. As measured by the harmonised index of consumer prices (HICP) – the comparable measure of inflation across the EU – prices in Ireland rose at an annual rate of 2.1 per cent in October. While the pass-through of the increase in global energy prices is driving headline figures, I would point out that core or underlying inflation remains very contained. Following on the fall in consumer prices in 2009 and 2010, the moderate rate of inflation that we have seen over the last two years or so is assisting us in regaining our price competitiveness, and helping the exporting sector to grow. Ireland's HICP inflation rate has now been below or equal to the euro area average for every month since March 2008.

Economic Growth Initiatives

98. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which his Department has isolated the main issues affecting economic growth; the extent if any to which these matters can be addressed in the short term; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50800/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Ireland is continuing to record low, but positive growth. GDP expanded by ½ per cent in the first half of 2012 relative to the same period of last year. The shift in the composition of activity – away from domestic demand and into the exporting sectors – that has characterised developments in recent years is continuing. Support for overall activity is coming from the exporting sectors, with services exports becoming an increasingly important engine of growth in recent quarters. The most recent figures show a year-on-year increase in services exports of 9.0 per cent in Q2. This, in no small part, reflects the improvements in price and cost competitiveness that have been evident since the onset of the crisis.

Domestic demand, on the other hand, remains weak. Households, firms and the government sector are still working through the imbalances built up during the boom. Available high-frequency indicators point to a continuation of the divergence between domestic and export-facing

sectors well into this year. A return to sustainable growth will require these imbalances to be worked through. In particular, we will need to restore order to the public finances.

We will also need further improvements in our competitiveness and a banking sector capable of supporting real economic activity. These are the areas in which government policy is focused.

The ongoing rebalancing of activity continues to have adverse implications for the labour market, given that the employment content of export-led activity is typically lower than that for activity driven by domestic demand. Employment has continued to fall in the first half of the year, with job losses being recorded in a majority of sectors. Notwithstanding this, unemployment has shown some tentative signs of stabilisation over the course of the year, albeit at a level that is too high (14.8 per cent).

The emerging picture is one of modest growth in the second half of this year, with a positive contribution from net trade offsetting further weakness in domestic demand.

Household Savings Rate

99. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which savings have been identified over the past three years and to date in 2012; the way such savings are generally held and the way it might be possible to reward those with savings for investment in job creation in the manufacturing or service areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50801/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The household savings rate has been in double digits over the past three years and remains so in the year to date, while household indebtedness in Q2 2012 fell to the lowest level since Q1 2007. This reflects both households' efforts to reduce their high indebtedness built up during the boom years as well as precautionary motives due to the challenging economic environment. In terms of the percentage share of household financial assets, there has been little change in how they are held. The main difference between Q2 2008 and Q2 2012 is a slight decrease in the percentage of assets held in shares and other equities, with the share of deposits increasing marginally. A number of incentives are available to those who wish to invest in job creation, including the Employment Investment Incentive (EII), a tax relief incentive scheme which provides tax relief for investment in certain corporate trades. Relief is initially available to an individual at 30%, with a further 11% tax relief available where it has been proven that employment levels have increased at the company at the end of the holding period.

The film relief scheme was also introduced, which aims to promote the domestic film industry, by encouraging investment in Irish made films. Tax relief on the full amount of the investment is available to individual investors at their marginal rate of tax (41% for top rate taxpayers) and individual investors can invest up to 50,000 euro under the scheme in any year of assessment .

Economic Growth Initiatives

100. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which the economic fundamentals are becoming more positive by way of reference to the past three years to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50802/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Support for overall activity is coming from the exporting sectors, with services exports becoming an increasingly important engine of growth in recent quarters. This, in no small part, reflects the improvements in price and cost competitiveness that have been evident since the onset of the crisis. Such internal price adjustments are crucial for Ireland's recovery, given that Ireland's membership of the euro area eliminates the option of currency devaluation. The European Commission recently forecast that our nominal unit labour costs will have fallen by a cumulative 16 percentage points in the period 2009-2014 compared with an increase of 8 percentage points for the euro area as a whole. Furthermore, from a macro-economic perspective an important measure of competitiveness is the real harmonised competitiveness indicator (HCI). This reflects relative consumer prices trends, together with weighted exchange rates. Since mid-2008, the real HCI has fallen by 21 percentage points, indicating an improvement in our international competitiveness.

So many of the necessary improvements are taking place, and this will support economic growth into the future.

Mortgage Protection Policies

101. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which his Department continues to be kept up to date in respect of the level of default by insurance companies with particular reference to mortgage or other debt protection; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50803/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): My Department does not keep up to date information on the level of default by insurance companies with particular reference to mortgage or other debt protection. I have made enquiries with the Central Bank about this matter which I understand relates to cases such as where a couple has mortgage protection insurance policy and then fall on hard times and as a result can no longer afford to pay for the protection and/or who make a claim which is rejected.

The Central Bank has informed me that it does not collect this information.

Finally, it should be noted that if a policyholder has a complaint about an insurance company not honouring a claim on a policy, they can refer the matter to the Financial Services Ombudsman for adjudication <http://www.financialombudsman.ie/>.

Questions Nos. 102 and 103 answered with Question No. 28.

Question No. 104 answered with Question No. 93.

Economic Competitiveness

105. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which the economic performance of all sectors has been monitored over the past five years and to date in 2012; the extent to which specific areas have been identified for the need for improvement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50808/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): My Department monitors the performance of all sectors of the economy on a continuous basis both in terms of official statistics from the CSO and also in terms of high frequency survey based indicators such as purchasing managers' indices (PMIs) and consumer confidence. The Action Plan for Jobs 2012 sets out a whole-of-Government approach to the Government's central policy of getting people work-

ing. This is key to economic recovery and spans all sectors of the economy. This is an annual process and my Department has already fed into the 2013 process. I might also mention that as part of my Department's reform programme, a new, expanded Economics Division has been established with a greatly expanded economic capacity, allowing the Department to now conduct additional sectoral analysis as part of its economic planning and forecasting function.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

106. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will support a matter (details supplied) regarding student grants. [50572/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Under the terms of the student grant scheme, grant assistance is awarded to students who meet the prescribed conditions of funding including those relating to nationality, residency, previous academic attainment and means. The eligibility criteria for student grants is reviewed annually and set out in the student grant scheme and the student support regulations each year. Students awarded a grant are paid the maintenance element subject to confirmation and verification of attendance from the institution being attended.

Students who have previously attended, but not completed an approved course of study are required to complete an equivalent period of study on an approved course before being eligible to be considered for a grant.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

107. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a student grant application is respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will be processed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50588/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI, the new centralised grant awarding authority, that further supporting documentation was requested from the student referred to by the Deputy on 2nd November 2012. When the documentation is returned to SUSI the student will be notified directly of the outcome.

Teacher Training Provision

108. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will consider the retention of home economic teacher training at St. Angela's Campus, Sligo, and if he will provide St. Angela's and NUIG an opportunity to demonstrate their capacity to fulfil the vision of the ITE report in the most cost effective manner possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50600/12]

122. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will intervene in any efforts by the Higher Education Authority to remove home economics initial teacher education from a campus (details supplied) in County Sligo and relocating same to NUI Galway campus; if he acknowledges that the college has a highly reputable international standing within home economics and home economics teacher education with regard to research and academic subject expertise; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50771/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 108 and 122 together.

I have accepted the recommendations set out in a report commissioned by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) on the structures of initial teacher education. The purpose of the report, which I requested, was to identify new possible structures to improve initial teacher education in Ireland so that it is comparable with the best in the world.

The international panel of education experts recommended that teacher education be provided in six “centres for teacher education”. Currently there are 19 state funded providers of ITE (and three non-state funded) offering more than 40 college programmes in primary and post-primary teaching. The new collaborations recommended by the international panel will mean that a smaller number of centres for ITE exist, but that they offer education across multiple sectors from early childhood to primary, to post primary to adult education. These centres for teacher education will also possess a critical mass in terms of research capacity which is not always possible in smaller institutions. The new configurations will mean strong research bases can be created in each centre. The HEA has been requested to consult with the relevant parties and to prepare a detailed plan on how to implement the recommendations of the Panel. I understand that this process has started and a plan is expected by the end of the year. I will fully consider the implementation plan from the HEA when received.

Student Grant Scheme Payments

109. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide in tabular form in respect of the academic years 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 the number of students who paid fees in full and the number of students who received maintenance grants for those years at each university and institute of technology; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50611/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The following table details the number of students both new and renewal who received student grants from the academic year 2008/09 to 2011/12. A student grant comprises of two elements maintenance and fees with a number of students only qualifying for one of those elements. This data is compiled from information supplied to my Department by the 66 grant awarding authorities and is not available for these years on an institutional basis.

The Deputy will appreciate that final data in relation to the 2012/13 academic year is not yet available.

The higher education institutions are autonomous bodies and the criteria governing the level of tuition fees to be charged (EU or Non EU rate) in cases where undergraduate students do not qualify under my Department’s free fees schemes, is a matter for the institutions to determine and my Department has no role. Accordingly, the information requested by the deputy in relation to the number of students who paid fees in full in the academic years referred to by the Deputy is not readily available.

Number of students who were awarded a student grant.

Academic Year	Number of students
2008/09	57,261
2009/10	69,486
2010/11	71,532

2011/12	76644*
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* This is a provisional figure and has been compiled from data supplied to my Department by the 66 Grant Awarding Authorities.

School Curriculum

110. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to introduce compulsory life saving training in secondary schools; if he has no such plan, if he will commit to carrying out an impact assessment of the introduction of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50622/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Pupils in primary schools and at Junior Cycle in post primary schools are currently afforded opportunities to participate in water safety training and awareness raising as part of the 'Aquatics' strand of the Physical Education (P.E.) curriculum.

The aquatics strand of the P.E. curriculum at Junior Cycle builds on the progress made at primary level, where there is a clear focus on promoting students' confidence and competence near, in, under and on water. One of the aims of the aquatics strand at Junior Cycle is to further enhance students' confidence and competence in the water and to develop their understanding of basic water safety and life-saving skills. There is also a clear focus on developing students' ability to make decisions having assessed hazards which relate to water activities. The learning outcomes for the aquatics strand of the P.E. syllabus at Junior Cycle include, inter alia, enabling students to perform basic personal survival skills as well as demonstrating a knowledge of elementary principles of land based rescue. As water safety is already an integral component of the aquatics strand of the P.E. curriculum in primary schools and at Junior Cycle, there are no plans at present to introduce compulsory life saving in post primary schools.

National Educational Psychological Service Staff

111. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) in County Cavan will be assessed by the National Educational Psychological Services, NEPS; the reason the service has not engaged with the person; if NEPS will meet and assess the person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50629/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I can inform the Deputy that all primary and post primary schools have access to psychological assessments either directly through the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), or through the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA), full details of which are on the Department's website. Where a NEPS psychologist is not assigned to a school, authorities therein may access psychological assessments through SCPA. Under this scheme schools can have an assessment carried out by a member of the panel of private psychologists approved by NEPS, and NEPS will pay the psychologist the fees for this assessment directly.

It should also be noted that in common with many other psychological services, NEPS encourages a staged assessment process, whereby each school takes responsibility for a pupil's initial assessment, educational planning and remedial intervention. Only if there is a failure to make reasonable progress in spite of the school's best efforts, will a child be referred for individual psychological assessment.

I have made enquiries in respect of this case and can inform the deputy that the child in

question has been brought to the attention of the NEPS psychologist attached to his school. A meeting has already taken place in this term with both the parents and teacher of the child and the review of his current situation and intervention therein is currently ongoing within the school. Should the parents of the child in question have concerns in this regard I would suggest that they should discuss the matter, in the first instance, with the school Principal.

School Staffing

112. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) in County Cavan will receive additional resource hours; the reason there has been no additional resources allocated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50630/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that, in primary schools, teaching supports for pupils with special educational needs are provided in two ways. Under the terms of the General Allocation Model (GAM) of teaching supports, schools are resourced to cater for pupils whose educational psychological assessment places them in the high incidence, or less complex, disability category, including children with mild general learning difficulties. Separately, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) allocates additional resource teaching hours to schools for children who have been assessed within the low incidence, or more complex, category of special need, as defined by my Department's Circular Sp Ed 02/05. All mainstream Primary schools have received an updated additional teaching resource allocation under the GAM this year to cater for children with high incidence special educational needs. Schools had been advised to apply to the NCSE for low incidence resource teaching support for the 2012/13 school year by 16th March, 2012 this year. Schools were notified by SENOs of their resource teaching allocation for 2012/13, based on the number of valid applications received to that point in June of this year. In addition, schools were requested to submit outstanding applications for resource teaching support for the 2012/13 school year by 5th October. The NCSE are currently in the process of advising schools of the outcome of this round of applications for resource teaching support. Resource Teaching allocations are therefore still being made to schools in respect of valid applications. Once allocations have been made, it is a matter for schools to monitor and utilise their allocation of resource teaching support, including supports allocated under the GAM, to best support the needs of qualifying pupils, in accordance with my Department's guidance.

Student Grant Scheme Payments

113. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will review the qualification criteria currently being applied and process all student grant applications as a matter of urgency; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that more than 66,000 applications have been received by Student Universal Support Ireland, SUSI, and to date only 18,000 have been processed, 9,000 of these have been approved, a further 9,000 have been refused, leaving 48,000 to be processed and finalised; if he will review the qualification guidelines being applied by SUSI in the current economic climate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50636/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Under the terms of the student grant scheme, grant assistance is awarded to students who meet the prescribed conditions of funding including those relating to nationality, residency, previous academic attainment and means. The eligibility criteria for student grants is reviewed annually and set out in the student

grant scheme and the student support regulations each year. The eligibility of an applicant, or the level of the grant awarded, may be re-assessed by the awarding authority in the event of a change of circumstances in the academic year. The applicant should in the first instance contact SUSI and notify them of the change in circumstances.

If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant, or that the rate of grant awarded is not the correct one, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI.

Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down, in writing, by SUSI, and remains of the view that SUSI has not interpreted the scheme correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the Student Grant Appeals Board. The relevant appeal form will be available on request from SUSI.

As the Deputy may be aware up until last year, students applied to their local authority or VEC for their grants. Some 66 grant awarding authorities were involved, all using a variety of application, assessment and payment processes. Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) replaces all of these with a centralised, and on-line system of application. I understand from SUSI in moving to the new process that what it could not have anticipated was the level of incorrect or incomplete supporting documentation subsequently submitted in support of applications. This has created bottlenecks in the system which SUSI is currently dealing with. My Department is ensuring that it has the resources and personnel to do so. SUSI is aiming to award all of the anticipated 33,000 successful applicants before the end of December.

Teacher Redeployment

114. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the regulations that apply to a person (details supplied) who wishes to change from a temporary full-time panel to a whole-time permanent panel in another area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50662/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The core function of the redeployment arrangements is to facilitate the redeployment of all surplus permanent teachers to other schools that have vacancies. The redeployment of all surplus permanent teachers is key to the Department's ability to manage within its payroll budget and ceiling on teacher numbers. Thereafter, schools are required under the panel arrangements to fill permanent vacancies from supplementary panels set up of eligible fixed-term (temporary/substitute) and part-time teachers.

The arrangements which were introduced for the current school year, 2012/13 for access to the subsidiary and supplementary panels for fixed term (temporary), substitute and part-time teachers are set out in Department Circular 0012/2012 which is available on my Department's website. The deadline for applications for access to these panels was Friday 20 April 2012. The teacher referred to by the Deputy applied under the terms of this circular but did not satisfy the eligibility criteria. My Department has just recently published Circular 0038/12 setting out the arrangements for panel access for fixed term (temporary/substitute) and part-time teachers to the Supplementary Redeployment Panel for the 2013/14 school year. The circular is available on my Department's website and the closing date for application is 14 December, 2012.

Post-Leaving Certificate Courses

115. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of proposed providers of PLC courses in County Kildare in 2012 that had their applications refused; the location of such providers; the number of participants which it was proposed to accommodate on the PLC course; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50665/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): There are currently a total of 32,688 approved Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) places available nationwide. These places are allocated to providers, mainly VECs, but also some voluntary secondary and community and comprehensive schools, on an annual basis, following an application process.

In Co Kildare the VEC is the sole provider of PLC courses and they received an allocation of PLC places for the 2012/2013 academic year similar to that which was allocated the previous year. No other provider in Co. Kildare made an application for PLC places in 2012 therefore no provider had their application refused.

Teachers' Remuneration

116. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when changes regarding newly qualified teachers' pay, under which new entrants start at point four of the salary scale, will come into effect; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50678/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The most significant adjustment to teacher pay arising from the recent Government decision on allowances is that new entrant teachers will not receive qualification allowances but will start on a new salary scale, the first point of which is equivalent to the fourth point of the existing scale. This new salary scale will apply in the case of all teachers who are new appointees to teaching on or after 1 February 2012.

