

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 15, inclusive, answered orally.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

16. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will consider changing the student grant scheme in order that mortgage repayments are considered in the means test for grant eligibility in view of the increasing number of families that have suffered drastic reductions in means under the burden of substantial home mortgage payments that have not reduced or that may have increased as a result of recent hikes in interest rates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11762/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Student grant applications are means tested on gross income from all sources earned inside and outside the State within a specified reference period. The assessment of income from the same starting point is deemed to be fair and reasonable because this approach eliminates any distortion which might arise from different spending decisions in different households. In the interest of equity, I have no plans to change this arrangement.

Special Educational Needs

17. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will remove the cap on the number of resource and learning support teachers working with special needs students in order to ensure that the hours allocated to existing students are not cut each time a new student is allocated hours; if he will ensure that the expected increase of 10,000 additional students entering the primary school system in September 2013 does not lead to an across the board reduction in students teaching support hours; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11981/13]

23. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his assessment of the impact of the cap on teacher numbers on special needs students; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11990/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 17 and 23 together.

There has been no overall reduction in Resource Teaching numbers for the current school year. 9,950 posts have been provided for Resource Teaching and learning support for the 2012/13 school year, the same number as provided for last year. 5,500 of these posts are avail-

able for allocation to pupils with more complex special needs. Due to an increase in demand in schools it was necessary for the NCSE to allocate 85% of approved resource teaching hours to each school. This ensured that every child who needs support is supported, with sufficient posts retained for emergency applications, without breaching the Employment Control Framework, which is necessitated by the severe budgetary constraints facing the Government. Schools were asked to minimise the impact of this adjustment through pairing and grouping of pupils. The position for the coming school year will be considered in light of the number of applications received by the NCSE.

School Patronage

18. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has received a request for a meeting from the parents of Tyrrelstown Educate Together National School to discuss the decision to award patronage to a Catholic trust for the new secondary school for Tyrrelstown, Mulhuddart, Dublin 15. [11799/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department recently received a letter from the Board of Management of Tyrrelstown Educate Together National School seeking a meeting to discuss its concerns regarding the establishment of a new secondary school for the area. I have asked officials from my Department to meet with representatives from the Board of Management concerned so that they can be fully informed of the position regarding the establishment of the new post-primary school.

Croke Park Agreement Issues

19. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide information on the implications arising from the loss of supervision and substitution payments for teachers arising from the pending Croke Park Two Agreement, particularly in relation to employment rights for staff who may lose their right to a lunch break. [11755/13]

32. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will outline details of the reduction in annual substitution hours his Department expects to pay for if the proposals under new public service pay agreement are implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11987/13]

34. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of extra hours that will have to be worked by primary teachers and by primary school principals under the terms of Croke Park Two. [11756/13]

39. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will ensure that the issue of the increasing casualisation of the teaching work force is addressed or taken into account during the negotiations on an additional €1 billion in public sector savings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11958/13]

44. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that teachers who for the past number of years have been making superannuation payments from their supervision and substitution allowance will not receive any pension benefit from such payments unless they retire within the next three years; and the way it is proposed that this element be dealt with. [11757/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions

Nos. 19, 32, 34, 39 and 44 together.

The proposals put forward by the Labour Relations Commission on an extension to the Croke Park Agreement arise from an intensive and difficult set of negotiations between the Public Services Committee of ICTU and the Government, that took place against a backdrop of continuing significant difficulties in the finances of the State. The public service trade unions are currently considering the outcome of these negotiations. Their members now have an important decision to make and in my view, it is better for us all to allow them the time and space to reflect and come to that decision without any perceived pressure from any side. In light of that, I do not think that it would be helpful to this ongoing process for me to comment or elaborate upon proposals which were carefully constructed by the LRC.

Skills Shortages

20. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if, in view of the skills gap in the technology sector, he is considering a comprehensive digital learning strategy for primary, secondary and third level education with specific focus on enhancing availability of learning options and building high-standard assessment models; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11763/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I am very conscious of the role of our schools in supporting national skills priorities. The new Junior Cycle Framework offers choice to schools in the provision of a range of learning experiences that is flexible enough to meet the needs of students. Under the Framework, students are expected to acquire proficiency across twenty four statements of learning, three of which refer to the use of ICT for learning, communication and work. Planning is underway for the implementation of the new Framework that is to commence in the next school year. It should be noted too that Computer programming is already an option in Transition Year and as part of Senior Cycle. Work has also commenced on a new ICT Strategy for Schools which will address digital learning. My Department is also involved with meeting training targets outlined in the joint Government-Industry ICT Action plan

Departmental Budgets

21. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which he is satisfied regarding the adequacy of his Departmental budget to meet the cost of educational requirements and objectives throughout the course of 2013 including the school building programmes and with particular reference to meeting the educational needs including special needs requirements in general; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11885/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): While the 2013 allocation for my Department takes account of difficult decisions that had to be made to meet savings targets, my priority has been to protect the most vulnerable in our education system. Of the gross current allocation of €8.51 billion, approximately €1.3 billion will be allocated in support of children with special educational needs in 2013. This includes the provision of 10,575 Special Needs Assistants, 9,950 learning support teachers, 1,100 teachers in special schools for pupils with various disabilities, enhanced levels of capitation and special school transport arrangements. The 2013 capital allocation of €433 million (including €19 million carried over from 2012) for my Department includes €367 million (or almost 85%) for the School Building Programme. This provision takes account of projected increased pupil numbers over the years

ahead. I am satisfied that through efficient and effective use of resources we can achieve much with my Department's 2013 Allocation.

Further Education and Training Programmes Provision

22. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has quantified the likely number of teaching jobs, course offerings and student places that may be lost as a result of his plans to increase the student teacher ratio in the further education sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11996/13]

25. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the impact that the the planned increase in the student staff ratio in the further education sector will have on course offerings, specialist training skills and course places; and if he will make a statement on the matter [11999/13]

38. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will reconsider his plans to increase the student staff ratio in the further education sector in view of the damaging effect this will have on the sector in terms of job and skill losses, loss of courses and reduction of course places for students; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11998/13]

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54. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will reconsider his plans to increase the student staff ratio in the further education sector in view of the damaging effect this will have on the sector in terms of job and skill losses, loss of courses and reduction of course places for students; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11997/13]

57. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether the planned change in the student teacher ratio of 1:17 to 1:19 in the further education sector will lead to the loss of many teachers with specialist skills; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11995/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): I propose to take Questions Nos. 22, 57, 54, 38, 25 and 49 together.

The change will reduce the overall number of PLC teaching posts by 200 and may lead to some reduction in subject choices for students but not approved places. CEOs of VECs have until next September to plan how best to deal with this change so that they can continue to deliver programmes which meet the needs of students and employers. In doing so regard will have to be had to the relevance of courses to the labour market, numbers undertaking courses, completion rates, certification rates and progression rates as well as the capacity for amalgamation of courses or modular delivery, etc. The Government's commitment to education, upskilling and retraining is evidenced by my Department's funding over 430,000 part time and full time education and training places across the range of provision in the higher education, further education and training sectors in 2013.

Question No. 23 answered with Question No. 17.

School Curriculum

24. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has reviewed the operation of any primary or post-primary computer science education programmes in EU and OECD partner States, for example, the new programming curriculum in Estonia where students from age seven upwards will be taught how to code; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11760/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The NCCA which advises me on curriculum and assessment for early childhood education and for primary and post-primary schools is aware of this development, and other similar code literacy initiatives. The Estonian initiative is a pilot project. Similar work is also taking place in a number of Irish primary schools involving “Scratch” and other programming languages. The NCCA is engaging with these initiatives in relation to their implications for the curriculum as a whole. Currently the NCCA is developing a short course that includes coding/ programming which will be available to schools for their Junior Cycle programme from September 2014. Through participation in this course it is expected that they will learn core computational concepts. All the key skills in the Framework for Junior Cycle highlight the use of digital technology. It will permeate the experiences of all Junior Cycle students as the new Framework is implemented.

Question No. 25 answered with Question No. 22.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

26. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether it has been clearly demonstrated in a number of studies (details supplied) that have been supplied to his Department that the exclusive use of ABA for some children has proved to be more effective than other eclectic type approaches [11749/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The position is that there is no definitive or universally accepted research which supports the use of one intervention exclusively for all children with autism. However, research does support the use of any of a range of autism-specific interventions depending on the individual needs of the child. My Department’s policy is based on the advice of international experts on autism; NEPS; the Inspectorate; an analysis of research, including the study referred to by the Deputy and the report of the Irish Task Force on Autism. The preferred approach ensures that each child can draw from a number of different approaches to ensure the optimum individualised educational programme for him/her. The use of behavioural interventions, including ABA, is supported by my Department by providing training for teachers in their use. However, it does not accept that ABA should be the only intervention used. My Department remains willing to review and consider any further research.

Student Grant Scheme Reform

27. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans regarding the review of means assessments for higher education grants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11766/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be probably be aware from my response to earlier questions today on this matter that I set up a capital assets

test implementation group to examine the issue of broadening current means testing arrangements for student grants to include the value of capital assets. I have received a draft report from the implementation group. I am considering that report and I intend to bring proposals to Cabinet shortly in relation to this matter. Any proposals will require Government agreement and necessitate legislative amendment.

Schools Building Projects Applications

28. **Deputy Eamonn Maloney** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress made regarding the provision of primary national schools in the Citywest, Ballycullen and Firhouse areas of Dublin 24; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11768/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy is aware, in June 2011, I announced that forty new schools comprising of twenty new primary schools and twenty new post-primary schools, were to be established up to 2017 across a number of locations. The Department subsequently invited patron bodies to make applications for patronage of the new primary schools to be established in 2012 and 2013. Following the assessment process of the applications concerned, approval was given for the establishment in September 2012 of two new schools in Citywest and a further two schools in Firhouse/Oldbawn from September 2013. Building projects for the provision of this accommodation was included in the five year construction programme announced in March 2012, and are scheduled to proceed to construction, two in 2014/2015 and two in 2015/16.

School Patronage

29. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide details of the response rate to the most recent 38 parental surveys on school patronage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11970/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The information requested by the Deputy is not yet available as the responses to the parental surveys are currently being validated and analysed by my Department.

Preschool Services

30. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason for his apparent policy of facilitating public primary schools for extensions in respect of early childhood care and education rooms in view of the consequent displacement of a significant number of community and private childcare facilities which exist, many of which have been funded under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11764/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As already indicated to the Deputy in response to her question on 25th February last, my Department does not have a policy of encouraging schools to set up preschool services in competition with services that have been funded through the EOCP or its successor programme. If the Deputy knows of schools where this has occurred, perhaps she could bring them to my attention.