Where a person gave service in a teaching position in an Oireachtas funded post before 1 February 2012, s/he will not be regarded as a new appointee to teaching. However, where a teacher who is retired and is in receipt of a pension returns to teaching on or after 1 February 2012, s/he will be appointed to the first point of the new salary scale and no qualification allowances or incremental credit will be payable.

Education Centre Network

117. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has considered the possible merging of information systems to create one access point for information such as lists of schools, pupil numbers, teachers' salaries and grant payments. [50685/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department has been dependent for many years on IT systems to provide a range of services to its customers, including schools and school employees. A number of systems have been developed over the past two decades, leading to disparate data stores. In an effort to address this issue, my Department's IT Unit has already taken steps to implement a technical solution to allow designated users a single access point for information regarding schools, pupils, school employee/pensioner pay details and grant payments. The Business Intelligence tool acquired has the capacity to merge information from many different data stores and provides users with interactive dashboards, analysis and reporting functionality, and capacity to run ad-hoc queries. This tool has been implemented for designated staff in the Inspectorate, Statistics Section and Post-Primary Divi-

sion of my Department, using primary census returns data and aggregate post-primary pupil data. The current phase is focussing on the inclusion of school employee payroll data for my Department's Payroll Division.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

118. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will retain the pupil-teacher ratio in budget 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50706/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): At this point I do not propose to give any specific commitment on the allocation of teachers to schools for the 2013/14 school year. The number of teaching posts that we can afford to fund in schools is a matter that I will have to consider with my colleagues in Cabinet in the context of the next budget. The Government will endeavour to protect frontline education services as best as possible. However, this must be done within the context of bringing our overall public expenditure into line with what we can afford as a country. The challenge will be to ensure that the resources that can be provided are used to maximum effect to achieve the best possible outcome for pupils.

Departmental Expenditure

119. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost to produce and post the fortnightly payslips to all primary and post primary teaching school staff and to all those retired teachers in receipt of pensions from his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50728/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The cost of producing and posting the fortnightly payslips to the approximate 94,000 school employees and pensioners now amounts to approximately €1.17 million per annum.

The printing and packing of payslips for serving and retired school employees was transferred from my Department, to the Revenue Commissioner's Print and Mail Centre with effect from mid-February 2012. This transfer has resulted in a significant saving of around €300,000 per annum to the Exchequer. The savings are principally due to the postal discounts achieved, due to the high quality of the print. The use of less expensive stationery and elimination of the need to maintain pressure seal equipment, have also contributed to the savings.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

120. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if payment of a third level grant will be expedited in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50729/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The decision on eligibility for new student grant applications from the 2012/13 academic year is a matter for the new centralised grant awarding authority, SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland).

Officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI that documentation requested from the student referred to by the Deputy has been received and that his application is currently awaiting review. The student will be notified directly of the outcome.

Departmental Consultations

121. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide a list of all public consultations his Department has carried out since the start of 2012. [50749/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Information relevant to the Deputy's question is currently being compiled. A further reply will issue to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Question No. 122 answered with Question No. 108.

School Enrolments

123. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason families living in Clontarf, Dublin 3, are not automatically entitled to a boys' secondary school in their catchment area; if he will outline the options available to families that cannot access these schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50790/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department's main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking school places in an area. However, this may result in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice.

As the Deputy will be aware, in June 2011, I announced that 20 new post-primary schools are to be established in the coming years across a number of locations to meet significantly increasing demographics in those areas. This announcement did not include a proposal to establish a new post-primary school in Clontarf, Dublin 3. The Forward Planning Section of my Department will continue to analyse demographic trends to determine the level of additional school provision which will be required into the future. Overall school requirements in Clontarf, Dublin 3 will be fully considered in this context.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

124. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the entitlement to a higher education grant in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50817/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI, the new centralised grant awarding authority, that in the case of the student referred to by the Deputy a grant has been awarded and an award letter issued on 2nd November, 2012.

Coastal Erosion

125. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to allocate further money to County Kerry to combat coastal erosion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50786/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): The Office of Public Works has to date approved funding of €891,000 to Kerry County

Council under the Minor Flood Mitigation Works & Coastal Protection Scheme for coastal protection measures in the county.

It is open to Kerry County Council to apply for further funding under the Scheme. Any application received will be assessed under the revised eligibility criteria for coastal protection measures introduced by the OPW earlier this year, which include a requirement that any measures are cost beneficial, and having regard to the overall availability of resources. Application forms and related guidelines are available on the OPW website.

Coastal protection is funded from the OPW's Flood Risk Management capital allocation, which is €45m for 2012.

Public Sector Pensions Expenditure

126. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the pensions of retired secretaries general are still linked to the salaries of existing secretaries general, or their former salaries upon retiring. [50686/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Superannuation benefits of retired Secretaries General are calculated by reference to pensionable remuneration at their date of retirement. It is the practice that pay increases granted to those serving in the equivalent grade are awarded to the relevant pensioners. However, having regard to the severe economic circumstances facing the country, there have been no salary or pension increases in the civil service since 2008. The Deputy will be aware that, in fact, pensions have been reduced. The pensions of Secretaries General who retired on or before 29 February 2012 are subject to the Public Service Pension Reduction (PSPR) calculated in line with the following rates and bands:

Annual Public Service Pension (€)
Reduction Rate

First 12,000	0%
Between 12,000 and 24,000	6%
Between 24,000 and 60,000	9%
Between 60,000 and 100,000	12%
Balance above 100,000	20%

This reduction is exclusive of normal taxation.

It should also be noted that the pensions of Secretaries General retiring on or after 1 March 2012 are based on reduced pay rates which in turn will give a lower rate of pension. I should point out that, in common with all public servants, Secretaries-General have had their pay reduced substantially and serving Secretaries-General pay the pension levy.

Public Sector Allowances Review

127. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if there are any public sector workers that have become entitled to and have received additional allowances since the Croke Park agreement came into force; if so, if he will give details of the reason for these allowances; and the value of same. [50687/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Allowances

are and will continue to be a normal part of the pay structure in the public service. The general position adopted by my Department in reviewing the business case of an allowance, as stated during the Review conducted this year is that allowances should only be payable in certain circumstances. These are:

- that it reflects the arduous nature or unsocial hours, including the need to remain on call at weekends and other times, clearly associated with the duties of posts, or
- work of additional value is actually received by an employer, or
- an actual cost accrues to the employee derived from their employment.

In that context, my Department has sanctioned new pay allowances since June 2010, including:

- An on-call allowance (€1,188 per week) for clinical staff at the National Virus Reference Laboratory at UCD, paid to one staff member per week to be on-call on a 24/7 basis for that week.

- An on-call allowance (€5,940 per annum) for 6 staff members in the National Ambulance Service, following the recommendation of a HIQA report that the HSE should ensure that there are formalised senior manager on call arrangements in place at all times for ambulance services, including Ambulance Control.

- An out of hours allowance was approved for Forensic Psychiatrists in order to ensure the availability of Consultant Psychiatric Support in critical emergency incidents, particularly in the context of recommendations arising from reviews of the tragic events at Abbeylara.

The detailed information sought by the Deputy in relation to the number of new beneficiaries of allowances in the wider public service in that period is not available to my Department. My Department has however published extensive information on the numbers in receipt of allowances during 2011. This does not include staff of commercial State -sponsored bodies or bodies funded by the State outside the public service since the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform is not responsible for setting the rate of pay for employees (other than the Chief Executives of the commercial semi-State bodies) outside the public service.

Departmental Consultations

128. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide a list of all public consultations his Department has carried out since the start of 2012. [50756/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As discussed with your office yesterday afternoon I will be forwarding a full and comprehensive reply to this question early next week.

Public Sector Pensions Expenditure

129. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the pensions payable to retired members of the Labour Court and to past chairmen of the Labour Court; the years of service for which those pensions were paid; if any special additional pension payments were made for any member of the Labour Court since 1985; and if so, the details of

these arrangements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50826/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The pensions currently payable to retired members and Chairpersons of the Labour Court are listed in the following table, together with their years of service and grade at retirement. No special additional pension payments were made to any former member or Chairperson of the Labour Court since 1985.

Grade at Retirement	No of Years of Service	Pension payable
Chairperson/Deputy Chair	12 years 17 days	€40,994.40
Chairperson/Deputy Chair	13 years 16 days	€37,668.24
Chairperson/Deputy Chair	8 years 138 days	€24,192.48
Member	7 years 329 days	€16,298.64
Member	17 Years 71 days	€35,468.88
Member	6 years 278 days	€12,207.93
Chairperson/Deputy Chair	9 years 51 days	€31,098.72
Member	4 years 276 days	€8,288.16
Member	6 years	€10,349.76
Chairperson/Deputy Chair	36 years 55 days	€62,648.64
Member	6 years 273 days	€11,545.44
Member	24 years	€41,063.04
Member	6 years 292 days	€11,149.75

Departmental Meetings

130. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of times civil servants from his Department have sat at meeting of the IFSC Clearing House and related sub-groups and working groups in 2012; if he will list those staff and their duties and the meetings they attended; if he will indicate, in each instance, the topics of discussion and the decisions that were made; if he will release the relevant briefing notes or reports prepared before and after each meeting by departmental staff to this Deputy and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50727/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The IFSC Clearing House Group and its sub-groups bring together public and private sector stakeholders to explore issues relevant to Ireland's international financial services sector. As these groups fall within the remit of the Department of the Taoiseach, decisions about publishing their records are in the first instance a matter for that Department. The Taoiseach this week informed this House that the minutes of Clearing House Group meetings and certain reports will in future be published both on his Department's website and on www.merrionstreet.ie. He also stated that he had arranged to have the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform briefed on the work of the Groups.

In terms of the involvement of my officials with the IFSC groups, the Secretary General of my Department is the Department's representative on the high level IFSC Clearing House Group and has attended 3 of the 5 meetings held so far this year. The Assistant Secretary with responsibility for the Innovation and Investment Division deputised for him at one meeting and an Assistant Principal Officer from the Company Law Unit of the Department deputised at the other. In addition, the Company Law Unit of my Department is represented, at either Principal

Officer or Assistant Principal Officer level, on both the IFSC Funds Group and that group's Legislative Sub-Group. To date in 2012, these two groups met 8 and 5 times respectively and my Department was represented at all but 2 of these meetings.

It is not normal practice for my Department to produce reports for the Clearing House Group, though it does provide input to periodic progress reports, coordinated by the Department of the Taoiseach, on implementing the IFSC Statement of Strategy.

Representation on the Funds and Funds Legislation Sub-Groups provides my officials with the opportunity to update and consult representatives of the collective investment funds industry about the practical implications on that sector of any relevant new EU company law proposals. My Department does not prepare briefing documents specifically for the IFSC groups on these proposals but instead draws the attention of members to public consultation documents or to proposals published either on this Department's or on the EU Commission's website.

During 2012 the Funds and Funds Legislative Sub-Groups were invited in this way to comment on EU proposals to amend the accounting and auditing directives. In addition, the Funds Legislative Sub-Group was consulted on the Companies Bill, which I intend to publish by the end of this year.

Departmental Consultations

131. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide a list of all public consultations his Department has carried out since the start of 2012. [50754/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The information sought by the Deputy is contained in the tables.

Public Consultations 2012

Public Consultation on the Workplace Relations Reform Programme relevant document - Blueprint to Deliver a World-Class Workplace Relations Service published in April 2012 - published on 5th April 2012
31 August 2012 – Labour Court consultation – Abolition of 3 Joint Labour Committees
Proposal for an EU directive of 11 July 2012 on the collective management of copyright and related rights and multi-territorial licensing of rights in musical works for online users in the internal market
The independent Copyright Review Committee, which examines the copyright legislative framework to identify any areas that might be deemed to create barriers to innovation, published a wide-ranging Consultation Paper in early 2012. Submissions on specific issues set out in the Consultation Paper were sought by the Committee.
Consultation on the review of the research exemption ('Bolar') Provision relating to Article 42(g) of the Patents Act. Broadening the scope of this exemption could enhance the ability of generic pharmaceutical manufacturers to undertake legitimate research without fear of patent litigation
Consultation on submissions for inclusion in the Action Plan for Jobs 2013

Public Consultations 2012

Consultation Document of Transposing Directive 2011/7/EU on combating Late Payments in Commercial Transactions - 9 August 2012- 17 September 2012
Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2006/43/EC on statutory audits of annual accounts and consolidated accounts – COM (2011) 778 final
Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on specific requirements regarding statutory audit of public-interest entities – COM (2011) 779 final
Consultation on Article 19 (Fees for the Use of Means of Payment) and Article 22(Additional Payments) of Directive 2011/83/EU on Consumer Rights

Child Benefit Rates

132. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will ensure that cuts to child benefit for multiples are not carried through. [50569/12]

137. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Social Protection her views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding child benefit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50673/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 132 and 137 together.

Child benefit is a monthly payment made to families with children in respect of all qualified children up to the age of 16 years. The payment continues to be paid in respect of children up to their 18th birthday who are in full-time education, or who have a physical or mental disability. The estimated expenditure on child benefit for 2012 is around €2 billion and it is paid to around 600,000 families in respect of some 1.15 million children. Parents of multiple birth children receive an additional monthly premia paid at one and a half times the monthly child benefit payment rate for each twin and double the monthly payment rate for each child in other multiple births. While Budget 2012 maintained this additional monthly payment, the multiple births grant of €635 paid at birth, at 4 years of age and at 12 years of age was discontinued.

As a universal payment child benefit assists parents with the cost of raising children and it contributes towards alleviating child poverty. The Government is also conscious that child benefit is an important source of income for all families, especially during a time of recession and high unemployment. Bearing this in mind, any plans to change the amount paid in respect of such payments will be a matter to be decided in a budgetary context and announced on Budget day. I do not therefore propose to speculate on any possible approaches to child benefit payment rates changes.

I am conscious that achieving a better design of the overall system of child income supports, including child benefit, raises complex issues about the effectiveness of the full range of income supports currently provided to families and their children. In this context and in line with a commitment in the Programme for Government, I established an Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare last year, which has been tasked with recommending cost-effective solutions as to how employment disincentives can be improved and better poverty outcomes achieved, particularly child poverty outcomes. The Advisory Group prioritised the area of family and child income supports and has completed its work on this area. Their report is currently receiving my consideration and will assist the Government in setting out a pathway towards a more appropriate system of child income supports.

Carer's Allowance Applications

133. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50575/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on 19 December 2011. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Carer's Allowance Applications

134. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50576/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on 5 October 2011. This application was referred to one of the Department's medical assessors who found that the caree in question was not medically eligible for carer's allowance. The deciding officer accepted that opinion and further decided that, in accordance with the evidence supplied, the person in question was not providing full time care in accordance with the relevant Regulations. A letter issued on 11 July 2012 refusing the allowance. The person in question subsequently submitted further medical evidence for review on 2 August 2012. This medical evidence is awaiting medical assessment by a medical assessor. On completion of all the necessary investigations as part of this review, a decision will be made and the person in question will be contacted directly with the outcome.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

135. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Social Protection ; if she will approve an application for rent supplement in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50632/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned has not provided all of the necessary documentation required for the centralised Kildare Rent Unit to process his claim. When the information has been provided a full assessment can be completed.

Carer's Allowance Applications

136. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a carer's allowance application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50663/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 15th May 2012. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Question No. 137 answered with Question No. 132.

Social Welfare Code Issues

138. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if couples who share custody can have shared social welfare payments for their children; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50674/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department of Social Protection administers a wide range of payments through which it provides supports to families including those with children. The main payments in this regard include child benefit and the family income supplement as well as qualified child increases to primary social welfare payments. Therefore, in responding to the Deputy's question, I propose to concentrate on these three payments in particular.

Child benefit is a universal payment made in respect of the care of children. The well-being of the children is the priority consideration in the operation of the current child benefit arrangements and this is reflected in the fact that payment is normally given to a person with whom the child is normally resident rather than on the basis of formal custody arrangements. Reflecting changes to the payment and its precursor (the children's allowance payment) in the 1970s and 1980s, social welfare legislation provides that the payment is normally made to the mother or step-mother of the qualified child payment where the child lives with both parents. Similarly, where the child lives with their father but not their mother, payment may be made to the father. The scheme does not provide for the splitting of the payment between parties in joint custody cases but is based on where the child is normally resident.

The family income supplement scheme (FIS) provides income support for employees on low earnings with families and is designed to preserve the incentive to take up or remain in employment in circumstances where the employee might only be marginally better off than if he or she were claiming other social welfare payments. In the case of parents who are separated, a parent who is wholly or mainly maintaining a former spouse and child(ren) can qualify for FIS. However, only one FIS payment can be made in respect of any family. Furthermore, a person included in one particular family for any period for FIS purposes shall not be regarded as a member of any other family during that period. Current provisions do not therefore allow for FIS payments to be divided between parents. Where a question arises in determining the residence of a child for FIS purposes, an investigation of specific circumstances may be carried out.

Qualified child increases (QCIs) are paid as supplements to weekly social welfare benefit and assistance payments to reflect the need for greater incomes among benefit-dependent households with dependent children. Therefore, QCI payments do not of themselves constitute a specific social welfare scheme and entitlement to the appropriate primary adult payment must be established in the first instance. To qualify for payment of a QCI, the child in respect of whom the increase is claimed must be considered to be normally resident with the person who is claiming the primary payment. In cases where the parents of a child are living apart, the child is considered normally resident with whom s/he is living. Where the child is resident part of the time with each parent, the child is considered to be normally resident with the parent with whom the child resides most of the time.

If the Deputy wishes to have a particular payment or case considered in further detail or to query the specific payment arrangements around a particular scheme, he can arrange to have the details brought to the attention of my Department for consideration.

Departmental Consultations

139. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide a list of all public consultations her Department has carried out since the start of 2012. [50757/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The information requested is currently being compiled within the Department and will be made available to the Deputy as soon as possible.

School Meals Programme

140. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will set out the criteria used in the determination of pupils' entitlement in the context of the school meals programme operated by community colleges in the vocational education committee sector; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50762/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The school meals programme provides funding towards the provision of food services for disadvantaged children through two schemes. The first is the statutory urban school meals scheme, operated by local authorities and part-financed by the Department. The second is the school meals local projects schemes through which funding is provided directly to participating schools and local and voluntary community groups who run their own school meals projects. The Government has provided €35 million for the school meals programme in 2012.

Funding under the school meals local projects scheme is for food costs only, subject to certain conditions. All food must be of suitable quality and nutritional value, and prepared and consumed in an appropriate environment. The type and range of meals provided, as well as the method and logistics of supplying the meals, are decided by the individual local groups and schools that operate the projects. Responsibility for all aspects of the day-to-day operation of the scheme lies with the school/group.

Schools may apply for funding for all pupils, if they feel such a need exists. There is no automatic entitlement to funding and all applications must be considered in light of the available budget for the scheme. Priority for funding is currently given to schools which are part of the Department of Education and Skill's initiative for disadvantaged schools, 'Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools' (DEIS). All DEIS schools who applied to join the scheme in the previous school year have been invited to participate in the 2012/2013 school meals programme. Over forty additional DEIS schools have joined the scheme during the past four years.

Payment under the scheme, which is paid in two instalments, is based on a rate per child per day, depending on the type of meal being provided. Details of the various options available under the scheme and rates of payment per child are shown in the tabular statement.

Various food options and payment per child:

Breakfast/Snack	€0.60	Cereal, Toast, Scone, Fruit, Yogurt, Milk, Juice-2 Items must be provided
Lunch	€1.40	Filled Sandwich/Roll or Soup & Roll or Salad Plate, plus 2 other items (eg Milk, Juice, Fruit, Yogurt)

Dinner	€1.90	Meat, Potatoes & Vegetables or Chicken Curry or Spaghetti Bolognese, plus a drink (Milk, Juice, Water)
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Question No. 141 withdrawn.

Social Welfare Benefits Applications

142. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide in tabular form the amount of applications for lone parents allowance in County Kerry between January 2010 and January 2012, the average waiting time for these applications to be processed, how many were granted, how many refused and how many are still pending; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50780/12]

143. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide in tabular form the amount of applications for jobseekers benefit in County Kerry between January 2010 and January 2012, the average waiting time for these applications to be processed, how many were granted, how many refused and how many are still pending; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50782/12]

144. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide in tabular form the amount of applications for jobseekers allowance in County Kerry between January 2010 and January 2012, the average waiting time for these applications to be processed, how many were granted, how many refused and how many are still pending; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50783/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 142 to 144, inclusive, together.

The information requested by the Deputy in respect of claimants of jobseekers allowance, jobseekers benefit and one-parent family payment is in the following tabular statement. This information is based on clients of the Local and Branch Offices in Co Kerry (Caherciveen, Dingle, Kenmare, Killarney, Killorglin, Listowel and Tralee). The catchment area of these offices may include addresses in neighbouring counties and for that reason those signing on at a Local Office in Kerry may not be resident in the county.

Jobseeker's Allowance	2010	2011	January -October 2012
Claims Registered	9,179	8,372	6,423
Average Time to Decide (weeks)	4.3	3.3	4.7
Total Awards	7,025	6,103	4,502
Total Disallowances	998	772	555
Pending Claim Load	363	545	841
Jobseeker's Benefit	2010	2011	January -October 2012
Claims Registered	11,104	9,798	6,433

Average Time to Decide (weeks)	1.4	1.6	2.2
Total Awards	9,537	8,529	5,480
Total Disallowances	245	224	212
Pending Claim Load	268	395	574
One Parent Family Payment	2010	2011	January -October 2012
Claims Registered	464	450	322
Average Time to Decide (weeks)	7.7	8.7	9.6
Total Awards	332	312	227
Total Disallowances	105	105	72
Pending Claim Load	55	59	65

Carer's Allowance Applications

145. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Cavan may expect to receive a decision on their carer's allowance application; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50792/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 9th December 2011. Further medical evidence was submitted to this department on 21st August 2012. This medical is awaiting assessment by a medical assessor. Once a deciding officer has carried out all the necessary investigations, a decision will be made and the person in question will be contacted directly with the outcome.

Jobseeker's Allowance Applications

146. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for jobseeker's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Louth; the reason for the initial refusal and if she is satisfied the correct procedures were followed in this case. [50794/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that a jobseekers allowance application by the person concerned was disallowed by the Deciding Officer on the grounds that he did not satisfy the Habitual Residence condition for receipt of the allowance. An Appeals Officer, having fully considered all the evidence, including that adduced at an oral hearing allowed the appeal of the person concerned and decided that he was habitually resident at the time of making his claim on 29 September 2009. He further decided that his means from self-employment at that date were €15.17 per week.

Correspondence has now been received from the person claiming his means have reduced since the date of his application. In order for his means to be reviewed, an application for such a review must first be processed through the person's local social welfare office and he has been so advised by letter dated 12th November 2012 and he has been advised that such an application should include details relating to his current circumstances.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Pro-

tection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Benefits Applications

147. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if and when social welfare payment will be restored in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50818/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): On 20th August 2012 a letter was issued to the person concerned advising him that he was required to submit an updated Garda National Immigration Bureau card confirming his immigration status, as his current card was due to expire on 8th September 2012. As this card was not submitted, his claim was closed on 10th September 2012. The person concerned can attend his Social Welfare Local Office at any time to make a new application for jobseeker's allowance, where he will need to re-submit all relevant documents including a current Garda National Immigration Bureau card.

Social Welfare Benefits Applications

148. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if and when the basic social welfare payment will issue in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50820/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): According to the records of this Department the person concerned has not submitted a recent application for supplementary welfare allowance.

Social Welfare Code Issues

149. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason the habitual residency clause is being used to deprive social welfare payment in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; if payment will be approved in view of the fact that they are an EU national; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50821/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned was disallowed a weekly supplementary welfare allowance payment on the grounds that she is not considered to satisfy the habitual residency condition. The person concerned can appeal this decision to the Social Welfare Appeals Office.

Question No. 150 withdrawn.

Fuel Allowance Applications

151. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the entitlement of fuel allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50824/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): In order to qualify for the national fuel scheme, applicants must satisfy a means assessment and be living alone or only with per-

sons who satisfy specific criteria. The person concerned is currently in receipt of invalidity pension since 15 September 2011. On 24 May 2012, in order to determine entitlement to free fuel allowance, the person in question was requested to furnish further details regarding means and his household composition. While household composition has now been confirmed, to date no response has been received regarding the means enquiry. On receipt of the requested information, entitlement to free fuel allowance can be determined.

Social Welfare Benefits Applications

152. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will qualify for a special once off payment to alleviate hardship; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50825/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): According to the records of this Department, the person concerned has not applied for an exceptions needs payment. An application form for an exceptional needs payment issued to the person concerned, and should be returned once completed to this Department for processing.

Arts Council Funding

153. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the position in relation to the need to maximise support for funding to the Arts Council and to local government (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50585/12]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Government policy on the arts is set out in the *Programme for Government*. As Minister responsible for the arts and culture sectors, I am committed to securing the best possible funding provision for them during my term of office.

Government policy is to promote and strengthen the arts in all its forms, increase access to and participation in the arts, make the arts an integral and valued part of our national life, and maximise the potential for cultural tourism. Primary responsibility for the promotion of the arts at all levels throughout the country is devolved to the Arts Council, which, under the Arts Acts, is independent in its funding decisions. In 2012, the Arts Council received an allocation of over €63 million – a curbing of the budgetary decline of previous years.

The Government appreciates the importance of the arts, culture and the creative industries to both our society and to our economy. I am fully aware of the challenges for those involved in the arts and culture sectors and of the tremendous work they are doing. I am committed to supporting the essential elements of the arts and culture sectors, within the available financial resources and in the light of the evolving budgetary and Estimates processes.

Arts Council Funding

154. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will give a commitment not to reduce current levels of funding given to The Arts Council of Ireland and local authorities in view of the fact that further cuts would result in job losses within the Arts sector here which currently employs 20,755 persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50740/12]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Government policy on the arts is set out in the *Programme for Government*. As Minister responsible for the arts and culture sectors, I am committed to securing the best possible funding provision for them during my term of office.

Government policy is to promote and strengthen the arts in all its forms, increase access to and participation in the arts, make the arts an integral and valued part of our national life, and maximise the potential for cultural tourism. Primary responsibility for the promotion of the arts at all levels throughout the country is devolved to the Arts Council, which, under the Arts Acts, is independent in its funding decisions. In 2012, the Arts Council received an allocation of over €63 million – a curbing of the budgetary decline of previous years.

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Departmental Consultations

155. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide a list of all public consultations his Department has carried out since the start of 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50745/12]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): As part of the review of the Official Languages Act 2003, my Department engaged in a public consultation process during the early part of 2012. The consultation process involved the completion of an online survey and provision of a template for written submissions.

Furthermore, I can advise the Deputy that, in association with Foras na Gaeilge, my Department established a focus group consisting of representatives from three community-based language promotion organisations. The aim of this focus group was to obtain community input into the development of language planning criteria for Irish Language Networks, to be established in accordance with the terms of the Gaeltacht Act 2012.

For completeness, the Deputy may wish to note that a public consultation is currently being carried out in relation to the Review of the Open Seasons Order for Deer. The closing date for submissions is 16th November 2012. Further information in relation to this matter can be found at: <http://www.npws.ie/legislationandconventions/irishlaw/openseasonsorder/>

Energy Schemes Issues

156. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland should install installation measures in dormer houses in cases in which the houses were surveyed; the measures agreed to in advance of the SEAI decision to cease installing installation measures in dormer houses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50661/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Better Energy: Warmer Homes delivers a range of energy efficiency measures to households which are vulnerable to energy poverty. The scheme is managed by the Sustainable Energy Au-

thority of Ireland (SEAI) and delivered through a combination of SEAI appointed Community Based Organisations (CBOs), augmented by a panel of private contractors in order to ensure national coverage.

I am informed by the SEAI that when the house in question was surveyed it was identified that the walls were already fully insulated but that it had insufficient attic insulation. The home in question is a dormer bungalow and the practice of insulating dormer roofs through the Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme was recently reviewed in respect of value for money, the overall effectiveness of the additional insulation which can only be undertaken in part of the roof space, and the significant costs associated with achieving appropriate ventilation in the roof space to avoid condensation problems. All of this is in the context of endeavouring to address the maximum number of vulnerable fuel poor homes from within available resources. On balance it has been decided that the significant costs are not generally justified by the marginal insulation gains. Therefore insulation of dormer roofs is not currently implemented under the scheme. However, I am advised that SEAI will continue to keep the matter under review with my officials for feasible cost effective alternatives, particularly where the homes are in extreme fuel poverty, at which time affected houses may be revisited.

Departmental Agencies Staff Remuneration

157. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the current salary paid to the Commissioner and to the Chairperson of the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg); the salary for these positions in 2010 and 2011; the bonuses, or payments or benefits other than the salary, if any, that have been paid to these positions in 2010, 2011, and 2012; if he is currently considering any proposals to review the operation of the Regulator and is he in a position to share any proposals regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50669/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The pay rates for the Commissioners of the Commission for Communications Regulation is €164,464 where the appointee is making a personal pension contribution and €156,241 for an appointee who does not make a personal pension contribution. These rates are applicable from 1 January 2010 following reductions introduced in accordance with the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (No 2) Act 2009.

A contribution of €1,000 is paid in respect of each Commissioner in the form of medical insurance paid by the Commission. Commissioners are not eligible for performance related pay.

An annual payment of €16,000 is payable to the Commissioner appointed as Chairman.

The vast majority of regulatory functions vested in ComReg stem from obligations addressed to independent national regulatory authorities in EU Directives applicable to the postal and telecommunications sectors. There are no proposals to review the applicable EU rules at this time and accordingly the role of the Commission in those matters will continue.

Telecommunications Services Provision

158. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if his attention has been drawn to the fact that mobile phone companies appear to be restricting access to Skype to customers on their mobile internet products. [50742/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):

The provision of telecommunications network services, including Skype services, is a matter in the first instance, for private sector service providers operating in a liberalised market regulated by the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg). I am advised by ComReg that they have just recently received a small number of consumer complaints in respect of the blocking of Skype and are currently investigating the matter.

Telecommunications Services Provision

159. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the supervision and control exercised either by his Department or by ComReg over the application of roaming charges for mobile Internet products by companies in the Irish telecoms industry in view of the often extortionate level of these charges. [50743/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):

The telecommunications market in Ireland, including the provision of mobile telephone services, is a fully liberalised market regulated by the independent market regulator, the Commission for Communications Regulation in accordance with the provisions of the Communications Regulation Act 2002, as amended. In the case of roaming charges, ComReg's market regulation is also exercised in accordance with applicable provisions of EU Roaming Regulations.

The current EU Roaming Regulation "(EU) No 531/2012 of 13 June 2012 on roaming on public mobile communications networks", which commenced on 1st July last, is the third in a series of such EU Regulations, first introduced in 2007. The purpose of these EU Regulations is to provide increasing levels of consumer protection to customers in all EU member states when using mobile roaming services. The reductions in the maximum permitted retail prices for roaming services within the EU required by these Regulations are summarised in the following table (excluding VAT). The Regulations impose binding maximum permitted retail prices but service providers are free to charge lower prices.

Maximum price	Making a call/minute	Receiving a call/minute	Sending an SMS	Receiving an SMS	Mobile Internet
July 2009	43 cents	19 cents	11 cents	free	-
July 2010	39 cents	15 cents	11 cents	free	-
July 2011	35 cents	11 cents	11 cents	free	-
July 2012	29 cents	8 cents	9 cents	free	70 cents/MB

The current EU Roaming Regulation also obliges mobile service providers to inform customers of roaming charges and to implement a minimum set of customer protection measures which include the following.

(i) Service provider must advise customers by SMS, on each occasion a customer moves to a roaming service, of the costs of roaming in the EU, including the cost of calls made and received, the cost of sending an SMS/MMS, the cost per Megabyte (MB) of data and provide a freephone number to customers to deal with any additional customer queries.

(ii) In the case of customers who data roam, service providers must automatically impose a data cap of €50 (excluding VAT) in any month in which a customer roams. Customers must be advised when 80% of the data usage cap is reached and at 100% of the data usage cap the service should cease. Customers can then choose to continue to data roam incurring additional charges above the default cap if they wish. The data cap requirement is mandatory within the

EU. In the case of customers roaming outside the EU, the data usage alert is required where possible. If the visited network outside the EU area cannot provide a warning alert, the customer should receive an SMS advising that the operator cannot apply the data usage alert in that country.

Any customer who has been charged in excess of the permitted roaming rates or who has incurred significant roaming charges without receiving the customer information required by the EU Regulation should contact ComReg to pursue the matter further. ComReg can be contacted at consumerline@comreg.ie, by phone at (01) 804 9668 or 1890 229668 or at Block DEF, Abbey Court, Irish Life Centre, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1.

Departmental Consultations

160. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide a list of all public consultations his Department has carried out since the start of 2012. [50747/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has carried out a number of public consultations to date this year in line with statutory requirements. Details of these public consultations are outlined in tabular form.