Student Grant Scheme Reform

31. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide an update on proposals to include productive assets, such as farmland, as part of the assessment for third level grant eligibility; and if he will respond to the views expressed by the Irish Farmers' Association who have described the methodology for inputting additional household income based on asset values of €750,000 as completely flawed and a proposal that will arbitrarily discriminate against farm families. [11748/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I have met with the Farmers' representative bodies and I am aware of their concerns. However, no decision has been taken on the treatment of productive farm or other business assets for student grant purposes. The up to date position is that I have received a draft report from the capital assets test implementation group. The report is currently under consideration and I will be consulting further with my Cabinet colleagues in the matter in the coming weeks.

The Deputy will appreciate that, until a collective Cabinet decision has been taken, it is not possible to say what assets may be included in any new means testing arrangements for student grants or to provide a basis for their inclusion. The Deputy can be assured, however, that the objective of a capital assets test is not to exclude any sector from availing of a grant but rather to fairly and equitably target scarce resources at those most in need of one. This means that farmers or, indeed, any other category of person whose income and assets fall below a certain level and cannot afford to send their children to third level would still continue to receive State support – while those who can afford to pay, would have to do so.

Question No. 32 answered with Question No. 19.

Schools Numbers

33. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of two teacher primary schools that currently have 20 students or less enrolled; the patronage details for these schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11983/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The information requested is set out in the following table.

Number of Two Teacher Primary Schools that have 20 Students or Less Enrolled 2011/2012 (refers to mainstream schools only)

Religion	Number of Schools
CATHOLIC	69
CHURCH OF IRELAND	13
MULTI DENOMINATIONAL	1
PRESBYTERIAN	3
Total	86

Source: National School Annual Census

Question No. 34 answered with Question No. 19.

Schools Numbers

35. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of two teacher primary schools that currently have 21 or more but less than 26 students enrolled; the patronage details for these schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11985/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The information requested is set out in the following table.

Number of Two Teacher Primary Schools That have between 21 and 25 Students Enrolled 2011/2012 (refers to mainstream schools only).

Religion	Number of Schools
CATHOLIC	42
CHURCH OF IRELAND	8
MULTI DENOMINATIONAL	0
PRESBYTERIAN	2
Total	52

Source: National School Annual Census

Adult Education

36. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to develop adult education or courses in further education for those who have left school early or those who are changing careers due to the economic crisis; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there are already excellent back to school and or back to college courses available via vocational education committees and community colleges of education (details supplied); if he will consider reviewing his policy and developing a major programme of course development particularly for those who are on the long-term unemployment register or for those who find themselves at home due to various circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12001/13]

58. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there are already excellent back to school and back to college courses available via vocational education committees and community colleges of education; if he will consider reviewing his policy and developing a major programme of course development particularly for those who are on the long-term unemployment register or for those who find themselves at home due to various circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12002/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): I propose to take Questions Nos. 36, 58 together.

In 2013 my Department will fund up to 430,000 education and training places across the range of provision in the higher education, further education and training sectors. The Government's objective in this area is to raise the educational and skills levels of adult learners, particularly among the unemployed, in areas where employment opportunities are emerging. The Government has introduced a number of initiatives such as MOMENTUM, Springboard and ICT skills to address the specific skills needs of enterprise and to support jobseekers, with emphasis on the long term unemployed and young unemployed people. SOLAS, the new education and training authority will be tasked to develop a clear strategy for the Further Education and Training sector that is consistent with policy in this area to enable informed prioritisation

of scarce resources by my Department and its agencies.

I am aware of the wide range of self funded evening classes provided by Voluntary Secondary, Community and Comprehensive and VEC schools across Ireland for adults of all ages. The Action Plan for SOLAS includes a commitment to undertake a review of the nature and extent of self-funded adult education evening classes delivered by VECs.

Small School Provision

37. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which he has had discussions with the various boards of management in the context of maintaining the widest possible availability and accommodation for the smaller rural schools of all denominations; the extent to which pooling of resources is likely to be invoked in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11886/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Government recognises that small schools are an important part of the social fabric of rural communities. They will continue to be a feature of our education landscape. In these extremely challenging times, all public servants are being asked to deliver our public services on a reduced level of resources and teachers in small schools cannot be immune from this requirement. How best to sustain provision for widely dispersed and small local communities does present as a particular challenge, especially in any locality where enrolment is declining to single figures. The Government is intent in fostering pluralism in school provision. Supporting small communities including minorities in maintaining their schools is part of that policy.

The value for money review of small primary school provision is at an advanced stage of preparation. I expect to publish the review and I look forward to debating its findings at that stage. My Department and I will continue to engage with the relevant education sector stakeholders in relation to education provision for all areas.

Question No. 38 answered with Question No. 22.

Question No. 39 answered with Question No. 19.

Schools Guidance Counsellors

40. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide details of the number of guidance hours being provided at individual secondary schools for the current academic year following on from the removal of the ex quota allocation for guidance counselling in budget 2012; if he is committed to monitoring the hours being provided in each school in future years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11989/13]

47. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if, in view of the publication of the New National Guidelines on mental health and suicide prevention in post primary schools, which are designed to provide an enhanced framework to disseminate information for schools and agencies supporting schools in mental health promotion and suicide prevention, the decision to withdraw the ex-quota allocation for school guidance counsellors undermines these efforts; and if he will reverse the cuts to school guidance counsellors. [11750/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 40 and 47 together.

The guidelines on mental health promotion and suicide prevention are based on schools taking a co-ordinated whole-school approach to preventing and, where necessary, tackling these issues. This involves building and integrating school self-evaluation processes, implementing the SPHE curriculum, developing the whole-school guidance plan, adopting the NEPS continuum of support, and building effective inter-agency relationships. Schools have autonomy on how best to prioritise their available resources to meet the requirements in relation to guidance and the provision of an appropriate range of subjects to students. This operates at local school level. Therefore, my Department does not have the type of detail requested by the Deputy.

The representative organisations for school principals and management developed a framework that assists schools on how best to manage the provision of guidance from within their staffing allocation. This was a very positive and proactive response to a difficult budget decision. Initial findings of a recent comprehensive survey by the National Centre for Guidance in Education on schools provision for guidance would suggest that even through there has been a cut in the allocation, schools continue to prioritise the guidance programme and within it have increased group work and class-based activity at senior cycle. This approach maximises the amount of time available for those pupils that need one-to-one support.

School Accommodation

41. **Deputy Eamonn Maloney** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide an update on the negotiations being conducted with South Dublin County Council on the acquisition of land on which to site a permanent building for a school (details supplied) in Dublin 24; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11767/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy will be aware from our recent meeting, South Dublin County Council has identified a site, adjacent to the site where the school to which he refers is in temporary accommodation, which may be suitable to provide a permanent building for this school. As the Deputy will be aware, however, there are a number of issues with this site, including issues relating to access to the site and its restricted size. The proposal is being reviewed within my Department and officials from my Department are liaising with officials from South Dublin County Council in this regard.

Question No. 42 answered with Question No. 14.

Small School Provision

43. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress made to date in addressing the specific issues of rural schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11765/13]

91. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the concerns of the authorities of a number of smaller, mostly rural denominational schools regarding their future; if he will ensure that all such schools' needs and traditions are carefully examined and assessed with a view to addressing issues of their concern; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12191/13]

92. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which he has had dialogue with the authorities at smaller and denominational rural schools with a view to putting in place structures that have due regard for their ethos and tradition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12192/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 43, 91 and 92 together.

There are many aspects to be considered in regard to small school provision. I assure the Deputies that I am aware of the concerns of the small rural schools and I am cognisant of the importance of schools to rural communities. Given our recent population growth, we will have a much increased enrolment at all levels of education. This is expected to continue in the medium term. Many pupil places are required in areas that currently have no school provision at all. We have schools in areas of stable or declining population with relatively low pupil numbers. Our current configuration of small primary schools is being examined by my Department as part of a value for money review. Among the issues the review will take into account are questions such as availability of diversity of provision, ethos of schools, parental choice, language of instruction, travel distances, transport costs and the impact of schools on dispersed rural communities. The review is at an advanced stage of preparation. I expect to publish it and I look forward to debating its findings at that stage.

Question No. 44 answered with Question No. 19.

Health and Safety Regulations

45. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether school principals are legally and financially responsible should a student or teacher become ill as a result of the untested pulsed microwave radiation emitted by Wi-Fi equipment; and if a similar liability apply to schools in the 26 counties. [11746/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Under the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the board of management is the body charged with the direct governance of a school. In general, individual school authorities are responsible, in the first instance, under Safety, Health and Welfare at Work legislation for ensuring the safety and welfare of children and others in their care. It is the responsibility of individual school management authorities to have a safety statement in place which should be reviewed on a regular basis.

The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government have specific responsibility with regards health effects of electromagnetic fields. They published a Report of the Expert Group on the Health Effects of Electromagnetic Fields in 2007. The report concluded that the weight of scientific evidence currently available shows no adverse short or long-term health effects from exposure to the radiofrequency signals produced by base station transmitters. The report was accepted by the then Government. Accordingly the advice from DCENR is that there is no scientific basis for, or evidence of, adverse health effects in children or adults as a result of exposure to electromagnetic fields.

Third Level Drop-out Rates

46. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will list in tabular form, on a county by county basis, the number of students who have dropped out of third level courses in the 2012-13 academic year up until the end of February 2013 and the way these figures compare to the same time last year. [11745/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The most recent report by the HEA entitled 'A study of Progression in Higher Education' is available on the HEA website. The following table from the report illustrates the non-presence rates of new entrants in their

second year of study by sector, NFQ level and course duration. New entrants are classified as 'not present' if they do not appear in the statistical returns of that institution in the following academic year. The proportion of new entrants in 2007/08 who were not present one year later was 15% on average across all sectors and NFQ Levels. Prior educational attainment is a very significant factor. The HEA is currently in the process of working on an analysis of retention rates in the universities and institutes of technology. This has only recently become possible due to a full population of SRS (Student Record System) data becoming available for a period spanning five years. The HEA which is responsible for the collection of data on student progression does not have the information requested for the current academic year. Non-Presence Rates for New Entrants by Sector and NFQ Level (2008/09)

Sector	Level	Most Common Points Attained	% Not Present
Institutes of Technology	Level 6	250-300	25%
	Level 7	250-300	26%
	Level 8	300-350	16%
	L8 3 yr duration	300-350	16%
	L8 4 yr duration	300-350	16%
	L8 4+ yr duration	450-500	10%
	All New Entrants	300-350	22%
Universities	Level 8	400-450	9%
	L8 3 yr duration	350-400	10%
	L8 4 yr duration	450-500	9%
	L8 4+ yr duration	550-600	3%
Other Colleges	Level 8	450-500	4%
	L8 3 yr duration	450-500	2%
	L8 4 yr duration	400-450	7%
All Institutions	Level 8	350-400	11%
All Institutions	All New Entrants	350-400	15%

Question No. 47 answered with Question No. 40.

School Inspection Reports

48. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether the inspection system in place for secondary schools is operating in a satisfactory manner; if he is satisfied with the impact they are having on education standards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11888/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I am satisfied that the inspection system in place for post-primary schools is effective and that it is very clearly focussed on school improvement and ensuring that schools deliver effectively for all learners. Reforms to the inspection system have ensured that a range of inspection models is now used to evaluate the work of schools, that a greater focus is placed on the quality and standards of teaching and learning in the classrooms visited, and that schools are visited more frequently by inspectors.

In 2012, for example, inspections were conducted in 81% of all post-primary schools. Through these inspections, inspectors engage school management and teachers in professional dialogue about teaching and learning methods, so that all students attain the appropriate standards. Inspectors directly address with the school the learning outcomes achieved by students. Following inspections, inspectors make robust recommendations where required to direct the

school's improvement agenda. I am satisfied that inspection contributes to the continuing improvement of standards achieved in education provision.

Question No. 49 answered with Question No. 22.

Literacy Levels

50. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the finding of two studies (details supplied) which showed primary school children in the six counties came sixth in numeracy and fifth in literacy, the highest rating of any English speaking country in the world; his views on whether this success can be attributed to the 48 per cent rise in per capita education funding in the North from 1997 and 2007; the lessons his Department can learn from this success; and his further views that similar measures should be implemented to improve standards in the 26 counties. [11744/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Pupils in Northern Ireland performed very well in PIRLS and TIMSS. The report was published last December. Further study will be needed to establish the reasons for this, and I look forward to the future publication of further analyses. It is notable that Northern Ireland was developing and implementing elements of its Literacy and Numeracy Strategy for some time prior to the development of our own strategy here in the Republic. I wish to acknowledge that Irish 4th class pupils also performed well in tests of reading, mathematics and science. In all three areas, Irish pupils scored significantly above the international average. Many of the elements of our own Literacy and Numeracy Strategy - improving teacher education, reform of the curriculum and better use of assessment - are similar to those in Northern Ireland. This range of measures as they are implemented should enable improvements in our reading and maths standards. We have, I believe, made a good start.

State Examinations Issues

51. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the way many leaving certificate students received an exemption from Irish from 2008 to 2012; the number of those students who studied another language other than Irish and English; the stage at which the review of the 12/96 circular announced in 2006 is at; and the efforts made by his Department between 2008 and 2012 to reduce the number of students receiving an exemption from Irish. [11754/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The information requested by the Deputy on students for the Leaving Certificate receiving an exemption from the study of Irish in the years 2008 to 2012 is contained in the following table. For the years 2008 to 2012, the granting of exemptions from the study of Irish at post-primary was provided for in limited circumstances as per the exemption criteria in departmental circular M10/94. This continues to be the position. Under the circular the authority to grant an exemption has been delegated to school authorities. An exemption may only be granted where the student's circumstances comply with the exemption criteria. While work has previously been done in relation to revising the exemptions circular, the issues involved are complex and it is clear that we need to gather more detailed evidence on the manner in which exemptions are sought and granted before issuing a revised circular. As announced towards the end of 2012, my Department will carry out research with a view to comprehensively informing further policy actions in this area.

The number of Leaving Certificate* students in each school year from 2008/09 to 2012/13

receiving an exemption from the study of Irish by reason for exemption in accordance with the criteria in Departmental Circular M10/94

Schools year	Circumstances in which exemption from the study of Irish were granted	No of students granted an Exemption in each school year	No of students receiving exemptions which were also enrolled for at least one Modern European Language#
2012	Students from abroad who have no understanding of English when enrolled	1,182	770
2012	Students whose primary education up to 11 years of age was received in Northern Ireland or outside of Ireland	221	156
2012	Students with a learning disability as provided for in paragraph 1(c) of the circular	578	321
2012	Students re-enrolling after a period of at least three years abroad	42	31
2012	Total in all categories	2,023	1,278
2011	Students from abroad who have no understanding of English when enrolled	1,109	704
2011	Students whose primary education up to 11 years of age was received in Northern Ireland or outside of Ireland	230	154
2011	Students with a learning disability as provided for in paragraph 1(c) of the circular	660	379
2011	Students re-enrolling after a period of at least three years abroad	25	17
2011	Total in all categories	2,024	1,254
2010	Students from abroad who have no understanding of English when enrolled	1,675	735
2010	Students whose primary education up to 11 years of age was received in Northern Ireland or outside of Ireland	356	142
2010	Students with a learning disability as provided for in paragraph 1(c) of the circular	1,153	246
2010	Students re-enrolling after a period of at least three years abroad	53	11
2010	Total in all categories	3,237	1,134
2009	Students from abroad who have no understanding of English when enrolled	1,689	895
2009	Students whose primary education up to 11 years of age was received in Northern Ireland or outside of Ireland	242	155
2009	Students with a learning disability as provided for in paragraph 1(c) of the circular	533	260
2009	Students re-enrolling after a period of at least three years abroad	18	18
2009	Total in all categories	2,482	1,328
2008	Students from abroad who have no understanding of English when enrolled	1,939	772

Schools year	Circumstances in which exemption from the study of Irish were granted	No of students granted an Exemption in each school year	No of students receiving exemptions which were also enrolled for at least one Modern European Language#
2008	Students whose primary education up to 11 years of age was received in Northern Ireland or outside of Ireland	286	251
2008	Students with a learning disability as provided for in paragraph 1(c) of the circular	442	271
2008	Students re-enrolling after a period of at least three years abroad	27	20
2008	Total in all categories	2,694	1,314

* *Leaving Certificate includes student in years 1 and 2 of the established Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP),*

Leaving Certificate Applied and those repeating the Leaving Certificate.

Modern European Language refers to French, German, Spanish and Italian.

The data has been extracted from the October Returns of student enrolled as at the 30th September for each school year as provided by post-primary schools to the Department.

Student Grant Scheme Payments

52. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the problems with payments of student grants has been fully resolved; if all students who have been approved for a student grant are now in receipt of payment; when the report of the inquiry into the student grant crisis will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11963/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I understand from Student Universal Support Ireland that they are up to date with processing all complete applications. The current position on processing of grants by SUSI, as at close of business on 3rd March is that 55,921 applications have been processed to completion. As part of the close out strategy for the 2012/13 academic year, SUSI is currently contacting applicants who have not completed their application by submitting the required documentation. SUSI is providing these with a final opportunity to submit the documentation so that applications for 2012/13 can be closed out. Support for students to complete their applications has been put in place.

The majority of the 2,070 students currently awaiting payment will be paid within the next two weeks depending on their submission of bank account details. An external review of SUSI’s business processes is currently being undertaken to inform improvements in the system for the 2013/14 academic year. The proposed timeline for completion of the review is March 2013.

Student Loan Scheme

53. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the suggestion from the IMF in its January report on the bailout programme that a student loan scheme be introduced here within two years [11977/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The question of introducing

fees allied to an income contingent loan scheme has been identified previously, including in the Hunt report, as a means of addressing future funding issues in the sector while retaining free access at the point of entry. A technical report on options for the development of such a scheme was developed by my Department in 2009 and is published on my Department's website.

As the Deputy is aware the Higher Education Authority (HEA) is undertaking a study on the sustainability of the current funding system for higher education. This study was initiated at my request and an initial report has been published. This report makes it clear that immediate work is required to prepare for a longer term approach to a system that can be maintained through a sustainable funding base which will be able to address the continual expansion of the sector while protecting quality of education. The HEA is continuing its work in this area and I will be advised further as this work progresses. The report will help inform the decision-making as to the future funding of the sector.

Question No. 54 answered with Question No. 22.

Bullying of Children

55. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the OK Kids programme that was launched recently by the National Anti-Bullying Coalition; if it is to be implemented on a pilot basis in County Roscommon; and his plans to provide funding and support for this initiative. [11753/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy will be aware, I recently launched an Action Plan on Bullying and have ring-fenced €500,000 to support implementation of the actions in the plan this year. The actions in the plan centre around three key themes: support for schools, awareness raising measures and further research. I have asked my officials to contact the National Anti-Bullying Coalition to discuss the contents of the OK Kids Programme.

Teachers' Remuneration

56. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will list in tabular form the respective pay scales of post primary school teachers and the way this has been affected by pay cuts and pension levies introduced since 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11992/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The pay scales and rates of allowances paid to teachers from 2009 to date are set out in the attached table.

TEACHERS' COMMON BASIC SCALE	1/9/2008	1/1/2010	New Entrants post 1/1/2011	New Entrants post 1/2/2012
1	€ 32,599	€ 30,904	€ 27,814	€ 30,702
2	€ 33,753	€ 31,972	€ 28,775	€ 32,198
3	€ 34,909	€ 33,041	€ 29,737	€ 33,168
4	€ 36,068	€ 34,113	€ 30,702	€ 34,136
5	€ 37,865	€ 35,775	€ 32,198	€ 36,576
6	€ 39,030	€ 36,853	€ 33,168	€ 37,795
7	€ 40,193	€ 37,929	€ 34,136	€ 39,251
8	€ 43,124	€ 40,640	€ 36,576	€ 40,700

TEACHERS' COMMON BASIC SCALE	1/9/2008	1/1/2010	New Entrants post 1/1/2011	New Entrants post 1/2/2012
9	€ 44,588	€ 41,994	€ 37,795	€ 42,160
10	€ 46,337	€ 43,612	€ 39,251	€ 43,380
11	€ 48,078	€ 45,222	€ 40,700	€ 44,996
12	€ 49,831	€ 46,844	€ 42,160	€ 44,996
13	€ 51,297	€ 48,200	€ 43,380	€ 44,996
14	€ 53,239	€ 49,996	€ 44,996	€ 47,225
15	€ 53,239	€ 49,996	€ 44,996	€ 47,225
16	€ 53,239	€ 49,996	€ 44,996	€ 47,225
17	€ 55,916	€ 52,472	€ 47,225	€ 47,225
18	€ 55,916	€ 52,472	€ 47,225	€ 50,170
19	€ 55,916	€ 52,472	€ 47,225	€ 50,170
20	€ 55,916	€ 52,472	€ 47,225	€ 50,170
21	€ 59,453	€ 55,744	€ 50,170	€ 50,170
22	€ 59,453	€ 55,744	€ 50,170	€ 53,423
23	€ 59,453	€ 55,744	€ 50,170	
24	€ 59,453	€ 55,744	€ 50,170	
25	€ 63,361	€ 59,359	€ 53,423	