Description of Consultation	Date of consultation
Public consultation on the bringing into use of a telecommunications duct infrastructure constructed alongside the gas pipeline between Ballymoneen Co. Galway and Bellanaboy County Mayo with a spur into Castlebar and Westport.	January 2012
Two separate public consultations relating to the proposed terms and conditions for REFIT 2 (for onshore wind, hydro and landfill gas technologies) and REFIT 3 (for biomass technologies) (Renewable Energy Feed In Tariff).	February and March 2012
Public Consultation relating to the Department's External Customer Service Charter.	March 2012
Public consultation on the Report of the next Generation Broadband Taskforce	May 2012
Public consultation on proposal to increase the rate of biofuel obligation under the Biofuel Obligation Scheme.	July and August 2012
Public consultation on intention to amend certain aspects of the Terms and Conditions for REFIT (Renewable Energy Feed In Tariff).	August 2012
Public consultation relating to the Order required to implement an increase to the biofuel obligation from 1 January 2013	October 2012

Public consultation relating to Statutory Notice of the proposal to revise the Wild Salmon and Sea Trout Tagging Scheme Regulations to apply from 1st January 2013.	November 2012
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In addition to the above list I would inform the Deputy that under the Minerals Development Acts 1940 to 1999, I give notice of my intention to award or renew a minerals prospecting licence over certain townlands in counties or parts thereof, by way of public advertisement, inviting objections to the proposal to be made within 21 days of the date of the notice. The following table lists the 47 consultation notices issued to date in 2012 indicating the licence holders, the relevant counties and date of notice.

Company	County	Date
Westland Exploration Ltd	Meath	07/01/2012
Teck Ireland Ltd	Westmeath	07/01/2012
Boliden Tara Mines Ltd	Meath	14/01/2012
IMC Exploration Ltd	Kerry	11/01/2012
Gary R. Brown	Galway	13/01/2012
Teck Ireland Ltd	Westmeath	28/01/2012
Teck Ireland Ltd	Tipperary	26/01/2012
Boliden Tara Mines Ltd	Meath	14/02/2012
Boliden Tara Mines Ltd	Meath/Westmeath	18/02/2012
Boliden Tara Mines Ltd	Wexford	07/03/2012
Teck Ireland Ltd	Longford	09/03/2012
Teck Ireland Ltd	Westmeath	10/03/2012
Conroy Gold & Natural Resources Ltd	Monaghan	15/03/2012
IMC Exploration Ltd	Donegal	16/03/2012
Omagh Minerals Ltd	Donegal	16/03/2012
Lundin Mining Ltd	Limerick	31/03/2012
TILZ Minerals Ltd	Limerick	13/04/2012
Conroy Gold & Natural Resources Ltd	Clare	13/04/2012
Conroy Gold & Natural Resources Ltd	Clare	13/04/2012
Unicorn Mineral Resources Ltd	Clare	20/04/2012
Tynagh Iron Mines Ltd	Galway	27/04/2012
Boliden Tara Mines Ltd	Limerick	28/04/2012
Lundin Mining Ltd	Longford	04/05/2012
Adventus Exploration Ltd	Louth	06/06/2012
Boliden Tara Mines Ltd	Galway	08/06/2012
Boliden Tara Mines Ltd	Galway	07/06/2012
Boliden Tara Mines Ltd	Galway	07/06/2012
Teck Ireland Ltd	Meath/Westmeath/Kildare/Offaly	13/06/12 & 16/06/12
Boliden Tara Mines Ltd	Limerick	16/06/2012

Company	County	Date
Conroy Gold & Natural Resources Ltd	Cavan/Monaghan	22/06/2012
Irish Resource Exploration Ltd	Galway/Mayo	01/06/12
Teck Ireland Ltd	Meath/Offaly/Kildare	10/07/12 & 11/07/12 & 14/07/12
Unicorn Mineral Resources Ltd	Galway	13/07/2012
Conroy Gold & Natural Resources Ltd	Monaghan	19/07/2012
Lundin Mining Ltd	Clare	20/07/2012
Belmore Resources Ltd	Clare	20/07/2012
Conroy Gold & Natural Resources Ltd	Monaghan	23/08/2012
Teck Ireland Ltd	Westmeath	31/08/2012
Teck Ireland Ltd	Roscommon	01/09/2012
Teck Ireland Ltd	Tipperary	30/08/2012
Belmore Resources Ltd	Clare	07/09/2012
Conroy Gold & Natural Resources Ltd	Monaghan	06/09/2012
Hendrick Resources (Ireland) Ltd	Wexford	04/09/2012
Dundalk Mining & Excavation Ltd	Laois	14/09/2012
Hendrick Resources (Ireland) Ltd	Wexford	18/09/2012
Gary R. Brown	Galway	12/10/2012
Boliden Tara Mines Ltd	Galway	02/11/2012

My Department also published notice of my intention to grant a State Mining Licence at Killoran, County Tipperary to Vedanta Lisheen Mining Ltd and others and invited representations from persons arising out of the proposal by 11 May 2012.

Departmental Expenditure

161. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide in tabular form a list of all companies or persons providing an external professional service to the Local Government Management Services Board in 2008 such as legal advice, advertising, project management and including any other external professional service not listed; the amount invoiced by each company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50582/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The information requested is as follows:

Questions - Written Answers

Name of Firm	Type of Service	Fees Paid	Nature of work carried out
Allen Design Consultants	Design	€1,283	Design of Brochure
ASA Consulting	Consultancy	€11,625	Consultancy on Shared Service
ASA Consulting	Training Consultancy	€1,440	Training of Local Authority Staff
BCM Hanby Wallace	Legal Advice	€8,532	Advice on; Dignity at Work, Child Protection Policy Guidelines, case before one of the State's employment rights bodies
BCM Hanby Wallace	Guest Speaker	€2,178	Guest Speaker at training conference
Breen HR Consulting	Consultancy	€15,246	Consultancy on HR Strategy for sector
Clear & Critical Thinking	Guest Speaker	€700	Guest Speaker at training conference
Dilucid Limited	Guest Speaker	€908	Guest Speaker at training conference
Durrow Communications	Training Consultancy	€9,680	Training of Local Authority Staff
Erwin Mediation	Guest Speaker	€684	Guest Speaker at training conference
Gar Holohan	Guest Speaker	€1,000	Guest Speaker at training conference
Hay Group Ireland Ltd	Consultancy	€60,500	Review of PMDS in sector
John Cook Video Productions	Design & Production Services	€1,816	DVD for Local Authorities
John O'Dowd	Training Consultancy	€15,000	Training of Local Authority Staff
John O'Dowd	Consultancy	€15,428	Preparation of Sectoral Report for Performance Verification Group
John O'Dowd	Facilitation	€12,055	Facilitation provided to Local Authority
La Touche Training	Training Consultancy	€13,609	Training of Local Authority Staff
Mason, Hayes & Curran	Guest Speaker	€1,083	Guest Speaker at training conference
McCann Fitzgerald Solicitors	Legal Advice	€25,112	Legal Advice regarding redevelopment
Melior Management	Professional Services	€1,815	Equality Conference

Name of Firm	Type of Service	Fees Paid	Nature of work carried out
Michael Collins Associates	Consultancy	€23,693	Project Management of Ushers Quay Development
Morahan Media	Guest Speaker	€4,235	Guest Speaker at training conference
Nat O'Connor Research Advice	Consultancy	€6,500	Preparation and Analysis relating to Service Indicators Report
Noone Casey	Accountancy	€12,818	Preparation of Annual Accounts
Optimum Point Consultancy	Guest Speaker	€1,000	Guest Speaker at training conference
Polaris	Training Consultancy	€23,677	Design & Provision of training services to Local Authority staff
PS Cahill Solicitors	Legal Advice	€15,166	Legal Advice sought on behalf of Local Authority regarding Safety, Health, and Welfare at Work Act
RA Consulting	Guest Speaker	€900	Guest Speaker at training conference
Richard Barnes & Associates	Guest Speaker	€7,273	Guest Speaker at training conference (includes international travel)
Sean Ruth & Associates	Guest Speaker	€900	Guest Speaker at training conference
SPSS Ireland	Consultancy	€10,164	Statistical Analysis of Survey Data
The Farm Media Group	Design & Production Services	€51,121	Design and Production of Local Authority Video
The Health & Safety Authority	Design & Production Services	€23,902	Safe System of Work Plan DVD Production for Local Authorities
Trinity College Dublin School of Law	Consultancy	€180	FOI Update
Trove KM Consulting	Guest Speaker	€605	Guest Speaker at training conference
Wayoveronder	Consultancy	€9,790	Design and Development Equal Status Policy for Local Authority Sector

Name of Firm	Type of Service	Fees Paid	Nature of work carried out
Willie Soffe	Facilitation	€2,250	Facilitation of Joint Management Union Group
Yellowstone Communications Design	Design & Production Services	€7,859	Annual Health & Safety Newsletter

Local Government Fund

162. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position in relation to the need to maximise support for funding to the Arts Council and local government (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50584/12]

175. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will give a commitment not to reduce current levels of funding given to The Arts Council of Ireland and local authorities as further cuts would result in job losses within the Arts sector here which currently employs 20,755 persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50739/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 162 and 175 together.

I assume that the Questions refer to general purpose grants from the Local Government Fund. General purpose grants contribute towards meeting the reasonable cost to local authorities of providing services to their customers. In line with previous years, it is my intention to inform local authorities of their 2013 general purpose grant allocations following the announcement of Budget 2013. I will seek to contribute to the general purpose funding of local authorities to the maximum extent possible in 2013, having regard to the current pressures on the public finances and motor tax income.

It is a matter for each local authority to determine its own spending priorities, including investment in the Arts, in the context of the annual budgetary process, having regard to both locally identified needs and available resources.

Local Authorities Management

163. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will supply the name of the Chairperson of the Finance and Audit Committee of the Local Government Management Agency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50586/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Chairperson of the Finance and Audit Committee of the Local Government Management Agency is Mr. John Tierney, Dublin City Manager.

Water Services Provision

164. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Lo-

cal Government when the inspection plan, including the operating manual for inspectors under the Water Services Act 2012, will be finalised and published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50587/12]

165. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government with reference to the 2007 report entitled 'Regulatory Impact Analysis of the proposed Surface Water Classification Systems including Environmental Quality Standards: Final Report' which is hosted on his Department's website and states that the total cost of the remediation of septic tanks nationally will be between €975 million and €3 billion and that the individual cost to householders is likely to be between €7,000 and €25,000, if he has undertaken any recent estimation as to the total cost to the State of complying with ECJ Judgment C-188/08 and the water quality standards required under the water framework directive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50608/12]

169. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the standards for which homeowners must comply to under the Water Services (Amendment) Bill will be published; whether or not grant aid will be made available to persons who must carry out upgrade work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50679/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 164, 165 and 169 together.

The Water Services (Amendment) Act 2012 provides that the Environmental Protection Agency will make the National Inspection Plan for domestic waste water treatment systems. A public consultation on the proposed plan was commenced by the Agency on 11 October 2012. Submissions received are currently being reviewed by the Agency with a view to finalising the Plan. A training course for persons who will be appointed to carry out inspections is also currently being finalised and this is being overseen by the Water Services Training Group. I understand that the Plan and the training course will be finalised shortly.

The standards to be met by all domestic waste water treatment systems are set out in the Act. They are that such systems do not constitute and are not likely to constitute a risk to human health or the environment and in particular do not create a risk to water, air or soil or to plants or animals. The Act also provides that such systems must not create a nuisance through noise or odours or adversely affect the countryside or places of special interest. These standards were augmented by the provisions of the Water Services Acts 2007 and 2012 (Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems) Regulations 2012 which set out additional performance standards, including maintenance and de-sludging requirements.

A Regulatory Impact Analysis carried out by my Department for the 2012 Act is published on my Department's website. The 2007 Regulatory Impact Analysis referred to was prepared by consultants, ERM Ireland, for the Environmental Protection Agency and it was not concerned with the provisions of the 2012 Act.

It is not possible to estimate the total cost of remediation for defective domestic waste water treatment systems. The extent of remediation required will depend on the nature of any problem identified, the extent of the risk to human health or the environment and the hydrological and geological conditions present. These factors will inform the selection of the most appropriate and cost-effective solution. While responsibility for the maintenance of on-site waste water treatment systems lies with the owners of those systems, I have stated on a number of occasions that I am prepared to consider all possible options to provide financial support to householders' whose wastewater treatment systems are deemed, following inspection under the new legislation, to require substantial remediation or upgrading. The provision of any financial support

will have regard to the overall budgetary situation and to the financial position of the individual households concerned.

Regeneration Projects Funding

166. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will confirm that funding has been withdrawn from the Ulster Canal Project Co-ordinator post; the reasons for same; if in view of the importance of this role in terms of the delivery of this project and the realisation in full of its real potential for Clones and all host communities along the route of the restored waterway, he will reverse this decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50621/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the reply to Question No. 199 of 14 November 2012, which sets out the position in this matter.

Proposed Legislation

167. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to bring forward the Non-Use of Motor Vehicles Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50659/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The General Scheme of a Bill to tighten the procedures for declaring a vehicle off the road for motor tax purposes has been approved by the Government and the Bill will be published once the legal drafting process has been completed.

Local Authority Housing Provision

168. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 711 and 712 of 6 November 2012 if he will indicate on a county basis the number of rental accommodation scheme units in use; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50672/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): It is not possible to give a specific breakdown by county of the number of units tenanted at any given time under the Rental Accommodation Scheme. Numbers in RAS constantly vary as contracts end, tenants move on to other properties, landlords withdraw from the scheme, new tenancies are allocated or vacancies in contracted units are filled. Figures in relation to RAS units are generally provided as the number of households transferred from Rent Supplement to RAS and other forms of social housing support and in that regard I refer to the table of transfers to RAS by county since 2005 given in reply to Question No 695 of 6 November 2012.

Question No. 169 answered with Question No. 164.

Cultural Trusts

170. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 428 of 12 June 2012, if he will provide a list of the assets under the control of the Temple Bar Cultural Trust; the money received by the Trust as a return on these assets; and when he will publish and make available to the public the Latitude report on the Trust. [50688/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): As indicated in the reply to Question No. 428 of 12 June 2012, the Temple Bar Cultural Trust organisation is a private limited company with the Dublin City Manager as the sole shareholder, and governance arrangements and financial management of the Trust are matters for Dublin City Council. I have no role in relation to these matters. Accordingly, the information sought is not available in my Department and may be obtained directly from Dublin City Council.

Environmental Regulations

171. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if there is provision in legislation for exemptions to the plastic bag levy for those customers who buy alcohol [50697/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The legislation which provides for the environmental levy is the Waste Management (Environmental Levy) (Plastic Bag) Regulations 2001. There is no specific provision in the legislation for exemptions to the environmental levy on plastic bags for customers buying alcohol.

Regulation 5 outlines the situations where plastic bags are exempted from the 22 cent environmental levy, including as follows –

(i) Plastic bags solely used to contain fresh fish, meat and poultry, provided that the bags are not greater in dimension than 225 mm in width (exclusive of any gussets), by 345 mm in depth (inclusive of any gussets), and by 450 mm in length (inclusive of any handles),

(ii) Plastic bags solely used to contain packaged (including in another plastic bag) fresh uncooked fish, meat or poultry products, provided that the bags do not exceed the dimensions indicated at (i) above,

(iii) Plastic bags solely used to contain non-packaged (loose) fruit, nuts or vegetables, confectionery (including unwrapped bread), dairy products, cooked food (whether cold or hot) and ice, provided that the bags do not exceed the dimensions indicated at (i) above.

Plastic bags are exempt from the levy when used to contain only the aforementioned food-stuffs. If items other than those specified above are placed in the same bag then the levy is applicable.

The Regulations further provide that plastic bags designed for reuse, and which are sold to customers for a sum of not less than 70 cent each, are also exempted from the levy.

Local Authority Leases

172. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 711 and 712 of 6 November 2012, the number of units held by each local authority in the current year; if he will also indicate the

trends discernible in relation to his Department's scheme of long-term leasing; if, on a county basis, long-term leases are being initiated by local authorities themselves or by approved bodies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50733/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I refer to the reply to Question No. 697 of 6 November 2012 which detailed the total number of units leased to end October 2012.

3,458 units have become operational under the leasing scheme to date. Of these 1,845 are unsold affordable units managed by approved housing bodies on behalf of housing authorities. A breakdown of the other 1,613 units by local authority is set out in the table. 347 have been sourced by approved housing bodies with the remaining 1,239 sourced by housing authorities.