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS	€	€	€
1. (a) (i) H. Dip. in Ed. (Pass)	€ 622	€ 591	€ 532
(ii) Higher Froebel Cert.	€ 622	€ 591	€ 532
(b) (i) H. Dip. in Ed. (1st or 2nd Hons)	€ 1,301	€ 1,236	€ 1,112
(ii) Ard Teastas Gaeilge	€ 1,301	€ 1,236	€ 1,112
(c) Primary Degree (Pass)	€ 1,939	€ 1,842	€ 1,658
(d) Masters Degree by thesis or exam (Pass)	€ 5,177	€ 4,918	€ 4,426
(e) Primary Degree (1st or 2nd Hons)	€ 5,177	€ 4,918	€ 4,426
(f) Masters Degree (1st or 2nd Hons)	€ 5,785	€ 5,496	€ 4,946
(g) Doctors Degree	€ 6,463	€ 6,140	€ 5,526
Only one of the allowances at (a) or (b) may be held together with one of the allowances (c) to (g)			
2. (i) *An Teastas i dTeagasc na Gaeilge le honóracha	€ 4,503	€ 4,278	€ 3,850
(ii) *Higher Diploma in Education (1st or 2nd Hons)	€ 4,503	€ 4,278	€ 3,850
(iii) *Primary Degree (Pass) together with at least 3 years approved experience in commercial, industrial or other approved occupation	€ 4,503	€ 4,278	€ 3,850
*Payable only to teachers who were in receipt of an allowance of £110 (pre July 1968) and who did not qualify for a higher allowance at 1. above			
(iv) Diploma for Teachers of Deaf, Blind, Mentally and Physically Handicapped Children	€ 2,565	€ 2,437	€ 2,193
OTHER ALLOWANCES	-	-	-
1. Rural Science Teachers	€ 1,939	€ 1,842	€ 1,658
2. Itinerant Domestic Science Teachers	€ 1,939	€ 1,842	€ 1,658
3. Teaching through Irish	€ 1,666	€ 1,583	€ 1,424

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ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS	€	€	€
4. Gaeltacht Grant payable to teachers in the Gaeltacht other than those in receipt of an allowance equal to 10% of scale salary	€ 3,224	€ 3,063	€ 2,757
5. Island Allowance	€ 1,939	€ 1,842	€ 1,658
6. Special allowance payable to teachers in Comprehensive Schools	€ 2,601	€ 2,471	€ 2,224
Untrained Teachers' Rate	€ 28,794	€ 27,354	€ 24,619
Allowance for Teachers with 35 years' service	€ 2,446	€ 2,324	€ 2,091
Honorarium Allowance Payable to Teachers in the Prison Service	€ 5,024	€ 4,773	€ 4,296
SECONDMENT ALLOWANCES	-	-	-
CATEGORY 2	€ 17,711	€ 16,825	€ 15,143
CATEGORY 3	€ 13,838	€ 13,146	€ 11,831
CATEGORY 4	€ 10,663	€ 10,130	€ 9,117
Allowance payable to teachers of apprentices in Dun Laoghaire and Co. Cork VECs	€ 10,253	€ 9,740	€ 8,766
Secure Unit Allowance/ Disturbed Adolescent Allowance	€ 2,311	€ 2,195	€ 1,976

NOTES:

Since 2009, the following measures have been applied to the salaries of teachers:

1. With effect from 1 March 2009, a pension levy was introduced for all public servants, including teachers. The levy is:

- first €15,000 of earnings are exempt;
- 5% on next €5,000 of earnings;
- 10% on earnings between €20,000 and €60,000; and,
- 10.5% on earnings above €60,000

2. With effect from 1 January 2010, a pay cut was introduced for all public servants, including teachers. The effect of this for public servants with rates of basic salary not over €125,000 was:

- 5% on the first €30,000 of basic salary
- 7.5% on any amount of basic salary over €30,000 but not over €70,000
- 10% on any amount of basic salary over €70,000 but not over €125,000
- 5% on allowances

3. With effect from 1 January 2011, the salaries of all new entrants to the public service, including teachers, were reduced by 10%. In addition, all public servants were required to start on the first point of the relevant pay scale.

4. With effect from 5 December 2011, a cap on the payment of qualification allowances was introduced. Teachers who entered teaching on or after that date were eligible for combined qualification allowances up to a maximum of honours primary degree level. Both new entrants and existing teachers are not eligible for further qualification allowances above this level if they

acquire further qualifications after that date.

5. With effect from 1 February 2012 and as a result of the allowances review, a new pay scale was introduced for new entrants to teaching, as these teachers are no longer eligible to be paid qualification allowances. The first point of this new scale is equivalent to the fourth point of the existing scale. In addition, certain allowances are withdrawn or modified for new beneficiaries with effect from that date. Full details are set out in Department Circular 8/2013.

Question No. 57 answered with Question No. 22.

Question No. 58 answered with Question No. 36.

School Patronage

59. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to a decision made in his Department to give patronage of a new secondary school for Tyrrelstown, Mulhuddart, Dublin 15 to the Catholic Le Chéile trust, in the most religiously diverse and multicultural area in the entire country; and if so, if he will recognise that the decision must now be reviewed as it would make the school inaccessible to a huge number of families who could be forced to commute to schools elsewhere. [11798/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The criteria that applied in awarding patronage of the post primary school for Tyrrelstown-Mulhuddart were as announced by me on 27th June 2011. These criteria provided for a greater diversity of school patronage having regard to parental preferences in each area. One of the criteria provided that the new schools would have to accept all pupils from within the areas they are to serve.

The recommendation made by the New Schools Establishment Group was that the Le Chéile Schools Trust patronage model satisfied all of the criteria, and on the basis of the level of parental demand shown for this type of school, should be awarded patronage. I accepted this recommendation and announced my decision to award patronage of the new school to Le Chéile Schools Trust on 25th July, 2012. It is not proposed to review the decision at this stage.

Question No. 60 answered with Question No. 11.

Gender Equality

61. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the way in which we can ensure that the Commission on the Status of Women taking place in March affirms Ireland's and the EU's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12129/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal UN global policy-making body on gender equality and the advancement of women. Ireland attaches great importance to the 57th session of the CSW, which is taking place from Monday 4 to Friday 15 March, as a centrepiece of our activities at the United Nations during our Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Ireland is being represented at the CSW by Ms Kathleen Lynch T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Health and the Department of Justice, Equality and Defence with responsibility for Disability, Equality, Mental Health and Older People. Extensive preparatory and out-

reach work has been undertaken by Ireland's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York. This focuses both on ensuring coherence in EU positions and on the building of cross-regional coalitions so as to maximise the possibility of a strong outcome to this year's session.

The 57th session has as its priority theme the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. The outcome being aimed for in this regard is a set of agreed conclusions, which are negotiated by all States and which must be adopted by consensus. The review theme of this session is the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV and AIDS, based on the agreed conclusions of the 53rd session in 2009. The emerging issue of this session is an exploration of how key gender equality issues can be reflected in the UN post-2015 development framework.

An EU strategy paper to which Ireland has contributed sets out the objective of achieving strong agreed conclusions which preserve and strengthen the international agreements and commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women, pursuing a rights-based approach to gender equality and the empowerment of women and countering attempts to undermine international human rights obligations.

Ireland's focus is firmly on practical measures and we hope to see a number of concrete actions and best practices reflected in the agreed conclusions. The EU is represented in the negotiations on these conclusions by the EU Delegation, supported by the Irish Presidency. Ireland is also co-sponsoring a number of side events. We are closely involved in the organization of an event entitled "Mobilising communities to prevent and respond to violence against women - lessons learnt from Uganda". The Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence is the main organiser of an event entitled "Addressing Gender Based Violence in fragile states in post conflict and fragile states - a case study of Sierra Leone". Ireland will also support Amnesty International's side event entitled "Women Human Rights Defenders" and a "Raising Voices" side event entitled "Exploring the evidence in preventing violence against women". We hope that these side events will contribute to raising awareness around these issues among officials and civil society actors attending the CSW.

Emigrant Support Services

62. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will outline the proposed disbursement of funding under the emigrants support programme for 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12264/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The 2013 grant round closed on 20 February with applications for 358 projects received from 17 countries. The assessment process, which is carried out in conjunction with our missions abroad, is now underway. The focus of the 2013 grants will be on supporting key frontline welfare and advisory services and on projects aimed at supporting new arrivals.

Northern Ireland Issues

63. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the proposals, if any, he has to advance the proposed Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12265/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The

Government remains firmly committed to ensuring the full and effective implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, including the provision relating to a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. We will continue to urge all the parties in the Assembly to engage in constructive discussion with a view to reaching agreement on the substance of a Bill of Rights. A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland would include rights reflecting the principles of mutual respect for the identity and ethos of both communities and parity of esteem, alongside the rights contained in the European Convention on Human Rights. A Bill of Rights drawn up by agreement between the main parties of the Assembly could set out precisely and formally the rights upon which a shared future for the people of Northern Ireland can be based. In contact with the British government we continue to stress the importance of implementation of the Agreement, including of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland which takes account of the separate and specific context of Northern Ireland.

Conflict Resolution in Syria

64. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the outcome of discussions at the most recent EU Foreign Affairs Council in relation to Syria; if additional humanitarian assistance was agreed for that region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12277/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Syria was the major issue discussed at the Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Brussels on 18 February, which I attended. The focus was very much on the most appropriate steps for the EU to take in support of ongoing efforts to achieve a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Against the background of escalating fighting between the Syrian army and opposition groups, and with no military resolution in sight, it is increasingly evident that a negotiated solution is the only realistic option to bring about an end to the appalling violence (which has so far cost close to 70,000 lives) and to start a genuine process of political transition. The Council made clear, in its Conclusions, that the EU welcomes and supports all efforts to bring about a peaceful solution to the violence in Syria.

These objectives are central to the mission of the UN/Arab League Joint Special Representative, Lakhdar Brahimi. The Council reiterated its full support for Mr. Brahimi's efforts. We also welcomed the offer made to the Syrian authorities by the President of the National Syrian Coalition, Dr Al Khatib, to start a political dialogue leading to a peaceful transition. The sanctions which the EU is applying at present are an essential means of maintaining strong pressure on the Syrian authorities so as to persuade them to stop their campaign of repression and brutality against the Syrian people. I welcome the fact that the Council was able to agree on renewing the full range of existing sanctions for a further period of three months.

Accountability is very important in the context of the many war crimes and human rights violations that have been committed by all sides during the conflict. Ireland has lent active support within the EU to calls for the situation in Syria to be referred by the UN Security Council to the International Criminal Court. The Council has called on the Security Council to urgently address the situation in Syria in all its aspects, including the question of a possible referral to the ICC.

The role of the UN is also key in coordinating international relief efforts to address the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation. Ireland was represented at the high-level pledging conference on Syria which UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon chaired in Kuwait on 30 January and at which in excess of US\$1.5 billion was raised to support ongoing international relief efforts. My colleague, the Minister of State for Trade and Development, Mr Joe Costello

T.D., announced additional emergency assistance of €4.7 million at the conference, bringing total Irish aid to Syria in the past year to €7.1 million. Total EU assistance to date, both from the Commission and Member States, amounts to some €580 million.

The Council, at its meeting on 18 February, explicitly reaffirmed the leading role of the UN in providing assistance to Syria as well as to those neighbouring countries who are so generously hosting the estimated 900,000 refugees from this conflict. The Council Conclusions also committed the EU to take steps towards providing humanitarian assistance to all areas in the country, including those currently not reached by humanitarian aid. The conflict in Syria will remain a major priority for Ireland at all levels of our international engagement. We will use the influence available to us in our current EU Presidency role to support European and UN efforts and initiatives towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Property Taxation Exemptions

65. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Finance if a waiver or reduction in the amount of household tax will be made available to senior citizens, particularly those with a disability in view of the fact that many senior citizens in this category do not have the resources to meet additional household payments; if he has any plans to introduce or consider introducing a waiver or reduction for senior citizens and or senior citizens with a disability; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12186/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): While there is no specific exemption from or reduction in the charge to Local Property Tax (LPT) for senior citizens or senior citizens with a disability, the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 and the recently published Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Bill 2013 contain certain provisions that may be relevant, depending on the particular circumstances involved. For individuals on low incomes or those whose only income source is from the Department of Social Protection, the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 provides for the possibility of deferring the charge to LPT in certain cases. Under the 2012 Act, a system of deferral arrangements for owner-occupiers is available where there is an inability to pay the tax and certain specified conditions are met. A person who qualifies for full deferral can opt to defer 100% of the LPT liability. A person who qualifies for partial deferral can opt to defer 50% of the liability and must pay the balance of LPT.

The deferral arrangements available under the 2012 Act are as follows:

	Condition Number	Condition
Full Deferral	1	Gross income for the year is unlikely to exceed €15,000 (single or widow/er) and €25,000 (couple)
Full Deferral	2	Gross income for the year is unlikely to exceed the adjusted income limit. This adjusted income limit is calculated by increasing the thresholds of €15,000 (single or widow/er) and €25,000 (couple) by 80% of the expected mortgage interest payments for the year 2013. This applies until 31 December 2017.
Partial Deferral	3	Gross income for the year is unlikely to exceed €25,000 (single or widow/er) and €35,000 (couple).
Partial Deferral	4	Gross income for the year is unlikely to exceed the adjusted income limit. This adjusted income limit is calculated by increasing the thresholds of €25,000 (single or widow/er) and €35,000 (couple) by 80% of the expected mortgage interest payments for the year 2013. This applies until 31 December 2017.

The 2013 Amendment Bill also provides for a full or partial deferral of the charge where there is an inability to pay the tax in certain other specific situations. In all cases, interest will be charged on LPT amounts deferred at a rate of 4% per annum. The deferred amount, including interest, will attach to the property and will have to be paid before the property is sold or transferred.

I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that, for those who do not qualify for deferral of the tax, there is a wide range of payment options available to liable persons, which will allow them to pay their LPT liability in full or to pay the tax for 2013 in equal instalments over the period 1 July 2013 to end December 2013.

In accordance with section 2 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Bill 2013, an exemption from the charge to LPT will apply to a residential property purchased, built or adapted to make it suitable for occupation by a permanently and totally incapacitated individual as their sole or main residence, where an award has been made by the Personal Injuries Assessment Board or a court, or where a trust has been established, specifically for the benefit of such individuals. In the case of adaptations to a property, the exemption will only apply where the cost of the adaptations exceeds 25% of the chargeable value of the property before it is adapted. The exemption ends if the property is sold and the incapacitated individual no longer occupies it as his or her sole or main residence.

Section 6 of the 2013 Amendment Bill provides for a reduction in the market value of a residential property that has been adapted for occupation by a disabled person where the adaptation has been grant-aided by a local authority. The reduction is limited to the lesser of the market value attributable to the adaptation work carried out on the property and the maximum grant payable under the relevant local authority scheme. The relief ends on the sale or transfer of a property that has been adapted, unless the person with the disability continues to reside in the property.

Furthermore, the impact of specific adaptations on a property can be to decrease the value which may in turn impact on the LPT liability. I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that details of the existing exemptions are available on Revenue's website www.revenue.ie, where the Commissioners have recently published a useful Guide to Local Property Tax. This will be revised shortly to take account of the provisions of the Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Bill 2013. It should be noted, however, that the provisions contained in the 2013 Bill are subject to its enactment.

Property Taxation Exemptions

66. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance if houses which have been modified to cater for a resident with a disability are exempt from the property tax. [12065/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that it is not possible to give a definitive reply based on the information provided by the Deputy. While there is no specific exemption from the Local Property Tax (LPT) for houses which have been modified to cater for a resident with a disability, the Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Bill 2013 that I recently introduced contains certain provisions that, when enacted, may be relevant, depending on the particular circumstances involved. Section 2 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Bill 2013 provides an exemption from LPT for a residential property purchased, built or adapted to make it suitable for occupation by a permanently and totally incapacitated individual as their sole or main residence, where an award has been made by the Personal Injuries Assessment Board or a court, or where a trust has

been established, specifically for the benefit of such individuals. In the case of adaptations to a property, the exemption will only apply where the cost of the adaptations exceeds 25% of the market value of the property before it is adapted. The exemption ends if the property is sold and the incapacitated individual no longer occupies it as his or her sole or main residence.

Alternatively, section 6 of the Bill provides for a reduction in the market value of a residential property that has been adapted for occupation by a disabled person where the adaptation has been grant-aided by a local authority. The reduction is limited to the lesser of the market value attributable to the adaptation work carried out on the property and the maximum grant payable under the relevant local authority scheme. The relief ends on the sale or transfer of a property that has been adapted, unless the person with the disability continues to reside in the property.

Furthermore, the impact of specific adaptations on a property can be to decrease the value which may in turn impact on the LPT liability. I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that details of the existing exemptions are available on Revenue's website www.revenue.ie, where the Commissioners have recently published a useful Guide to Local Property Tax. This will be revised shortly to take account of the provisions of the Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Bill 2013.

Property Taxation Application

67. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance in view of the uncertainty in the property market, the way a person will value their home in confidence that it is the correct valuation and that they will not incur any charges at a later date. [12066/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 sets out how the tax is to be administered and how a residential property is to be valued for Local Property Tax (LPT) purposes. I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that LPT is a self-assessed tax so in the first instance it is a matter for the property owner to calculate the tax due based on his or her assessment of the market value of the property. As property values are organised into valuation bands for the purposes of LPT, property owners will not be required to provide a precise value for their property. The Revenue Commissioners have prepared valuation guidance which, taken together with the owner's own knowledge of the property, will assist him or her in assessing its value. The guidance includes an on-line guide that provides indicative property valuation bands depending on the property type, age and location. I am advised by the Commissioners that this on-line guidance will shortly be available on the Revenue website.

The guidance also draws property owners' attention to the publicly available property price register produced by the Property Services Regulatory Authority which provides an actual sales price for all properties sold since January 2010. Owners are also encouraged to refer to other sources of information relating to local properties such as the property section of local newspapers, information from local estate agents and property websites. Alternatively, owners may choose to obtain a valuation from a competent professional valuer. If property owners have purchased their property or obtained a professional valuation in recent years, they may use this valuation and adjust for any change in property values in their area since the date of this valuation.

When using Revenue's valuation guidance, the property owner should consider the specifics of his or her own property - for example, if the property has certain unique features, is smaller or larger than the average property in the area, or is in a significantly poor state of repair - and these factors should be taken into account in the owner's assessment of the valuation of the

property. If the property owner feels that the guidance is not indicating a reasonable valuation, they should make their own assessment. As I have previously advised the House, where the Revenue guidance is used in an honest manner, the property valuation made by a property owner will not be challenged by Revenue in accordance with its normal Customer Service Charter and, consequently, additional charges will not be applied.

Finally, I am advised by the Commissioners that the initial valuation of a property on 1 May 2013 will be valid up to and including 2016 and will not be affected by any improvements made to the property, or any increase in property prices, during this period.

Local Government Funding

68. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Finance the percentage of the proposed property tax that will revert to the local authority; the criteria that will be used in assessing same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12089/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Section 157 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act, as amended, provides that, in each financial year commencing in 2014, the Minister for Finance shall pay into the Local Government Fund an amount equivalent to the local property tax, including any interest paid thereon, paid into the Central Fund or the growing produce thereof during that year. The allocation of funding to local authorities, as well as criteria in assessing such allocation, is properly a matter for the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government.

Tax Code

69. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Finance if he has considered the Certified Public Accounts Ireland Entrepreneurship Report for 2012; his views on the recommendations to provide a more equitable treatment of entrepreneurs under the tax system to award tax credits to investors in business which can only be claimed against dividends realised from that business; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12140/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I would like to thank the Deputy for drawing this report to my attention. I will have my officials examine the report and will revert to the Deputy in writing in due course.

NAMA Property Leases

70. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance in view of the state of the public finances, if he will make a direction to National Assets Management Agency to have leases in which Government Departments or State agencies are the tenants, reviewed to reflect current market value. [12164/13]

71. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Finance if he will detail in tabular form, the leases for which National Assets Management Agency has an interest, where a Government Department or State agency is the tenant; if he will give details to include location, identification of State agency, annual leasing cost, if the lease includes an upward only rent clause, owner, lease start date and lease term time. [12167/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 70 and

71 together.

As the Deputy is aware, NAMA has acquired loans from the five participating institutions and is not the owner/manager of properties. The Agency's role is that of a secured lender. Properties securing NAMA's loans continue to be owned and managed by their existing owners or, in the case of enforcement, on their behalf by duly appointed insolvency practitioners. I am advised by NAMA that there are NAMA debtors and appointed insolvency practitioners who own/manage properties which are leased to State Agencies and who derive income from them. The properties are leased to the State by these debtors/appointed insolvency practitioners on an arms-length basis. NAMA has no legal role in relation to the contracts between property owners/appointed insolvency practitioners and third parties. Any discussion on rent reviews is a matter between for the property owner/appointed insolvency practitioner and the tenant, and these discussions will be dealt with on a commercial basis and in accordance with the NAMA Guidelines. The Deputy is aware that NAMA, in its role as secured lender, is agreeing rent abatements through its debtors and insolvency practitioners to support small businesses around the country that are struggling to survive because of the current economic environment.