Housing Authority Area	Authority	AHB	Overall
Athlone Town Council	43	7	50
Birr Town Council	20		20
Bray Town Council	1	0	1
Buncrana Town Council	38		38
Bundoran Town Council	1		1
Carlow County Council	6		6
Cashel Town Council	4		4
Cavan County Council	6		6
Clare County Council	44		44
Clonmel Borough Council	16		16
Cork City Council	60	16	76
Cork County Council		1	1
DLR County Council	12	37	49
Donegal County Council	55	12	67
Drogheda Borough Council	16	15	31
Dublin City Council	50	87	137
Dundalk Town Council	102	29	131
Ennis Town Council	15		15
Enniscorthy Town Council	9		9

Housing Authority Area	Authority	AHB	Overall
Fingal County Council	47		47
Galway City Council	96		96
Galway County Council	12		12
Kerry County Council	3		3
Kildare County Council		41	41
Kilkenny County Council	13	15	28
Laois County Council		54	54
Leitrim County Council	1		1
Letterkenny Town Council	42		42
Limerick City Council		10	10
Limerick County Council	13	5	18
Longford County Council	20		20
Mayo County Council	28		28
Meath County Council		27	27
Monaghan County Council	1		1
Nenagh Town Council	6		6
North Tipperary County Council	13		13
Offaly County Council	36	8	44
Roscommon County Council	4		4
Sligo Borough Council	10		10
Sligo County Council	19		19
South Tipperary County Council	20		20
Sth Dublin County Council	157		157

Housing Authority Area	Authority	AHB	Overall
Templemore Town Council	50		50
Thurles Town Council	12		12
Waterford City Council	21	10	31
Waterford County Council	26		26
Westmeath County Council	38		38
Wexford Borough Council	6		6
Wexford County Council	46		46
Wicklow County Council	1		1
Grand Total	1,239	374	1,613

Fire Service Staff

173. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of fire chiefs, assistant fire chiefs, senior assistant chiefs, fire prevention chiefs, full-time fire fighters and part-time fire fighters currently employed in County Waterford; the number of part-time fire fighters that have resigned from the services in County Waterford in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50736/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The number of whole time equivalent (WTE) fire service personnel employed in Waterford City and Waterford County Council on 30 September 2012 is set out in the following table. The number of part time fire fighters employed in Waterford City Council and Waterford County Council on 30 September 2012 is set out in the following table on a headcount basis.

	Waterford City Council	Waterford County Council
Fire Chief	1	1
Assistant Fire Chief	2	0
Senior Assistant Chief	2	2
Fire Prevention Chief	0	2
Full Time Fire Fighters (WTE)	32	0
Part time Fire Fighters (Headcount)	13	80

The number of part time fire fighters that have resigned from the fire service in Waterford City Council and Waterford County Council from 2008 is set out in the following table.

Part time fire fighter resignations	Waterford City Council	Waterford County Council
2008	0	5
2009	1	6
2010	0	2
2011	1	5
2012	1	7

Local Authority Staff Remuneration

174. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the pay scale currently used in the fire services; specifically, the annual salary and expenses payable to fire chiefs, assistant fire chiefs, senior assistant chiefs, fire prevention chiefs, full-time fire fighters and part-time fire fighters. [50737/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Figures relating to the actual remuneration paid to fire fighters across every local authority are not available in my Department; however, the current applicable salary scales are contained in the following tables.

Chief Fire Officer (Dublin City Council)

Point	Rate 01/01/2010
1	€78,368
2	€81,185
3	€83,995
4	€86,809
5	€89,623
LSI 1	€92,583
LSI 2	€95,540

Chief Fire Officer (Other L.A's)

Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Dublin City)

Point	Rate 01/01/2010	Point	Rate 01/01/2010
1	€73,223	1	€73,223
2	€74,957	2	€74,957
3	€76,685	3	€76,685
4	€78,417	4	€78,417
5	€80,148	5	€80,148
6	€81,886	6	€81,886
LSI 1	€84,500	LSI 1	€84,500
LSI 2	€87,117	LSI 2	€87,117

Senior Executive Fire Officer (Cork County) Senior Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Other L.A's)

Point	Rate 01/01/2010	Point	Rate 01/01/2010
1	€62,276	1	€62,276

Questions - Written Answers

2	€64,219	2	€64,219
3	€66,147	3	€66,147
4	€68,037	4	€68,037
5	€69,934	5	€69,934
6	€71,822	6	€71,822
7	€73,726	7	€73,726
LSI 1	€76,116	LSI 1	€76,116
LSI 2	€78,501	LSI 2	€78,501

Third Fire Officer (Dublin City) Second Fire Officer (Cork City) Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Other L.As)

Point	Rate 01/01/2010	Point	Rate 01/01/2010	Point	Rate 01/01/2010
1	€73,223	1	€62,276	1	€46,732
2	€74,957	2	€64,219	2	€48,467
3	€76,685	3	€66,147	3	€50,204
4	€78,417	4	€68,037	4	€51,944
5	€80,148	5	€69,934	5	€53,684
LSI 1	€81,886	6	€71,822	6	€55,422
LSI 2	€84,500	7	€73,726	7	€57,162
		LSI 1	€76,116	8	€58,893
		LSI 2	€78,501	9	€60,639
				10	€62,372
				LSI 1	€64,371
				LSI 2	€66,350

District Officer (Dublin City) Third Fire Officer (Cork City) Assistant Fire Officer

Point	Rate 01/01/2010	Point	Rate 01/01/2010	Point	Rate 01/01/2010
1	€51,281	1	€51,280	1	€40,368
2	€52,767	2	€52,766	2	€42,097
3	€54,265	3	€54,260	3	€43,811
4	€55,740	4	€55,742	4	€45,529
5	€57,229	5	€57,225	5	€47,254
6	€58,715	6	€58,717	6	€48,971
				7	€50,687
				8	€52,408
				9	€54,136
				LSI 1	€55,903
				LSI 2	€57,672

Retained (Part-Time) Fire Service

Service	Station Officer	Sub Officer, Driver Mechanic	Firefighter
0 - 5 years	€15,438	€11,687	€8,402

5 – 10 years	€17,345	€13,130	€9,439		
10 years +	€19,078	€14,442	€10,383		
Hourly rate of attendance		Fire	Fire	Fire	Fire
	Drill	Day	Day	Night / Weekend	Night / Weekend
		1st Hour	Subsequent Hours	1st Hour	Subsequent Hours
Rate per Hour	€19.86	€39.72	€19.86	€79.44	€39.72

Full Time Fire Service

Dublin & Limerick City

	Station Officer		Firefighter	Sub-Officer
Point	01/01/2010	Point	01/01/2010	01/01/2010
1	€ 889.11	1	€ 477.34	€ 887.43
2	€ 900.05	2	€ 564.40	
3	€ 912.30	3	€ 616.90	
4	€ 923.51	4	€ 669.65	
5	€ 935.00	5	€ 722.04	
		6	€ 738.76	
		7	€ 781.86	
		LSI 1 11 yrs	€ 813.62	
		LSI 2 17 yrs	€ 849.62	

Cork City

	Station Officer		Firefighter	Sub-Officer
Point	01/01/2010	Point	01/01/2010	01/01/2010
1	€ 889.11	1	€ 477.34	€887.43
2	€ 900.05	2	€ 564.40	
3	€ 912.30	3	€ 616.90	
4	€ 923.51	4	€ 669.65	Leading Fire-fighter
5	€ 935.00	5	€ 722.04	01/01/2010
		6	€ 738.76	€ 868.55
		7	€ 781.86	
		LSI 1 11 yrs	€ 813.62	
		LSI 2 17 yrs	€ 849.62	

Waterford City & Galway, Kilkenny & Sligo County Councils & Drogheda Borough Council & Dundalk Town Council

	Station Officer	Sub-Officer		Firefighter
Point	01/01/2010	01/01/2010	Point	01/01/2010
1	€ 887.84	€ 886.16	1	€ 476.07
2	€ 898.78		2	€ 563.13

Questions - Written Answers

3	€ 911.03		3	€ 615.63
4	€ 922.24		4	€ 668.38
5	€ 933.73		5	€ 720.77
			6	€ 737.49
			7	€ 780.59
			LSI 1 11 yrs	€ 812.35
			LSI2 17 yrs	€ 848.35

Carlow, Clare, Cork, Kerry, Kildare, Longford, Mayo, Meath, Offaly, South Tipperary & Westmeath County Councils & Athlone and Bray Town Councils

	Station Officer	Sub-Officer
Point	01/01/2010	01/01/2010
1	€ 887.84	€ 886.16
2	€ 898.78	
3	€ 911.03	
4	€ 922.24	
5	€ 933.73	

Question No. 175 answered with Question No. 162.

Departmental Consultations

176. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a list of all public consultations his Department has carried out since the start of 2012. [50750/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Since the start of 2012 my Department has carried out public consultations on the following:

- Review of Part B (Fire Safety) Building Regulations 1997 – 2012;
- The establishment of a Public Water Utility and the future funding of water services;
- Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland;
- Local Property Tax;
- Consultation on Septic Tanks and other domestic treatment systems draft standards;
- National Climate Policy Development;
- Delivering Cleaner Air - Smoky Coal Ban regulations;
- Keeping Communities Safe / CAMP-The Next Generation (fire safety and fire services);
- Draft building control (amendment) regulations 2012;
- End of Waste Criteria for Waste Plastic for Conversion;
- EU Industrial Emissions Directive;
- Review of the Producer Responsibility Initiative Model in Ireland;

Local Area Plans Draft Guidelines;

Local Government Support for Economic Development and Local Enterprises;

Development contributions – draft guidelines;

Draft Guidelines on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment;

Building for the Future - A Voluntary Regulatory Code for Approved Housing Bodies in Ireland;

Official Languages Act 2003 - Preparation of a Draft Scheme by the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government;

Draft Action Plan for the Implementation in Ireland of Directive 2010/31/EU on the Energy Performance of Buildings (Recast);

Proposed Amendment to Part J (Heat Producing Appliances) of the Building Regulations;

Implementation of the Restriction of Hazardous Substances in Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive 2011/65/EU.

A joint public consultation was also organised by my Department in conjunction with the Department of Finance on Vehicle Registration Tax (VRT) and Motor Tax, specifically adjustments to the current CO2 bands and rates in line with technological advances in motor vehicles. Submissions were returned to the Department of Finance. My Department deals with a significant number of applications under the Foreshore Act 1933 on an annual basis, most of which are subject to public consultation and public participation as part of the decision-making process. A full list of the consultations held in 2012 will be forwarded to Deputy Spring as soon as possible.

Household Charge Collection

177. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 710 of 6 November 2012, if he will clarify his response and state specifically if it may be possible for householders to make payments, other than the full amount or the full amount plus penalties, of the household charge to the local authority at any given stage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50770/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the reply to Question No. 710 of 6 November which outlines the position in this matter. The Household Charge Act 2011 places the collection of the charge under the care and management of local authorities and application in particular circumstances is a matter for the relevant local authority.

Proposed Legislation

178. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an update on his efforts toward commencing section 15 of the Fines Act 2010; and if he will provide an estimate of when he will be able to commence it. [50568/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy will be aware, the Government recently approved the drafting of the Fines (Amendment) Bill 2012, the Scheme

of which is available on my Department's website (www.justice.ie). While the main purpose the Bill is to provide for the introduction of attachment of earnings to collect unpaid fines, the Bill will also amend section 15 of the Fines Act 2010 to provide an automatic right to pay by instalments to all persons on whom a fine is imposed. Under the 2010 Act, in order to avail of the payment by instalment provisions, the person had to satisfy the court that to require him or her to pay the fine in full by the due date would cause undue financial hardship. I hope that it will be possible to enact the Fines (Amendment) Bill during 2013.

Garda Training

179. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the dates in 2012 that the Garda advanced driving courses were held; the number of Gardaí that attended each of the courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50612/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that there have been no advanced driving courses facilitated by the Garda College in 2012. These are highly specialised courses and as such are facilitated only as necessary. The need to hold such courses is constantly kept under review.

Garda Deployment

180. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda reserves allocated to each station in the Dublin region; the next date for graduation and the number of Garda reserves that will graduate; the total number of Garda reserves nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50613/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that as of 31 October 2012 the personnel strength of the Garda Reserve was 996. Of this a total of 299 are assigned to the DMR as follows:

DMR South Central	No.
Kevin Street	11
Kilmainham	7
Pearse St	30
Harcourt Tee	0
Donnybrook	7
Irishtown	7
Total	62
DMR North Central	No.
Store Street	19
Bridewell	14
Fitzgibbon Street	1
Mountjoy	17
Total	51
DMR NORTH	No.
Santry	12
Whitehall	0
Ballymun	13

DMR South Central	No.
Raheny	5
Clontarf	2
Howth	4
Coolock	9
Swords	7
Malahide	4
Balbriggan	7
Total	63
DMR EAST	No.
Dun Laoghaire	8
Dalkey	0
Cabinteely	0
Kill-O-Grange	0
Shankill	2
Blackrock	4
Dundrum	3
Stepaside	0
Total	17
DMR SOUTH	No.
Crumlin	7
Sundrive Road	6
Tallaght	12
Rathfarnham	6
Rathmines	8
Terenure	8
Total	47
DMR WEST	No.
Cabra	1
Finglas	15
Blanchardstown	20
Lucan	14
Ronanstown	3
Ballyfermot	2
Clondalkin	4
Rathcoole	0
Total	59
DMR TOTAL	299

I am further informed by the Garda authorities that there are currently 232 Garda Reserves in training. There is no date finalised for the next Garda Reserve Graduation and, as a result, it is not possible to give the number of graduates at this time.

Departmental Funding

181. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount of

funding that has been given by taxpayers to an organisation (details supplied) for the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50626/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): My Department has not provided any funding to this organisation within the time frame outlined by the Deputy.

Garda Vetting of Personnel

182. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the processing of Garda vetting applications; when assessments will be carried out on applications in respect of students (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50657/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) provides employment vetting for approximately 20,000 organisations in Ireland who are registered with the Gardaí for this purpose and which employ/engage persons in a full-time, part-time, voluntary or training capacity to positions where they would have substantial, unsupervised access to children and/or vulnerable adults. Vetting is carried out in response to written requests made through registered organisations on behalf of the individual who is to be vetted.

In the context of the applications referred to in the Deputy's question, I am informed by the Garda authorities that it is not possible to check the status of any applications received in respect of students of the College referred to in the absence of details such as the names of the students and dates of birth. If the Deputy will provide the additional information, I will have further enquiries made in the matter.

Residency Permits

183. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding a change of status in respect of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50680/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that the persons referred to by the Deputy have no permission to remain in the State. Their permission to remain in the State on Stamp 2 (student) permission was renewed on 2 February, 2012 until 31 July, 2012 for the purpose of allowing a member of the family to complete the Junior Certificate examination and to enable the family to finalise their affairs in Ireland before returning to their country of origin. However, I am informed that an application for a Change of Status from the persons referred to by the Deputy has been received by INIS and is being considered. I understand that a decision on the application is due to issue shortly.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Public Order Offences

184. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 535 of 17 July 2012, if he will provide an update on the actions being taken to address the continuing problem of anti-social behaviour in the Temple Bar area, Dublin. [50690/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can inform the Deputy that An Garda Síochána continues to implement a wide range of strategies as outlined in my previous reply to the Deputy in order to tackle incidents of anti-social behaviour and public disorder in the Temple Bar area of Dublin.

I am advised by the Garda authorities that the number of recorded instances of public order and drunkenness offences for the overall Pearse Street District, within which the Temple Bar area sits, has fallen between 2011 and 2012.

As I indicated in my previous reply, Garda responses include the designation of certain areas as hot spots for such criminality and the deployment of high visibility patrols to respond accordingly. Furthermore, a Garda unit has been specifically tasked with dealing with public order incidents, deploying a public order van on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. The work of this unit is supplemented by other units working ordinarily in the Temple Bar area. I am also informed that the deployment of plain-clothes officers in Temple Bar has led to significant successes in tackling drug related issues.

The Garda authorities also continue to employ a collaborative approach in addressing anti-social behaviour issues in the area which includes important ongoing liaison with local business associations, such as the Temple Bar Traders Association and other stakeholders. This approach is designed to ensure that An Garda Síochána is kept fully informed of criminal matters of concern to the local business community, to ensure that appropriate crime prevention advice is provided and to facilitate a joint approach to policing the night-time economy in the area.

This situation is being kept under ongoing review and I can further assure the Deputy that I am in regular contact with the Garda Commissioner with a view to ensuring that our streets are safe for all.

Drug Rehabilitation Clinics

185. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the drug rehabilitation clinic on Oakley Road, Ranelagh, is located 100 metres from two primary schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50692/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to inform the Deputy that the location of drug rehabilitation clinics does not fall under the remit of the Minister for Justice and Equality.

Proposed Legislation

186. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he plans to introduce paternity leave as part of the overall legislative reforms around the implementation of the EU directive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50703/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): My Department is currently working on the draft Heads of the Family Leave Bill which will transpose Council Directive 2010/18/EU on Parental Leave. Among other things this new legislation will provide for an additional 4 weeks parental leave for both mothers and fathers. This Bill will also consolidate all various family leave legislation (maternity, adoptive, parental and carer's leave) in one Bill. This will also provide an opportunity to examine whether there is scope for additional improvements in current provisions in the area of leave for fathers.

Departmental Consultations

187. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide a list of all public consultations his Department has carried out since the start of 2012. [50755/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can inform the Deputy that since the start of 2012 my Department carried out public consultations concerning the following matters:

- European Commission's Proposal for a new Data Protection Regulation
- General Scheme of the Criminal Justice Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Amendment Bill 2012
- General Scheme of the Criminal Justice (Corruption) Bill 2012
- Mental Health issues and the Criminal Justice System ⁽¹⁾
- New Cork Prison Development ⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾ An Interdepartmental Group has been established to examine issues relating to people with mental illness or a mental disorder interacting with the criminal justice system and its agencies. Submissions were invited from the public.

⁽²⁾ The Irish Prison Service is currently engaged in a public consultation process regarding the proposed New Cork Prison Development, Rathmore Road, Cork.

Residency Permits

188. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the options available to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare to attend a family event in Poland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50788/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy is aware the person concerned submitted an application for a review of the decision to refuse the applicant residence in the State under the provisions of the European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2006 and 2008 (the Regulations) which was received in the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) on the 5 October, 2012. I am advised that the person concerned has been given temporary permission to remain in the State until 4 February, 2013, while the review application is under consideration. A decision will be made on the review application before the expiration of her temporary permission to remain.

I am also advised that while holding the temporary permission to remain the person in question, if a visa required national, should apply for a re-entry visa before leaving the country.

There is no requirement for a minimum period of validity of “Stamp 4” permission attaching to such an application.

It may be that this requirement is being imposed by the Polish authorities in respect of a visa to enter that county but I am not in a position to comment on any visa requirements that Poland may apply to visa required visitors.

Residency Permits

189. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position and future prospects in respect of persons (details supplied) in Dublin 1 who have studied and worked in this jurisdiction over the past six years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50809/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that the person referred to by the Deputy was registered in the State on student conditions from 9 October 2006 to 14 August 2012 and therefore currently has no permission to remain in the State.

The INIS have informed me that the person has made a written request for further permission to remain dated 2 November, 2012. This application is under consideration. All requests are dealt with in chronological order and my officials will be in touch with the person concerned in due course.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy’s view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Residency Permits

190. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedure to be followed in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15, a resident here since 1997, whose application for renewal of their stamp 4 was refused on the basis of the loss of their Garda National Immigration Bureau card; the procedures to be followed in such circumstances as a matter of urgency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50810/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Parliamentary Question No. 510 of 23 October, 2012 which is set out below. The position is unchanged since then. The onus is on the person concerned to present to the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) to regularise his status in the State, which I am informed that he has failed to do up to the present date.

The permission to remain in the State of the person concerned expired on 8 September, 2012. As this person is now currently out of permission to remain in the State, he should attend the GNIB to register and to advise them of his misplaced GNIB card.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained with-

out the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Deportation Orders

191. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will indicate notwithstanding the decision in respect of deportation taken by his predecessor in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 16, if the case will be reviewed in view of the danger they face in the event of return to their homeland; if particular attention has been paid to such issues both at the time of the decision to deport and since then with specific reference to the political situation in their homeland and humanitarian situation arising for them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50811/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): In reply to the Deputy's Question, following a comprehensive and thorough examination of the asylum claim and the application to remain temporarily in the State, the person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order signed on 28 June 2004. He has been evading his deportation since 3 November 2009 and should he come to the notice of the Garda authorities, he would be liable to arrest and detention. He should, therefore, present himself to the Garda National Immigration Bureau without any further delay.

As a general matter of policy, it would be logistically inconsistent to review a person's case who has failed a very fair and comprehensive asylum process, and who have thereafter proceeded to evade their deportation for several years, by granting such persons residency in the State.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Citizenship Applications

192. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current progress made in the determination of naturalisation entitlement in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 24; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50812/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that an application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in September 2011.

The application is being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation, such as good character and lawful residence, and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

As well as being a significant event in the life of its recipient, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation as provided for in law is also a major step for the State which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Asylum Applications

193. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedures to be followed in the determination of residency status in the case of persons (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50813/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned applied for asylum on 12th June, 2007. His asylum application was refused following consideration of his case by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and, on appeal, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.

The person concerned initiated Judicial Review Proceedings in the High Court, challenging the decision of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal in his case. As these Proceedings are ongoing, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on his asylum claim at this time.

In July, 2011, the person concerned submitted a separate application for leave to remain in the State based on the principles of the Zambrano Judgment. When consideration of this application has been completed, the person concerned will be notified in writing of the outcome.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Deportation Orders

194. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will indicate notwithstanding his replies to previous Parliamentary Questions in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin, if he will examine the extent to which the political situation prevailing in their homeland at the time of issue of the deportation order and since might now have a bearing on their case; if this might constitute sufficient grounds for a review of the previous decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50814/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): In reply to the Deputy's Question, following a comprehensive and thorough examination of the asylum claim and the application to remain temporarily in the State, the person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order signed on 30 October 2008. He has been evading his deportation since 11 December 2008 and should he come to the notice of the Garda authorities, he would be liable to arrest and detention. He should, therefore, present himself to the Garda National Immigration Bureau without any further delay.

As a general matter of policy, it would be logistically inconsistent to review a person's case

who has failed a very fair and comprehensive asylum process, and who have thereafter proceeded to evade their deportation for several years, by granting such persons residency in the State.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Residency Permits

195. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a Stamp 4 update will be issued in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare who was employed on foot of Stamp 4 in this jurisdiction for more than five years, has worked for estate agency, who continues to be available for work and who has been offered employment, the only impediment to which is the need for regularisation of their residency [50815/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I refer the Deputy to my detailed reply to his earlier Parliamentary Question, PQ No. 172 of Thursday, 20th September 2012 - copied beneath. The position is unchanged since then.

Citizenship Applications

196. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress made to date in the determination of application for naturalisation in the case of persons (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50816/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Citizenship Division of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that an application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in September, 2008.

The application is currently being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation and is at an advanced stage. Further information was requested from the person concerned in a letter issued on 4 July 2012. Once the requested information has been received and assessed the case will be finalised and submitted to me for decision.

The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Defence Forces Personnel

197. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Defence the number of promotions at each rank that have been approved in the Air Corps and the Naval Service in 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50618/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The following tabular statement sets out the number of promotions which have occurred or are in train in the Air Corps and Naval Service in each of the years 2010, 2011 and to 13 November 2012. Competitions for promotions for enlisted personnel have been completed and promotions are on-going from which there will be further promotions in the Air Corps and Naval Service. Officer Promotion competitions will commence later this month from which in due course there will be promotions in the Air Corps and Naval Service.

Promotions will be carried out within the resource envelope allocated to Defence.

PROMOTIONS, BY RANK, IN THE AIR CORPS AND NAVY 2010, 2011 AND TO 13 NOVEMBER 2012

-	CPL	SGT	CQMS	CS	BQMS	SM	TO-TAL NCO	LT	CAPT	COM-DT	LT COL	COL	BRIG GEN	MAJ GEN	TO-TAL OFFR	TO-TAL All ranks
2010																
AC	3	6		1			10	1	5	0	0	1	0	1	8	18
NS		9					9	13	3	0	2	2	0	0	20	29
Total	3	15	0	1	0	0	19	14	8	0	2	3	0	1	28	47
2011																
AC	29	4			1	2	36	0	5	6	3	1	1	0	16	52
NS	36	1			2	1	40	0	17	4	5	1	1	0	28	68
Total	65	5	0	0	3	3	76	0	22	10	8	2	2	0	44	120
2012 (to 13/11)																
AC	17						17	3	7	10					20	37
NS	11	32	8	31	3	2	87	1	6	13					20	107
Total	28	32	8	31	3	2	104	4	13	23					40	144

Note:

Air Corps and Equivalent Naval Service Rank

Cpl: Corporal/Leading Seaman	Lt: Lieutenant/Sub Lieutenant
Sgt: Sergeant/Petty Officer	Capt: Captain/Lieutenant (NS)
CQMS: Company Quartermaster Sergeant/Senior Petty Officer	Comdt: Commandant/Lieutenant Commander
CS: Company Sergeant/Chief Petty Officer	Lt Col: Lieutenant Colonel/Commander
BQMS: Battalion Quartermaster Sergeant/Senior Chief Petty Officer	Col: Colonel/Captain
SM/Sergeant Mayor/Warrant Officer	Brig Gen: Brigadier General/Commodore
	Maj Gen: Major General

Departmental Consultations

198. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Defence if he will provide a list of all public consultations his Department has carried out since the start of 2012. [50748/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): My Department has not carried out any public consultations since the start of 2012.

Single Payment Scheme Appeals

199. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding a single payment appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; the reason for the delay in reviewing this case; when a decision will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50571/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An on-line application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Area Scheme was submitted on behalf of the person named by his Agricultural Consultant on 14 April 2012.

Dual claims were identified in respect of two of the land parcels declared. Following correspondence with my Department, the applicant confirmed in writing, on 11 September, that he did not have the right to claim the parcels. Under the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme every entitlement must be accompanied by an eligible hectare of land. As the shortfall exceeded 20% of the eligible area found, no payment can be made.

Such decisions can, however, be appealed to the Agriculture Appeals Office and my Department has written to the applicant setting out the appeals procedure.

Ash Dieback Threat

200. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will report on the additional bio security measures he is considering to address the escalating number of trees affected by ash disease; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50609/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Department has surveyed for *Chalara fraxinea* since 2008. The first finding of the disease was confirmed on 12 October 2012 in County Leitrim. My Department has been resolute in its efforts to stop the spread of this disease and to prevent further infection. The consignment, made up of some 30,000 plants imported from continental Europe was planted over 11 sites. The ash trees at each of these 11 sites were cut and destroyed by burning without delay last month.

Voluntary measures agreed with forestry stakeholders, the nursery sector and hurley makers to prevent the importation of infected material from the continent have now been superseded by robust legislation. This legislation, introduced simultaneously with Northern Ireland, makes it an offence to import plants from areas known to have *Chalara fraxinea*. Furthermore, the movement of plants within the country is now also subject to plant passport requirements. Additional legislation was also introduced which control ash wood movement into Ireland, including firewood and hurley ash. Under the legislation ash wood may enter the State if (1) it comes from an area free of the disease or (2) it is free of outer round surface (including bark) or (3) it is kiln dried below 20% moisture.

In terms of future actions, site surveys of the ash estate are continuing this week. These surveys on the health of our ash trees will focus on sites which are at most risk from infection. These will include recently planted forests which used material imported ash plants from the continent. Examinations of ash imported wood and planting material will also be increased to

enforce recently enacted legislation.

In relation to specific biosecurity measures to be observed where the disease is suspected or where ash surveys are being carried out the Department currently recommend the following hygiene measures. In relation to footwear it is recommended to wash off all soil and plant debris from boots. Boots should then be sprayed with disinfectant and used water should be disposed of onto an area where the water will not run into a watercourse. In relation to clothing it is recommended to check all clothing and remove any plant material. Soil and plant debris should be washed off all tools and equipment with disinfectant.

Forest owners, forest nursery staff and members of the public have been asked by my Department to be vigilant for the disease and report (with photographs if possible), any sites where there are concerns about unusual ill health in ash trees to the Forest Service.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Appeals

201. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the disadvantaged area scheme payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo and if he will expedite the matter. [50623/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named is one of a number of clients, whose derogation applications have been unsuccessful, and who have now appealed my Department's decision to the recently constituted, independently chaired, DAS Appeals Committee. Immediately that Committee has adjudicated on the appeal, the person named will be advised of the Committee's decision, in writing.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Applications

202. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if payment will issue on an agri environment options scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50664/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was approved for participation in the 2011 Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from 1 September 2011.

Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue.

The person named was selected for a ground inspection which took place on 11 May 2012. During this inspection, areas of non-compliance with the terms and conditions of the scheme were discovered in relation to Natura and Non Natura Commonages. As a result a letter issued to the person named dated 3 September 2012 detailing the nature of the penalty and offering the option to appeal the decision. However, following a review of the file officials in my Department have decided that the penalty is no longer applicable in this case and the application will now be further processed with the intention of issuing payment as soon as possible.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

203. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the penalties imposed on the SPF in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wexford; the options available to them at this time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50677/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2012 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 17 April 2012.

A dual claim was identified on one of the parcels declared by the applicant, who was written to in this regard. As no reply was received to the final reminder, which issued on 02 August 2012, the appropriate penalty was applied when the advance payment issued on 16 October.

Subsequently, the herd owner submitted a detailed explanation in relation to the dual claimed parcel which was accepted by my Department and the penalty has been removed.

Consequently, the amount withheld will be included with the balancing payment which is scheduled for 1 December.

Agriculture Schemes Data

204. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons in each county in the State that joined the REP Scheme 4, the agri environment option scheme 1 and 2 respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50695/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The current number of active participants in REPS 4, AEOS 1 and AEOS 2 are as set out in the tables.

COUNTY	REPS	AEOS 1	AEOS 2
Carlow	299	102	34
Cavan	1106	239	185
Clare	1394	393	377
Cork	3479	513	389
Donegal	1895	691	905
Dublin	52	17	8
Galway	2860	887	821
Kerry	2066	383	385
Kildare	369	82	34
Kilkenny	420	281	125
Laois	778	177	74
Leitrim	1570	405	233
Limerick	1407	276	209
Longford	670	119	86
Louth	216	62	34
Mayo	2823	982	900
Meath	557	184	83
Monaghan	909	232	120
Offaly	721	144	94

COUNTY	REPS	AEOS 1	AEOS 2
Roscommon	776	415	355
Sligo	935	311	204
Tipperary	1936	416	261
Waterford	1102	151	54
Westmeath	729	241	113
Wexford	821	198	90
Wicklow	403	111	65
Totals	30293	7999	6238

Departmental Expenditure

205. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the underspend of €47 million against profile, €34 million current and €13 million capital, as published in the Exchequer returns; if there is likely to be an underspend at the end of the year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50698/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): A profile of projected expenditure on a monthly basis is drawn up at the beginning of each year in order to anticipate the Department's funding requirements and financial management over the course of the year. The profile which is the best estimate of expenditure available at the time is difficult to forecast and may vary significantly during the year for a variety of reasons, such as the level of payments under demand led schemes, the pattern of drawdown of Grants-in-Aid by State bodies, the levels of disease incidence and payment of compensation, etc. A monthly comparison is reported showing actual expenditure against the profile.

The recent Exchequer returns for my Department and show that there are a number of budget lines, which are, for a variety of reasons, behind profile. I expect that in most cases expenditure will 'catch up' before the end of the year. Expenditure is being monitored and managed carefully with a view to minimising savings on this year's Vote. The final outcome is to a large extent driven by factors outside the Department's control but in the overall context of the Department's Vote of €1.339 billion, I do not expect a significant underspend this year.

Departmental Consultations

206. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide a list of all public consultations his Department has carried out since the start of 2012. [50744/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Since January 2012, my Department has invited submissions from interested parties in respect of the following:

1. Review into certain aspects of the Irish Horse Industry
2. Food Harvest 2020 – Environmental Analysis process
3. Fishery Harbour Centres (Rates and Charges) Order 2012 S.I. No 214 of 2012 public consultation
4. Draft Deer Management Policy Vision – 2nd round of consultations

5. North Harbour, Cape Clear Island, Co Cork – Construction of Bull’s Nose and Storm Gate
6. Dunmore East Fishery Harbour Centre, Co Waterford – Construction of new steps and a ramp for disability access to the top of the wave wall, safety railings along the top of the wave wall and works to the lighthouse concourse area including walkway, viewing platform and safety railing
7. Castletownbere Fishery Harbour Centre, Co Cork – Construct a new pontoon and gangway at Dinish Island, Castletownbere, Co Cork
8. An Daingean Fishery Harbour Centre, Co Kerry – Erect perimeter fencing to a net storage area at Dingle, An Daingean Fishery Harbour Centre, Co Kerry
9. Castletownbere Fishery Harbour Centre, Co Cork – Construct a new road, car parking, access to pier, footpaths, public lighting and associated drainage works at Dinish Island, Castletownbere, Co Cork
10. Baltimore and Skibbereen Harbour, Co Cork – foreshore lease application
11. 74 individual public consultations in accordance with the regulations governing aquaculture and processing
12. Nearly 2,500 public consultations in respect of forestry planting.