NAMA advises that the income arising from the rental by state bodies of approximately 82 NAMA debtor and insolvency practitioner properties is of the order of €30 million per annum. NAMA advises that 48 properties are located in Dublin and the neighbouring counties of Wicklow, Kildare and Meath; these account for 76% of total rental income. There are 24 properties located in counties Limerick, Cork and Galway and these account for a further 21% of total income. The residual properties are located throughout the rest of Ireland and account for 3% of rental income. The further breakdown by number and county sought by the Deputy would lead to the identification of specific properties, breaching Sections 99 and 202 of the NAMA Act, under which NAMA is prohibited from disclosing confidential details relating to its debtors or their properties, and the obligation on its debtors and insolvency practitioners to uphold the confidentiality of agreements entered into with third parties. In addition, details regarding the terms and duration of individual leases cannot be divulged for reason of commercial sensitivity.

The Deputy is aware that NAMA's mandate to achieve the best possible return for the taxpayer from the management and sale of its acquired bank assets and that the NAMA Board has a mandate to independently frame its decisions in this context. Given the independence afforded to NAMA by the NAMA Act, I have no role as Minister for Finance in relation to strategies applied by NAMA to maximise income generation from individual assets securing its loans and to ensure that interest and principal on the debt are repaid by a debtor.

Property Taxation Exemptions

72. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will make any provision for exemption from property tax for persons who are part of the fair deal (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12170/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): While no specific exemption from local property tax for individuals in the Health Service Executive Fair Deal Scheme is provided in either the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 or the Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Bill 2013 the legislation does provide for a number of exemptions from the Local Property Tax (LPT) as well as for the possibility of deferring the charge in certain cases of inability to pay.

I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the exemption which seems to be most relevant to the Deputy's question would appear to be section 5 of the 2012 Act under which

an exemption may be obtained where a property that was previously occupied by a person as his or her sole or main residence has been vacated by the person for 12 months or more due to long term mental or physical infirmity. An exemption may also apply where the period is less than 12 months, if a doctor is satisfied that the person is unlikely at any stage to return to the property. In both cases, the exemption applies only where the property is not occupied by any other person. I am also advised by the Commissioners that where a property is owned by more than one person, the owners are jointly and severally liable for the payment of the tax. Accordingly, this exemption under section 5 of the Act would not apply if the property in question was jointly owned with others.

Details of the existing exemptions and options for deferral are available on Revenue's website www.revenue.ie, where the Commissioners have recently published a useful Guide to Local Property Tax. This will be revised shortly to take account of the provisions of the Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Bill 2013.

Disabled Drivers

73. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Finance the implications, if any, of the recent announcement on the eligibility for VRT rebate for persons with mobility difficulties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12248/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I understand the Deputy to refer to the recent announcement by the Minister for Health on the ending of the Motorised Transport Grant and Mobility Allowance schemes. There are no implications with regard to eligibility for VRT rebate for persons with mobility difficulties under the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Scheme, the details of which are set out below. The Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Scheme provides relief from VAT and VRT (up to a certain limit) on the purchase of a car adapted for the transport of a person with specific severe and permanent physical disabilities, to those who meet certain disability criteria.

The disability criteria for eligibility for the tax concessions under this scheme are set out in the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations 1994. To get the Primary Medical Certificate, an applicant must be severely and permanently disabled and satisfy one of the following conditions: be wholly or almost wholly without the use of both legs; be wholly without the use of one leg and almost wholly without the use of the other leg such that the applicant is severely restricted as to movement of the lower limbs; be without both hands or without both arms; be without one or both legs; be wholly or almost wholly without the use of both hands or arms and wholly or almost wholly without the use of one leg; or have the medical condition of dwarfism and have serious difficulties of movement of the lower limbs.

Banking Sector Remuneration

74. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he has received a copy of the Mercer report on remuneration in the banking sector; the date on which he intends to present the report to Cabinet; his plans for publishing the report; the timetable he envisages for implementation of its recommendations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12249/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): My Department is in final discussions with the consultants on the report. I expect to bring it to Government imminently for decision. I fully recognise that there is a real public interest in the levels of remuneration at the Covered Institutions and I will endeavour to have the details underpinning the review published as soon

as possible thereafter.

Tax Compliance

75. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of pension schemes whose trustees have not made payment in respect of the 2011 and 2012 liability; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12250/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the pension levy is a self assessment tax. The chargeable person and the trustees of the pension scheme are both jointly and severally liable for the payment of the pension levy. In the case of assets held under contracts of assurance, the chargeable person is the insurer. In the case of any other assets the administrator is the chargeable person. A chargeable person is entitled to dispose of or appropriate scheme assets for the purpose of meeting the amount of the levy payable. The Pension Levy levy is charged at a rate of 0.6% on the aggregate of the market value of assets of a pension scheme at the valuation date. Assets include all property, investments, deposits, debts and contracts of assurance held for the purpose of a scheme.

In 2011 and 2012 Revenue initiated enquiries by means of a compliance program to establish if any amounts of levy remain unpaid and with a view to taking appropriate action where any such cases are identified. The evidence to date from the program suggests that the legislation is largely being complied with. A small number of cases have been found where incorrect levy amounts, both overpayments and underpayments, were paid. The amounts involved were in general not very material. Any chargeable person who fails to comply with the legislation has to pay, as well as the pension levy, a daily penalty charge and interest calculated from the due date until the payment date.

Mortgage Arrears Proposals

76. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he has had any indications from mortgage lending institutions of an intention on their behalf to change their current approach to home repossessions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12251/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Central Bank, under its MARs project, has for some time been intensively working with lenders to ensure that they can offer a range of longer term options to their customers who are experiencing mortgage difficulty. These can include mortgage-to-rent, trade-down mortgages, equity participation, interest rate reduction, split mortgages and sale by agreement, or other appropriate options as may be developed by lenders. In addition, the Central Bank's Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears is a key framework that governs the relationship between mortgage holders experiencing difficulty and their bank and it offers very worthwhile protections for mortgage holders who are in arrears or pre-arrears. The Code provides that a mortgage lender must, in the case of mortgage difficulty, consider all options for alternative repayment arrangements and must not apply to the Courts to commence legal action for repossession of the borrower's primary residence until every reasonable effort has been made to agree an alternative arrangement. It also provides that where a borrower co-operates with the lender, the lender must wait at least twelve months from the date the borrower is classified as a MARP case before applying to the Courts. However, provision 48 of the Code outlines the circumstances, for example where the borrower does not cooperate with the lender, where the twelve month moratorium on the initiation of Court actions will not apply.

The Deputy may also wish to note that the Central Bank has commenced a review of the

Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears, which will shortly involve a public consultation process, to take account of recent developments, such as the new personal insolvency legislation. Subject to compliance with this Code, it is a matter for lenders to take the legal actions it considers necessary to protect and enforce its rights as provided for in mortgage law and contracts.

State Banking Sector

77. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will set out in tabular form the current value ascribed to each of the State's investment holdings in Bank of Ireland and Allied Irish Bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12252/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As previously disclosed the gross bank recapitalisation commitments made by the State in Allied Irish Bank (AIB) and Bank of Ireland (BOI) to date are set out in the following table:

€bn	AIB/EBS	BOI	Total
Government preference Shares (2009) - NPRF	3.5	3.5*	7.0
Capital contributions (with Promissory Notes as consideration)/Special Investment Shares (2010) - Exchequer	0.9	-	0.9
Ordinary Share Capital (2010) - NPRF	3.7		3.7
Total pre-PCAR 2011 (A)	8.1	3.5	11.6
PCAR 2011:	AIB/EBS	BOI	Total
Capital from Exchequer**	3.9	-	3.9
NPRF Capital	8.8	1.2	10.0
Total PCAR (B)	12.7	1.2	13.9
Total Cost of Recap for AIB & BOI (A) + (B)	20.7	4.7	25.4

* €1.7bn of BOI's government preference shares were converted to equity in May/June 2010 (€1.8bn still left in existence). The government also received €0.5bn from the warrants relating to BOI's preference shares (excluded from table above). In addition the State received €1.1bn stock coupons from BOI and AIB relating to the Government Preference shares.

** The Exchequer cost of the 2011 BOI recap is shown net of share sale to private investors (Completed in October, 2011).

As the Deputy will be aware, the State successfully disposed of the €1.0 billion Contingent Capital instruments in Bank of Ireland in January 2013 at a profit of €10m, while previously we received €0.5bn from the sale of our warrants in the bank. These disposals and other receipts from dividends and coupons are not reflected in the headline figures shown in this table. The State's remaining investments in these two banks consist of a 99.8% equity stake in AIB, a 15% stake in BOI, preference shares with a nominal value of €3.5bn in AIB and €1.8bn in BOI and Contingent Capital in AIB of €1.6bn.

The most recent valuation of these holdings is contained in the NPRF 2011 Annual Report published on the 19th July 2012. As at the 31st December 2011, the NPRF valuation of its investments in AIB was €6.1bn, comprising preference shares of €2.2bn and ordinary shares of €3.9bn (the Contingent Capital is held by the Minister directly). Its investments in BOI were valued at over €1.8bn consisting of preference shares of almost €1.5bn and ordinary shares c.€0.4bn.

The value of the State's remaining bank investments is understood to have improved since then as evidenced by the recent strength in BOI's share price. As of 5th March 2013, it was at

14c per share versus 8c at the end of 2011.

Table from NPRF Annual Report

Directed Portfolio 31 December 2011	Valuation €m	% of Directed Portfolio
Allied Irish Banks		
3,500 million preference shares	2,224	27.9
513 billion ordinary shares	3,896	48.9
Total Allied Irish Banks	6,119	76.9
Bank of Ireland		
1,837 million preference shares	1,473	18.5
4,512 million ordinary shares	370	4.6
Total Bank of Ireland	1,843	23.1
Cash	0	0
Total Directed Portfolio	7,962	100.0

Figures may not total due to rounding

Source: NTMA

Budget 2013

78. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Finance if consideration has been given to enabling a citizen who is experiencing financial difficulties to access previously made pension contributions in a similar manner to the access being granted by the Finance Bill to AVC funds for the sole purpose of alleviating a mortgage arrears problem. [12273/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In my Budget 2013 speech, I announced that I would make provision in Finance Bill 2013 for persons making Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs) used to supplement their main scheme retirement benefits to withdraw up to 30% of the value of those contributions. Any amounts withdrawn will be subject to tax at the individual's marginal rate. The option will be available for 3 years from the passing of the Finance Bill. This is a restricted measure which will enable rather than incentivize certain individuals to access part of their pension savings beyond their regular or compulsory pension contributions. I do not wish to damage future pension provision and it is important that individuals continue to provide for their retirement. For these reasons, I have no plans to extend the measure beyond AVCs.