Commonage Division

207. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine with reference to implementation of the Commonage Framework Plans, the way his Department intends to overcome absenteeism and dormancy in securing total agreement between commonage stakeholders; the way stocking requirements will be fulfilled on commonage areas where there is high absenteeism or dormancy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50768/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Commonage Framework Plans, first published in 2002, have been reviewed to take account of the current vegetative condition of commonages nationally. This review which will replace the Commonage Framework Plans has been carried out by the National Parks and Wildlife Service in co-operation with my Department. The review was carried out on a commonage LPIS parcel basis and sets a minimum and maximum number of ewe equivalents (EE) required to graze the commonage parcel to ensure that it is maintained in Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC). I am currently considering an implementation plan to take account of the changed stocking levels.

My Department is trying to reconcile the reality of commonages with the EU requirements of GAEC. I will work with the farmers, farm organisations and others to design a practical solution.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

208. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) in County Kerry in REP scheme 4 has been told that the Department has been instructed to hold back payment to persons that joined in 2007; if this is

true, the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50784/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced REPS 4 in December 2007 and has received payments for the first four years of their contract.

REPS 4 is a measure under the current 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before any payments can issue. This administrative checks are well advanced for the 2012 REPS 4 scheme year and my Department is processing claims including those cases where there are penalty adjustments or outstanding queries. My aim is to finalise the process as quickly as possible and to commence payments in the near future. In the event that any issues arise on the file of the person named, officials in my Department will be in direct contact with the person named.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

209. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan will receive their disadvantaged area payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50789/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named applied for derogation under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, processing of which has recently been completed. Payment will issue shortly to the nominated bank account.

Commonage Division

210. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine with reference to implementation of the commonage framework plans, the role that he will play in securing collective agreement regarding document and fencing issues, including in commonage areas where there are instances of dormancy and absenteeism. [50793/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Commonage Framework Plans, first published in 2002, have been reviewed to take account of the current vegetative condition of commonages nationally. This review which will replace the Commonage Framework Plans has been carried out by the National Parks and Wildlife Service in co-operation with my Department. The review was carried out on a commonage LPIS parcel basis and sets a minimum and maximum number of ewe equivalents (EE) required to graze the commonage parcel to ensure that it is maintained in Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC). I am currently considering an implementation plan to take account of the changed stocking levels.

My Department is trying to reconcile the reality of commonages with the EU requirements of GAEC. I will work with the farmers, farm organisations and others to design a practical solution.

Departmental Contracts

211. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the name of the company that delivered the Government Referendum leaflet to each home here. [50791/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): An Post were awarded the contract to deliver the Department's Children's Referendum information booklet to all addresses throughout the State.

Children in Care

212. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children in foster care on a county basis; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50704/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have been advised by the HSE that there were a total of 5,739 children in Foster Care at end of August 2012. Of these 3,936 were in general foster care and 1,803 were in relative foster care. The following is a breakdown of this information by HSE area:

HSE Dublin Mid Leinster	Foster Care total care placements
Dún Laoghaire	103
Dublin South East	79
Wicklow	111
Dublin South City	147
Dublin South West	206
Dublin West	188
Kildare/Wicklow	180
Laois/Offaly	203
Longford/Westmeath	118
Total	1335
HSE Dublin North East	Foster Care total care placements
Louth	192
Cavan/ Monaghan	168
Meath	130
Dublin North West	378
Dublin Nth Central	314
Dublin North	149
Total	1331
HSE South	Foster Care total care placements
North Lee	473
South Lee	212
North Cork	111
West Cork	58
Kerry	140
South Tipperary	154
Carlow/Kilkenny	182
Waterford	255
Wexford	198

Total	1783
HSE West	Foster Care total care placements
Limerick	274
Clare	155
Tipperary North	124
Galway	261
Mayo	126
Roscommon	134
Donegal	156
Sligo/Leitrim	60
Total	1290

Health Services Staff Numbers

213. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of social workers per head of population on a county basis; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [50705/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department has sought the information requested by the Deputy from the HSE. I will provide the Deputy with the information when it becomes available.

Departmental Consultations

214. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide a list of all public consultations her Department has carried out since the start of 2012. [50746/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department has carried out two Public Consultations since the start of 2012.

- 1) A public consultation on “Improving the lives of children and young people”.
- 2) A public consultation on “National Children Detention Facilities”.

Health Insurance Prices

215. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which his Department continues to monitor activity in the health insurance area with particular reference to the need to retain lower premium payments in the current economic climate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50806/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The main legislative provisions for the regulation of the Irish private health insurance market are included in the Health Insurance Acts 1994 to 2011 and Regulations made under those Acts. Under this legislation, my Department fulfils an important ongoing role in the private health insurance market, by ensuring that the market is regulated appropriately and that access to health insurance cover is available to con-

sumers of health services with no differentiation made between them.

The maintenance of a healthy and functioning private health insurance market by my Department is essential to facilitate the transition to a market-based Universal Health Insurance (UHI) system. In addition, there are a number of important stepping stones to achieving the Programme for Government commitment of UHI, one of which is the introduction of a robust risk equalisation scheme for the private health insurance market.

The introduction of a permanent scheme of risk equalisation is a key requirement for the existing private health insurance market and is designed to keep health insurance affordable for older persons and to maintain the stability of the market. I was pleased, therefore, to recently publish the Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2012 on 18 October, to give effect to a new Risk Equalisation Scheme (RES) to be applied from 1 January 2013. Second Stage of this Bill is currently underway in the Dáil and is expected to conclude today, 15th November. An effective and robust RES is required in the Irish private health insurance market in order to protect affordability for those who need it most.

There can be little doubt that price increases will make it more difficult for persons who hold private health insurance to renew their policies. I have consistently raised the issue of costs with health insurers and am determined to address costs in the sector in the interests of consumers. I will continue to focus strongly on this issue.

I am keen to explore all available measures to limit the costs related to health insurance. In February of this year I established the Health Insurance Consultative Forum which comprises representatives from the country's main health insurance companies, the Health Insurance Authority (HIA) and the Department of Health. This Forum has been established with a view to generating ideas which would help address health insurance costs. Its core focus is on identifying ways of addressing costs throughout the industry, whilst always respecting the requirements of competition law. Bilateral meetings have taken place with each insurer where they have brought forward their own ideas for cost savings in the market. The Forum will also give a voice to the insurers in the development of the new Universal Health Insurance model. I have also made it clear to the health insurers that I believe that significant savings can still be made, the effect of which can be to minimise the need for increases in premiums.

In this regard, VHI has commissioned consultants to carry out an external review of their claims. The review is nearing completion and will look at the opportunities and costs involved in possible reductions in utilisation that can be achieved by implementing appropriate utilisation management approaches.

I would also strongly advise consumers to shop around for the health insurance plan that best suits their needs. Consumers have a legal right to switch between or within insurers to get better value and to reduce their premium costs. The HIA provides information to consumers regarding their rights and also on health insurance plans and benefits. The HIA's website www.hia.ie has a useful plan comparison tool which assists in finding suitable and competitive health insurance plans.

Departmental Strategies

216. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the progress made to date in developing a sexual health strategy; the target date for the finalisation and publication of this strategy; and if it will be completed by the end of this year as promised. [50580/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My Department commenced the develop-

ment of a National Sexual Health Strategy earlier this year. This initiative is intended to formulate a strategic plan for the delivery of services in this area. This plan will focus on improving sexual health and wellbeing and address the surveillance, testing, treatment and prevention of HIV and STIs, crisis pregnancy, and sexual health education and promotion. The Strategy will be in line with the forthcoming Public Health Policy Framework.

A high level steering group has been established to lead the development of the Strategy. The steering group will oversee the drafting of the National Sexual Health Strategy, which will take the form of a high level strategic action plan. The steering group, supported by a number of working groups set up to address different areas, is making good progress and I expect the final draft strategy to be submitted by the end of the year or early in 2013 for my consideration.

Drugs Crime

217. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the progress made to date on changes to regulations under the Misuse of Drugs Act to address the street-trading of Benzodiazepines and other related issues. [50581/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): My Department is reviewing the Misuse of Drugs Regulations with a view to, amongst other issues, introducing additional controls on certain prescription drugs being traded illicitly, including benzodiazepine medicines.

My Department has consulted with key stakeholders in relation to the proposed amendments, which include introducing import and export controls as well as an offence of possession, thereby assisting the law enforcement roles of Customs and of the Garda Síochána. It is anticipated that new legislation will be introduced in early 2013.

Hospital Procedures

218. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding an appointment for a nerve conduction survey procedure in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50591/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The management of waiting lists for patients awaiting public health care is based on the principle that after urgent and cancer patients are treated, then clinically assessed routine patients should be seen in chronological order (i.e. longest waiter first). Should the patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he/she would be in the best position to take the matter up with the consultant and hospital involved.

In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Hospital Procedures

219. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) was not included or obtained listing in regard to an operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50592/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The management of waiting lists for patients awaiting public health care is based on the principle that after urgent and cancer patients are treated, then clinically assessed routine patients should be seen in chronological order (i.e. longest waiter first). Should the patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he/she would be in the best position to take the matter up with the consultant and hospital involved.

In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Primary Care Centres Provision

220. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if he plans to refurbish Coolock Health Centre, Dublin 5; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50615/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Coolock is one of the 35 potential locations for primary care centres for development by way of PPP as announced in the Government's Infrastructure Stimulus Package. Of the 35, approximately 20 will be offered to the market subject to a) agreement between the local GPs and the HSE on active local GP involvement in the centres and b) site suitability and availability. The HSE is currently analysing the available sites in each location and engaging with the GPs in each location to determine their interest in participating in the primary care centre development.

In relation to the specific query raised, it is a service issue and has, therefore, been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Tobacco Control Measures

221. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the measures taken by the National Tobacco Control Office to ensure that tobacco retailers at markets and fairs are registered with the Office under the Public Health Tobacco Acts 2002 and 2004; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50616/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Smoking is the greatest single cause of preventable illness and premature death in Ireland, killing over 5,200 people a year. Ireland's public health policy objective in relation to tobacco is to promote and subsequently move towards a tobacco free society.

As the Deputy may be aware, further provisions of the Public Health (Tobacco) Acts 2002 and 2004 (Public Health Tobacco Acts) were commenced with effect from 1 July 2009 including: a ban on the display and advertising of tobacco products; a requirement for all tobacco products to be out of view and stored within a closed container which can only be accessed by the retailer; a prohibition on self-service vending machines except in licensed premises or in registered clubs and a requirement for all retailers who wish to sell tobacco products to register with the National Tobacco Control Office.

The aim of these provisions is to further de-normalise tobacco and to protect children from the dangers of tobacco consumption. As the maintenance of the retail register is a service matter, I have referred this question to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

General Practitioner Services

222. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if he will increase the number of vehicles allocated to the D-Doc services his views on the fact that currently there is only one vehicle allocated to cover the whole of the north side of Dublin during the week and two vehicles available at the weekends; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50617/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Out-of-hours co-operatives allow general practitioners (GPs) to put in place arrangements to provide services to their patients while their surgeries are closed in the evenings, on weekends and bank holidays. Out-of-hours co-operatives are now in place in all Health Service Executive (HSE) areas, providing coverage in all or in part of all counties. Drivers are employed by co-operatives to drive GPs when making house calls. The driver provision addresses issues of security and location knowledge for GPs. In many cases, the cost of providing drivers and vehicles for GP out-of-hours co-operatives is covered by the HSE.

In March 2010, the HSE published the National Review of GP out-of-Hours Services. The review was carried out with a view to examining the existing models of GP out-of-hours service to identify best practice and make recommendations for the future development of standardised GP out-of-hours services, consistent with national policy and the HSE Transformation Programme. The recommendations of the review are being implemented by the HSE on an ongoing basis.

The Review recognised that each HSE region should review the delivery of services by drivers with a view to providing services in a more cost effective manner, particularly with regard to the 'red-eye' shift. At the time of the review, the overall cost of providing drivers to the co-operatives amounted to €11.5 million, which at that time represented 10.7% of the overall national cost of providing GP out-of-hours services.

In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy about the need to increase the number of vehicles allocated to the D-Doc out-of-hours service, the HSE has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Medicinal Products Supply

223. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Health his plans to give explicit recognition to persons with epilepsy as passed by the European Parliament in its declaration of 2011, in his consideration of the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50627/12]

234. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if he has plans to exempt anti-convulsant medication for epileptics from the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill 2012 in view of evidence that epileptics can suffer breakthrough seizures caused by switching medication. [50684/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 223 and 234 together.

Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill, the Irish Medicines Board has statutory responsibility for establishing and publishing a List of Interchangeable Medicinal Products. In deciding whether to add a group of medicinal products to the List of Interchange-

able Medicinal Products, the Board must be satisfied that each medicinal product which falls within the group: (a) has the same qualitative and quantitative composition in each of its active substances as each of the other medicinal products which fall within the group; (b) is in the same pharmaceutical form as, or in a pharmaceutical form that is appropriate for substitution for, each of the other products in the group; and (c) has the same route of administration as each of the other medicinal products which fall within the group.

In addition, the Bill provides that the Board is not permitted to add a group of medicinal products to the List of Interchangeable Medicinal Products where, for example, any of the medicinal products cannot be safely substituted for any one or more of the other medicinal products in the group. To further enhance the patient safety aspect of generic substitution, Section 13 of the Bill allows a prescriber to indicate on a prescription that a branded interchangeable medicinal product should, for clinical reasons, not be substituted.

I am satisfied that these provisions address the concerns raised by the Deputies.

It is important to point out that generic medicines must meet exactly the same standards of quality and safety and have the same effect as the originator medicine. All of the generic medicines on the Irish market are required to be properly licensed and meet the requirements of the Irish Medicines Board.

Child Care Services Provision

224. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Cavan will be assessed by the child and adolescent psychiatry services; the reason for the delay in assessment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50631/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Aids and Appliances Applications

225. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the refusal to supply essential mobility aids in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [50633/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Speech and Language Therapy

226. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Health the reason the one unfilled permanent vacancy for a speech and language therapist in County Mayo has not been filled to date by the Health Service Executive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50635/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Government has decided that the numbers employed across the public service must be reduced in order to meet its fiscal and budgetary targets. The health sector must make its contribution to that reduction. However, the HSE can make staff appointments once it remains with its overall employment ceiling and has the

financial resources to do so. As the recruitment of speech and language therapists is a matter for the HSE in the first instance, the Deputy's enquiry has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Medical Card Applications

227. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding an application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50658/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Departmental Surveys

228. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if he has reviewed the recent findings of the National Advisory Committee on Drugs Drug Prevalence Survey for 2010/2011; his views on the finding that there were statistically significant increases in both the lifetime and last year prevalence of sedatives and tranquilisers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50660/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I have reviewed the latest Bulletin of the Drug Prevalence Survey 2010/11 on Sedatives, Tranquillisers & Antidepressants which was published by the National Advisory Committee on Drugs on 23 October.

The survey found that 13.9% of those aged 15-64 years used sedatives or tranquilisers in their lifetime, with 6.5% using these drugs in the past year. This shows an increase from 10.5% and 4.7% respectively from the previous survey in 2006/7. Appropriate use of sedatives and tranquilisers plays an important role in facilitating the health and well-being of many people. However, I am concerned about the health risks associated with their inappropriate or long-term use and their more widespread availability.

The survey findings will further inform my Department in the review of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations with a view to imposing additional controls on benzodiazepine and z-drugs. Legislative amendments being considered include the introduction of an offence of unauthorised possession as well as import and export controls on such drugs. It is also proposed to tighten the prescribing and dispensing rules applying to these drugs. I hope to bring forward legislative proposals in this area in the first half of 2013.

Hospital Staff Issues

229. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if a memorandum has been issued by National Directors of the Health Service Executive (details supplied) to the effect that consultant posts are not exempt from the recruitment moratorium; the date on which this memorandum was issued; if there are circumstances in which vacancies in consultant posts are exempt from the moratorium; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50666/12]

230. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if all current vacancies in consultant posts across the state have full locum cover; if there are any posts that do not have locum cover; if he will identify those positions which are not currently covered and which discipline

and hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50667/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 229 and 230 together.

The Government has decided that the numbers employed across the public service must be reduced in order to meet its fiscal and budgetary targets. The health sector must make its contribution to that reduction. The Employment Control Framework for the health sector sets out the numbers reduction target for 2012 and how the public sector wide moratorium is to be applied in the health sector. While the frameworks in recent years had exempted a number of grades from the moratorium, including consultants, the 2012 Framework does not specifically exempt any particular grade. Nevertheless, the HSE can make staff appointments, including consultant posts, once it remains with its overall employment ceiling and has the financial resources to do so.