Universal Social Charge

79. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 278 of 5 February 2013, the position remains unchanged; tax is still being deducted from a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12281/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised by the Revenue Commissioners that they have again contacted the pension provider on this matter. The pension provider has confirmed that USC deducted was repaid to the person concerned on 22 February 2013. In addition, the pension provider has also confirmed that there will not be any tax or USC

deducted from the next and following payments.

Substance Misuse

80. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will explore every possible funding option in 2013 for a project (details supplied) in County Kerry; if he will consider the huge social dividend derived from this very worthy project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12039/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department understands that this project is designed to provide health education and drug awareness programmes to children in primary schools. The Department of Education and Skills, through substance abuse prevention education, contributes to the overall aim of Government policy in relation to drugs, which is to provide an effective, integrated response to the problems posed by drug misuse. Substance abuse prevention education is implemented as part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curricula. SPHE is mandatory in all primary and post-primary schools up to Junior Certificate level, and is supported by full time support services offering professional development to teachers and advice to schools. The second level support service is operated jointly with the Health Sector. SPHE is designed to help develop students' confidence and self esteem, and promote the skills for living, for responsible decision making, and for mental, physical and emotional health and wellbeing. SPHE includes substance misuse prevention education as an integral part which must be implemented by all schools.

In addition, the Framework for Junior Cycle, published in October 2012, is underpinned by 8 principles one of which is "Wellbeing", Through Wellbeing "the student experience will contribute directly to their physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing and resilience. Learning takes place in a climate focused on collective wellbeing of school, community and society". In addition the Framework contains 24 Statements of Learning which students should experience. One of these statements aims to ensure that the student "takes action to safeguard and promote his/her wellbeing and that of others". In addition, there are six key skills required for successful learning by students across the curriculum and for learning beyond school. One of the six key skills of Junior Cycle is "Staying Well". In the context of the details outlined above and the significant support which my Department in collaboration with the Department of Health gives to this area, I am not in a position to provide funding for this project.

Further Education and Training Programmes Provision

81. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will consider amending current FÁS stipulations which are preventing job-seeking persons who worked in the construction industry but who are not qualified plumbers, from receiving the financial assistance required to undertake up-skilling courses that would permit job-seekers from availing of the opportunities that will arise from the installation of water meters nationally. [12272/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): I understand from FÁS that only qualified Plumbers should be responsible for the installation of boundary boxes and water meters. This position was confirmed in a recent meeting between FÁS and Irish Water and subsequently between FAS and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). I am informed that this work is specifically covered as part of the Plumbing Apprenticeship, and therefore ensures that qualified Plumbers are confirmed as capable of boundary box/water meter installation. The installation of Valves and Taps is covered in the Plumbing

Apprenticeship Phase 2 Module 2 “Domestic Hot and Cold Water Services”. The causes and means of prevention of water supply contamination is covered in Phase 6 Module 2 “Advanced Pipework, Water and Wastewater Systems”.

Irish Water have stated that boundary box/water meter installation teams will consist of two persons, one responsible for the excavation/repair of ground works and the other for the installation of the boundary box/water meter. There may of course be ‘operative’ type work available around site work/preparation for installation etc. In relation to the issue of providing financial assistance to job-seekers looking to avail of up-skilling courses, this would be a matter for the Department of Social Protection in the first instance.

Student Grant Scheme Delays

82. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the problems with student grants have been fully resolved; if all students who have been approved for a student grant are now in receipt of payment; when the report of the inquiry into the student crisis will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12116/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I understand from Student Universal Support Ireland that they are up to date with processing all complete applications. The current position on processing of grants by SUSI, as at close of business on 3rd March is that 55,921 applications have been processed to completion. SUSI is currently contacting applicants who have not completed their application to provide a final opportunity to submit outstanding documentation before the remaining incomplete applications are closed out. The vast majority of students awarded maintenance are already in payment. The remaining 2,070, the majority of whom were recently awarded, will be paid within the next two weeks depending on their submission of bank account details. An external review of SUSI’s business processes is currently being undertaken to inform improvements in the system for the 2013/14 academic year. The proposed timeline for completion of the review is March 2013.

Teachers’ Remuneration

83. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason the outstanding difficulties in relation to the proper remuneration for a person (details supplied) have not yet been resolved; when the person may expect the matter to be resolved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12059/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Following on from the review of allowances in the public service, revised salary scales for teachers were agreed and Circular 008/2013 was published on the 25th January setting out the new scales. My Department are currently adapting the payroll systems to take account of the new scales and to ensure that the correct rate of pay is applied to the relevant teachers. When the developments are completed, all teachers will be paid the correct rate and arrears due, if any, will be paid. My officials have been in contact with the person in question and he is aware of the position in relation to the new scales.

Teachers' Remuneration

84. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reasons newly appointed teachers who commenced between the 1 January 2011 and 1 February 2012 and who should be entitled to payment at point four of the relevant pay scale, that is, those who formerly received a qualification allowance have not yet been paid at the rate specified in their contracts; when he expects the difficulties within the payroll section regarding this matter to be overcome; if he will commit to taking extra steps to ensure the problem is resolved quickly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12061/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Following on from the review of allowances in the public service, revised salary scales for teachers were agreed and Circular 008/2013 was published on 25th January setting out the new scales. These new arrangements affect some teachers appointed since January 2011, depending on their teaching service and registration details. Teachers appointed since February 2012, depending on registration and employment history will be placed on the new agreed scales and qualification and other allowances will not be paid to appointees since the 1st February 2012. My Department is currently adapting the payroll systems to take account of the new scales and to ensure that the correct rate of pay is applied to teachers. When the developments are completed, all teachers will be paid the correct rate and arrears due, if any, will be paid.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

85. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will arrange to have an application for a higher education grant re-examined in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [12092/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) has confirmed that the applicant referred to by the Deputy appealed the decision on his grant with regard to the rate of grant awarded and that a letter on the appeal issued on 24th January, 2013. Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down in writing by SUSI and remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board. The relevant appeal form will be available on request from SUSI.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

86. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) in County Kerry will be awarded the special rate of maintenance grant due to a change in their circumstances since their original application or if they will be permitted to reapply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12098/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) has confirmed that the student referred to by the Deputy, appealed the decision on her grant to the appeals officer in SUSI with regard to the rate of grant awarded and their original decision was upheld. A letter on the appeal issued on 31st January, 2013. The applicant has submitted an appeal to the Student Grants Appeals Board. This appeal is due for consideration at the next sitting of the Student Grants Appeals Board which is scheduled for the 12th March 2013.

School Curriculum

87. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has considered the Certified Public Accountants Ireland Entrepreneurship Report for 2012; his views on the recommendation to introduce entrepreneurship as a subject to the curriculum for primary and secondary students; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12130/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I am aware of the Certified Public Accountants Ireland Entrepreneurship Report which was published in 2012. The Primary School curriculum concentrates on the development of core communication skills and literacy and numeracy. The pupils are encouraged to be active and collaborative learners and to use ICT as a cross-curricular tool. The development of these skills provides them with the foundation for lifelong learning and for creating a culture of enterprise.

In October 2012, I published the Framework for Junior Cycle which acknowledges the key role of entrepreneurship. In its principles the Framework highlights the role of “creativity and innovation”. There are Statements of Learning which specify what students should know, understand, value and be able to do at the end of junior cycle. A number of the statements are relevant to enterprise but one in particular emphasises that the students “should take initiative, be innovative and develop entrepreneurial skills”.

In Senior Cycle, there are opportunities to develop entrepreneurial skills through, for example, the Leaving Certificate Business Studies course or through participation in the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme Links modules and in the Leaving Certificate Applied. For Transition Year students there is the opportunity to participate in the Sean Lemass Awards that include the Transition Year Mini Company and its “Get up and Go” competition and the County/ City Enterprise Board “Student Enterprise “ Competition. In 2012, almost 10,000 students participated in the Transition Year programme and over 15,000 participated in the Student Enterprise Awards.

I welcome the CPA Report and its recommendation on entrepreneurship . I am committed to our young people developing entrepreneurial skills and a number of initiatives, as noted above, are in place to make this a reality.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

88. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if Asperger’s Syndrome is a recognised disability for resource hours in primary and second level. [12138/13]

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. In this context, eligibility for low incidence resource hours for children with Asperger’s Syndrome is considered under the Autism/Autism Spectrum Disorder category.

Schools Building Projects Expenditure

89. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which he expects to be in a position to meet requirements of the school building programme as set out by the various school management authorities at primary and second level throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12188/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that my priority is to ensure that there is sufficient school accommodation to meet projected pupil enrolment increases into the future. The 5 Year Plan that I announced in March 2012, together with my recent announcement of the 50 school projects which are scheduled for construction in the current year as part of a €2 billion capital investment programme, outlines the major school projects that will commence construction over the duration of the Plan. This information is available on my Department's website www.education.ie.

In addition, my Department will consider applications by schools for funding for additional classrooms, which schools may provide on a permanent basis, where an immediate enrolment need is arising. Under the Rental Prefab Replacement Initiative announced in 2012, almost 200 schools have been offered grants to build permanent accommodation - over a third of all schools who currently rent prefabs. Over €40 million has been allocated for this initiative. Given the current financial constraints within which my Department is operating, the position is that priority is being given to school applications for essential mainstream classroom accommodation. In this regard, the delivery of new schools, together with extension projects to meet the demographic demand, will be the main focus for capital investment in schools in the coming years.

School Staffing

90. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which he expects to be in a position to retain the required complement of teachers at primary and second level throughout the country throughout the course of the current year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12190/13]

97. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he is satisfied regarding the adequacy of sufficient number of teachers available at primary and second level to meet the requirements as determined by various school authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12197/13]

102. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which he expects to be in a position to control class sizes in the coming year notwithstanding the difficulties arising from the Memorandum of Understanding entered into by his predecessors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12202/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 90, 97 and 102 together.

The Government has protected front-line services in schools to the greatest extent possible in the recent budget and there will no reduction in teacher numbers in primary schools and in free second level schools for the 2013/14 school year as a result of the budget. The DEIS scheme for disadvantaged schools is also fully protected with no overall changes to staffing levels or funding as a result of the budget.