I take it that the memorandum referred to by the Deputy is a letter dated 20 July signed by National Directors of the Integrated Services Directorate and of Human Resources. That memorandum sets out the approach to health service recruitment to be taken in order to assist in addressing the serious budgetary situation facing the HSE. In particular, it outlines that except in a limited number of circumstances, all recruitment is to be paused with effect from the date of the letter.

As the filling of consultant vacancies, by locum cover or otherwise, is a matter for the HSE in the first instance, the Deputy's enquiry in that regard has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Eligibility

231. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health his plans to assist those on gluten free diets in view of certain charges (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50670/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): In the current financial environment the Health Service Executive (HSE) is facing a challenge to deliver services in a way that will minimise any adverse impact on patients and continue to protect, as far as possible, the most vulnerable citizens. Unfortunately, it has become necessary for the HSE to suspend certain products from its list of reimbursable items. This includes gluten-free products. Many European countries do not pay for food products under their Health Service Arrangements – the logic being that all persons need to buy food.

Gluten-free products have become more widely available in supermarkets in recent years and tend to be significantly cheaper than products sold through community pharmacies. A Supplementary Welfare Allowance Adult Diet Supplement may be awarded by the Department of Social Protection to eligible persons. Persons wishing to apply for this allowance can do so by completing an application form which can be downloaded at the following link: <http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Forms/Documents/swa9.pdf> . Separate application forms are available for children.

For persons who are not awarded a Diet Supplement, monies spent on gluten-free foods can be taken into account for tax purposes.

Services for People with Disabilities

232. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to representations regarding St Micheal's House, Dublin 9; the impact that past cutbacks have had on the services offered by them to the community and the potential impact that further cuts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50671/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Expenditure on health services for people with a disability in 2012 will be around €1.4 billion.

In the case of disability services, the HSE National Service Plan 2012 provides for a 3.7% reduction in budgets but makes it clear that there is scope for achieving efficiencies of 2% or more through measures such as consolidation and rationalisation of back office costs. All providers will be expected to achieve some efficiency savings but the level of savings required will vary depending on the profile of the service provider, efficiency savings achieved to date and the scope for further savings. Some reductions in day services, residential and respite services will be unavoidable even with such efficiencies. The aim will be to tailor such reductions to minimise the impact on service users and families as much as possible.

In relation to the specific queries raised by the Deputy, as these are service issues they have been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Hospital Services

233. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No.618 of 9 October 2012, if he will provide an update in relation to the future of the laundry service at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda, County Louth. [50676/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I understand that the Health Service Executive were in communication with the Deputy in relation to this matter on the 10th October. As this issue is a service issue I have asked the Executive to update the Deputy on this matter as soon as possible.

Question No. 234 answered with Question No. 223.

Graduate Support Schemes

235. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if he has considered allowing graduate speech and language therapists to conduct their mandatory supervised one year placement with the Health Service to allow graduates receive their qualification and make available more personnel in this area, and at a reduced cost to the State. [50689/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): There is no requirement for graduate speech and language therapists to undergo a mandatory supervised one-year placement post qualification.

Students on existing Irish programmes which lead to recognised qualifications in speech and language therapy are facilitated by the Irish health service to undertake clinical placements during the course, and as part, of their education and training programme.

HSE Properties

236. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if the Health Service Executive has a policy on the location of its drug rehabilitation clinics. [50691/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): An objective of the National Drugs Strategy 2009-16 is to develop a national treatment and rehabilitation service that provides drug free and harm reduction approaches for problem substance users and to encourage problem substance users to engage with, and avail of, such services.

To this end the HSE provides a variety of drug treatment interventions to meet the needs of individual drug users. These include interventions to reduce drug-related harm such as needle exchange provision, together with evidence-based treatment options such as opioid substitution, counselling and community and residential rehabilitation initiatives.

The treatment settings utilised include:

- primary care through General Practitioners and community pharmacies;
- satellite clinics that facilitate opioid substitution through community pharmacies;
- treatment centres where opioid substitution treatment is dispensed on site; and
- residential rehabilitation facilities.

The HSE recognises that drug treatment should be provided at the lowest level of complexity, matching the patient's needs and as close to the patient's home as possible. In the past few years the HSE has systematically reviewed waiting lists with a view to maximising the utilisation of existing services and developing new services where required. Arising from this additional services have been made available in Waterford, Wexford, Kilkenny, Cork, Tralee, Limerick and Dundalk, greatly enhancing the drug treatment options for people in these areas.

The HSE will continue to review the overall situation with a view maximising the availability of treatment for problem drug users in line with available resources.

Hospital Staff Issues

237. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Health the reason a promised podiatry post at Waterford Regional Hospital, County Waterford, sanctioned in April 2012, will now not be filled, when it will be resolved; his view on the alternatives available to persons in the meantime; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50696/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The issue raised by the Deputy is a service matter, therefore, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Vaccination Programme

238. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Health his plans to provide for a package of supports for those affected by narcolepsy following the publication of the final report of the National Narcolepsy Study Steering Committee earlier this year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50702/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My Department is working closely with the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Department of Education and Skills to address the needs of those affected by narcolepsy following pandemic vaccination.

The HSE provides a range of services and supports to those affected including access to rapid diagnosis, clear treatment pathways, temporary medical cards and reimbursement of expenses incurred. Multi-disciplinary assessments which allow for the appropriate individualised health and educational supports to be put in place have commenced. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) is also engaging with the HSE and with the individual schools and parents of children concerned to identify and provide educational supports for the children and adolescents affected.

My Department is considering all other possible supports which may need to be put in place for those affected. Any such supports require my approval and the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

I would like to assure the Deputy that this matter continues to be a priority for my Department.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

239. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the saving that would be achieved from improving the occupancy of existing designated private beds in public hospitals to 70% and respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50708/12]

240. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the saving that would be achieved from ending the practice of private patients of consultants being accommodated in public beds free of charge to private health insurance companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50709/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 239 and 240 together.

The principle underlying the 1991 eligibility framework is that patients opting for private consultant care should in general be accommodated in private or semi-private beds. However, an overriding principle is that emergency cases should be admitted to whatever bed is available, regardless of the public or private status of the patient or the bed.

Under the current legal framework, private in-patients who occupy public beds in public hospitals are not levied the daily maintenance charge, which ranges from €586 to €1,046. The Comptroller and Auditor General reported in 2010 that 45% of in-patients treated privately by their consultants were not charged for their maintenance costs because they were not occupying designated private beds in public hospitals. As part of Budget 2012, I announced my intention to bring forward legislation to provide for the charging of all private patients in public hospitals, irrespective of whether they occupied a public or a private bed. In doing so, I was conscious of the significant potential cost implications for private health insurers. In discussions with the insurers, I indicated that I was prepared to postpone implementation of the legislation until 2013 provided that the funds targeted in Budget 2012 for the current year could be raised through a system of improved cashflow. I am pleased to say that this process is nearing completion.

A range of factors will impact on any revenue estimates which will require further consideration. These factors could include the number of patients treated as over-night or day cases, type of accommodation provided, e.g. private or semi private; rates of private patient charges, the proportion of patients electing to be treated privately with private health insurance and, the proportion of patients presenting through A&E Departments that necessitate private accommodation.

Currently, my Department is considering a number of issues and implications relating to the proposed legislation in advance of bringing the matter to Government for decision.

Health Services Staff Issues

241. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff and associated payroll costs for Health Service Executive staff on management and administrative grades; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50710/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Government has decided that the numbers employed across the public service must be reduced in order to meet its fiscal and budgetary targets. The health sector must make its contribution to that reduction. The part of the question pertaining to payroll costs has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

The number of staff in the Management & Admin staff category is as follows:

	31/12/2011	30/09/2012
Management & Admin (WTE)	15,983	15,696

Vaccination Programme

242. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the savings that would be achieved from transferring responsibility for administration of seasonal 'flu vaccine to community pharmacists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50711/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): There are no plans to transfer responsibility for administration of seasonal flu vaccine to community pharmacists. Seasonal Flu vaccination forms part of the Adult Immunisation Programme operated by the HSE. Seasonal Flu vaccination is available every year as the vaccine changes every year to suit the strain of the circulating virus. The vaccine is free to those in at risk groups. Those aged 18 years or older in the medically at risk groups may attend either their GP or participating pharmacist for vaccination as they so chose. Those medically at risk aged under 18 years should attend their GP for seasonal flu vaccination.

Drugs Payment Scheme Administration

243. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the savings that would be achieved from excluding households with an income greater than €100,000 from making a claim under the drug payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50712/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The information requested by the Deputy is not available to my Department or the HSE. The Drug Payment Scheme is not means-tested and anyone ordinarily resident in Ireland can apply to join the Scheme, regardless of financial circumstances.

Home Help Service Provision

244. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Health the number of companies that are engaged by the Health Service Executive for the provision of home help services; if the HSE maintains a list of eligible companies; if the HSE supports Irish small and medium enterprises; the way this policy fits with the Government's Action Plan for Jobs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50723/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Home Help Service Provision

245. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Health his views on the ongoing delays home helps are experiencing in being vetted by An Garda Síochána; the efforts being made to tackle this delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50724/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Home Help Service Provision

246. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Health if he intends to make home help services and companies subject to investigation by the Health Information and Quality Authority; the standards or legislative requirements that must be met by companies offering home help services; his views on the profits being made in this sector; the minimum wage that must be paid to those providing home help services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50725/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): All relevant implications arising from this proposal will obviously have to be taken into account including, for example, recent reports by the Law Reform Commission in relation to various aspects of professional Home Care and Carers in general.

Primary legislation and resources will be required for the introduction of a statutory regulation system for home care services. The question of possible changes to legislation, including regulation and inspection, for Home Care services for older people is at present under consideration. The Department is examining this matter in the overall context of the licensing of Health Care providers. Legislation is currently being prepared and various options are being considered, including the complex legal issues involved, and the need to prioritise legislation across the Social Care area overall.

Statutory regulation or licensing is only one way of improving the safety and quality of services and that other measures have or are being taken to improve Home Support services delivered by, or on behalf of, the Health Service Executive (HSE). This approach is reflected in the HSE Service Plan 2012, and includes a new public *Procurement Framework* for Home Care services (with quality and screening requirements); new *National Quality Guidelines for Home Support Services*, and new *National Home Help Guidelines*. These various measures, taken together, have been designed to improve relevant aspects of HSE Home Care provision nationally, pending progression of the legislative proposals raised by the Deputy. In particular, non-statutory agencies at present providing Home Care on behalf of the HSE must comply with the criteria laid down under the current procurement arrangements including, for example, service level agreements.

The Deputy will be aware that, outside of the existing procurement arrangements that the HSE has with certain non-statutory providers, these providers, or others, may compete in a growing sector in relation to Home Care for Older People. Such companies would obviously be subject to the normal requirements governing the operation of business, including those governing profits and minimum wage.

Home Help Service Provision

247. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if the review of the provision of home help and home support packages in counties Louth and Meath has been completed; the number of hours of home care supports that have been cut as a result of this review; if he will provide a breakdown of the home help hours or home support packages that have been cut as a result of this review; if he will provide a comparison of the amount of home care packages and home help hours provided in counties Louth and Meath in 2011 and the number currently being provided following the completion of the review [50730/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Procedures

248. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Galway will be called for medical treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50731/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The management of waiting lists for patients awaiting public health care is based on the principle that after urgent and cancer patients are treated, then clinically assessed routine patients should be seen in chronological order (i.e. longest waiter first).

Should the patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he/she would be in the best position to take the matter up with the consultant and hospital involved. In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Hospital Staff Issues

249. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 193 of 11 October 2012, if he is now in a position to provide a comparative assessment of the staffing levels in each of the hospitals in the Louth-Meath hospitals 2011 with current staffing levels in the hospitals following recent cuts to agency and overtime staffing. [50732/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Government has decided that the numbers employed across the public service must be reduced in order to meet its fiscal and budgetary targets. The health sector must make its contribution to that reduction.

A comparative assessment of staffing levels is a matter for the HSE, and as such, the Deputy's enquiry has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Departmental Consultations

250. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a list of all public consultations his Department has carried out since the start of 2012. [50753/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The information requested by the Deputy is currently being collated and will be forwarded to him as soon as it is available.

Mental Health Services Provision

251. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Health his plans to provide alternative and appropriate purpose built accommodation for the remaining residents of St. Joseph’s Psychiatric Hospital, Mulgrave Street, County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50773/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): *A Vision for Change* recommended the closure of the old psychiatric hospitals and a move from the traditional institutional based model of care to a patient-centred, flexible and community based mental health service, where the need for hospital admission is greatly reduced, while still providing in-patient care when appropriate. This Government is committed to implementing *A Vision for Change* and reforming our model of healthcare delivery so that more and better quality care is delivered in the community. In this regard the mental health capital programme will provide the infrastructure necessary for the continued reform of our mental health services and will facilitate the closure of the remaining hospitals.

In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter the question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Hospital Services

252. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Health when the new critical care unit of the Mid-Western Regional Hospital, Dooradoyle, County Limerick, will be opened; if funding and staff have been provided for this unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50774/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Funding for this particular project is a matter for the Health Service Executive. Therefore, I have forwarded the Deputy’s query to them, in order for them to respond directly to the Deputy in relation to this matter.

Hospital Services

253. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Health his plans to open the vacant stroke unit at St. Camillus’ Hospital, County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50775/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Medical Card Application Numbers

254. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide in tabular form the number of applications for medical cards in County Kerry between January 2010 and January 2012, the average waiting time for these applications to be processed, the number that were granted, the number refused and the number still pending; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50781/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Taxi Regulations

255. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he plans to bring forward the Taxi Regulation Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50619/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly): I will shortly seek Cabinet approval for the publication of the Taxi Regulation Bill, 2012, which will provide for replacement of the Taxi Regulation Act 2003 and extend the regulatory framework to give effect to recommendations from the Taxi Regulation Review.

Official Engagements

256. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he is engaging with the European Investment Bank; the matters on which he is engaging with the European Investment Bank on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50620/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): My Department is not directly engaged with the European Investment Bank at present.

Taxi Regulations

257. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the concern being expressed by taxi drivers at the consequences of changes in regulation that are having the effect of forcing drivers to sell their licenses at a loss; if in view of the fact that taxi drivers are suffering as a consequence of our current economic difficulties and are not in a position to work as drivers but are waiting for a pick up in the trade in the future, he will consider allowing some flexibility into the process to allow for this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50624/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly): The National Transport Authority (NTA) has responsibility for the regulation of the taxi industry under the Taxi Regulation Act, 2003 and is also the lead agency with responsibility for implementation of the recommendations of the Taxi Regulation Review Report within the target time periods specified in the Report.

I understand that the National Transport Authority has already given advance notice to the industry concerning the implementation of a number of measures arising from the Review. In particular, advance notice has been given for the implementation of the prohibition on the transfer of small public service vehicle (SPSV) licences. This measure reflects the Review Group view that a licence should determine a person's suitability to carry out a function and it should

not have monetary value or be traded on the open market.

The implementation of the prohibition on SPSV licence transfer will be subject to the enactment of the Taxi Regulation Bill 2012 which is to be published by year-end. The date of enactment will be dependent on the deliberations of the Oireachtas.

Departmental Consultations

258. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide a list of all public consultations his Department has carried out since the start of 2012. [50758/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): My Department consults with members of the public across a range of the Department's functions, including two formal public consultations processes since the start of 2012. A draft National Sports Facilities Strategy was published as a discussion document on the Department's website in September 2012 inviting comments by end October. Submissions were also invited from interested parties, by end October 2012 on the future role and remit of Sport Ireland and how we might best deliver for sport in Ireland. (Sport Ireland is a new organisation which I propose to establish to merge the Irish Sports Council and the National Sports Campus Development Authority).

In addition and although not directly under the remit of the Department, over 50 Community Town Hall meetings were held this year all over Ireland to get communities involved in preparing for and identifying events for The Gathering Ireland 2013. These meetings were attended by thousands of people and hundreds of events and Gatherings have been identified by local communities as a result.

Bus Éireann Services

259. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his view regarding bus connections (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50785/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): This is a matter for Bus Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Tourism Promotion

260. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will support the development of the Irish Cultural-GAA Museum at Fitzgerald Stadium, Killarney, County Kerry; if he acknowledges the potential this €3 million project has for tourism in the county; if he will request Fáilte Ireland to support and provide funding for this project in 2013 that has the potential to be one of Ireland's greatest tourist attractions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50827/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The matter raised is an operational one for Fáilte Ireland. I have referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. Please contact my private office if a reply is not received within ten working

days.