Teacher allocations are approved annually in accordance with established rules based on recognised pupil enrolment. The staffing arrangements at primary and post primary level for the 2013/14 school year have been published and are available on the Department website. The allocation process at individual school level is currently underway. At post primary level and in accordance with existing arrangements, where a school management authority is unable to meet its curricular commitments within its approved allocation, my Department considers applications for additional short term support i.e., curricular concessions.

The allocation processes at both primary and post primary level also include an appeals mechanism under which schools can appeal against the allocation due to them under the staffing schedules. The appeal procedures are set out in the annual staffing arrangements. The Appeal Boards operate independently of the Department and their decisions are final. The final staffing position for all schools at primary and post primary level will ultimately not be known until the Autumn. At that stage the allocation process will be fully completed and any appeals to the Staffing Appeal Boards will have been considered.

Questions Nos. 91 and 92 answered with Question No. 43.

Employment Support Services

93. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which he is satisfied regarding the availability of facilities in respect of up skilling to meet current and future employment requirements either directly or in conjunction with other Departments or agencies including Solas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12193/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): In the Programme for Government we undertook to introduce a more focussed, targeted approach regarding the States engagement with and support of the unemployed - to keep them close to the labour market, provide education and training opportunities and to get them back into the workforce. The Government is tackling unemployment generally through the twin strategies of the “Action Plan for Jobs” and “Pathways to Work”.

In 2012, the Government launched its “Action Plan for Jobs”, which is an ambitious jobs plan that aims to create 100,000 new positions by 2016 and a further 100,000 by 2020. My Department played a key role in the successful implementation of this plan with a number of initiatives that were monitored on a regular basis to track progress. These initiatives were implemented in conjunction with several other Government Departments and Agencies to ensure that the country’s workforce receive relevant training and upskilling through a variety of further education and training programmes which is a vital element of this country’s recovery from the current downturn.

As I am sure the Deputy will be aware the Government launched its 2013 “Action Plan for Jobs” last month. This Plan will build on the success of the 2012 plan and will support employment creation and provide targeted assistance to those who are unemployed to help them access the labour market. My Department will play a central role in this Plan in providing relevant education and training to assist the unemployed to enter or re-enter the workforce. With a rapidly changing economy, the measures the Department will take this year are focused on aligning the education and training system with labour market needs, addressing skills gaps where there are real opportunities for employment and also targeting youth and the long-term unemployed.

To complement the “Action Plan for Jobs”, the Irish Government also introduced a new Integrated Employment and Support service entitled ‘Intreo’, which is being managed under the

aegis of the Department of Social Protection. The services and supports involved were previously provided by three distinct State services and the innovative integration of these supports has facilitated the development of a co-ordinated structure which provides unemployed people, particularly the long term unemployed, with options and assistance in finding jobs or referrals to appropriate education and training. In doing so, “Intreo” provides a “one-stop-shop” service.

In addition to these policy initiatives, and despite reducing resources, the Government will fund up to 430,000 education and training places across the range of provision in the higher education, further education and training sectors in 2013. Places have been prioritised specifically for those who have been unemployed for 12 months or more. My Department will continue to work closely with all relevant Government Departments and Agencies to ensure that the Government is putting the right measures in place to ensure people can upskill and reskill in the areas where skills are in demand.

Education and Training Provision

94. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he and his Department has set specific targets to meet up skilling requirements arising from educational deficiencies due to third level drop out during the economic boom which has left many currently unemployed, under skilled in terms of market requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12194/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): In 2013 the Government will fund up to 430,000 education and training places across the higher education, further education and training sectors. All of these places are open to unemployed people who wish to retrain or upskill and the provision also includes a number of targeted programmes that have been introduced with the specific aim of supporting jobseekers to retrain or upskill in key areas of labour market demand.

The Springboard programme provides free part time higher education places targeted at unemployed people who have lost jobs in sectors where employment levels will not return and who will need new qualifications and skills to re-enter employment. More than 10,000 places have been provided under the two rounds of the programme to date. A new call for proposals for Springboard courses was issued at the end of February and is expected to provide for an additional 5,000 places in 2013. 6,500 training places are also currently being rolled out for unemployed people under the Momentum programme. The training, which is aligned up to levels 5 and 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications, is targeted at areas of labour market demand and there is a particular focus on the needs of unemployed people under the age of 25.

In addition, as part of the joint Government-Industry ICT Action Plan, in February 2013 more than 760 new places were made available for jobseekers under the second phase of the graduate skills conversion programme. Furthermore, Skillnets, a state-funded, enterprise-led support body which arranges training based on the needs of industry, will target 8,000 of its training places specifically towards the unemployed in 2013.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

95. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the degree to which he continues to be in a position to meet the special needs requirements at both primary and post-primary level in all areas throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12195/13]

96. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the degree to which he hopes to be in a position to provide the necessary resources to meet special needs teaching and SA requirements throughout the educational system at primary and second level in line with requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12196/13]

100. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which special needs teaching requirements in the context of special needs teachers and special needs assistants is being met in the current year at primary and second level throughout County Kildare; the extent to which he has received submissions from the various representative groups in this regard in respect of extra facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12200/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 95, 96 and 100 together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that this Government is committed to the protection of frontline services for pupils with special educational needs. The Programme for Government sets out that education will be a priority for this Government and that we will endeavour to protect and enhance the educational experience of children, young people and students. Approximately 15% of the entire budget of my Department - some €1.3 billion - was spent in support of children with Special Educational Needs in 2011/12. The provision for the 2012/13 school year is in line with expenditure last year and shows that despite the current economic difficulties, the overall level of funding for special education has been retained.

In line with this Government's commitment to protect frontline services for pupils with special educational needs:

- 10,575 whole time equivalent (wte) Special Needs Assistant (SNA) posts are being provided for primary, post-primary and special schools for the current school year in order to support the care needs of pupils with disabilities.

- Approximately 9,950 learning support/resource teacher posts, including those provided under the General Allocation Model, are also being provided in primary & post primary schools in order to provide additional teaching support to pupils with special educational needs.

- Over 1,100 teachers are also being provided for in special schools providing teaching to pupils with various disabilities at much reduced pupil: teacher ratios, for example the autism PTR is 6:1 and the moderate general learning disability PTR is 8:1.

- Enhanced levels of school capitation are payable to most special schools and special classes and special School Transport arrangements for pupils with disabilities are provided at a cost of over €60m per year.

- Approximately €1.3m is also provided annually to schools for assistive technology support.

- Early educational intervention is provided for children with autism from 2½ years of age. There are now 76 early intervention classes for children with autism attached to mainstream schools that are funded by the Department. Funding is also provided through the home tuition programme for children with autism who are unable to access placement in an early intervention class.

- An extended school year is also currently available for pupils who have either a severe/profound general learning disability or who have autism.

The continued commitment of this Government to special education provision, at a time when savings are being required across a range of expenditure areas has ensured that children with special educational needs can continue to have access to educational facilities in line with their requirements. The level of investment being provided will ensure that provision can continue to be made to provide for the educational requirements of children with special educational needs in mainstream primary and post primary schools and special schools this year, including such schools in Co. Kildare.

My Department has also requested the National Council for Special Education to provide policy advice to the Department, in accordance with its role under the EPSEN Act, on the appropriate nature and configuration of educational supports which should be provided to schools to support children with special educational needs. In preparing its advice the NCSE has consulted widely with representative bodies and education partners. The advice from the NCSE is expected in the coming months. It is intended that the significant resources to support children with Special Educational Needs are deployed to ensure the best possible outcomes for students. The advice will be a key input into achieving this goal.

Question No. 97 answered with Question No. 90.

Student Grant Scheme Reform

98. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which he will re-examine the structures of Student Universal Support Ireland and the inadequacy of the existing structures to deal with the volume of applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12198/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): An external review of Student Universal Support Ireland's business processes is currently being undertaken to inform improvements in the system for the 2013/14 academic year. The proposed timeline for completion of the review is March 2013.

Student Grant Scheme Application Numbers

99. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the total number of student higher education grant applications received by Student Universal Support Ireland in respect of the 2012/2013 academic year; the number approved, refused or pending to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12199/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I understand from Student Universal Support Ireland that they are up to date with processing all completed applications. Applications are not complete until all of the required supporting documentation has been submitted by the applicant. The number of initial online applications submitted to SUSI to date is 69,402 which represents a very substantial increase of over 20% on the 57,635 applications submitted as of January last year. However, the number of complete applications (those with all of the required documentation submitted) is 56,384. As of 3 March 2013, 36,317 applications have been awarded or provisionally awarded and 19,604 have been refused or cancelled. The remaining 463 applications are currently with SUSI for processing. There are 13,018 incomplete applications. SUSI has contacted most of those applicants to provide a final opportunity to submit outstanding documentation before the remaining incomplete applications are closed out.

Question No. 100 answered with Question No. 95.

Schools Building Projects Status

101. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which he has received communication from the various school authorities at primary and second level throughout County Kildare in respect of the provision of new or replacement school buildings, permanent and/or temporary; his plans to meet such requirements in the current year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12201/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The 5 Year Construction Programme that I announced in March 2012, together with my recent announcement of the 50 school projects which are scheduled for construction in the current year as part of a €2 billion capital investment programme, outlines the major school projects that will commence construction over the duration of the Plan (2012-2016). The primary aim at the core of the Five Year Plan is focused on meeting demographic demands to ensure that every child will have access to a physical school place and that our school system is in a position to cope with increasing pupil numbers.

Two of the 50 projects scheduled to proceed to construction in the current year are located in Kildare. The current status of all projects on the school building programme, including those in County Kildare, may be viewed on my Department's website at www.education.ie and this will be updated regularly throughout the year. In addition, my Department will also consider applications by schools for funding for additional mainstream classrooms, which schools may provide on a permanent basis, where an immediate enrolment need is arising.

Question No. 102 answered with Question No. 90.

Teachers' Remuneration

103. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if both the principals and deputy principals' allowances are based on the maximum number of teachers based in their school, irrespective of their current staff numbers; the number of schools both primary and post-primary in which such a scenario exists; if he will provide a breakdown of the additional costings associated with same; and his plans to change this system to achieve savings in the future. [12253/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The level of allowance payable to Principals and Deputy Principals in Primary and Post Primary schools is based on the number of authorised teaching posts which have been sanctioned in the year in which the posts of responsibility accrue. Principal and Deputy Principal allowances may increase if the number of teachers in the school increase provided this results in a change of category. However, allowances held by Principals and Deputy Principals are not impacted during the tenure of the Principal/Deputy Principal if the number of teachers in the school decreases. New appointees will be remunerated at the revised allowance applicable at the time of appointment based on staffing levels at that time. Collating information on the numbers of principals and deputy principals within the education system who are in receipt of allowances based on historical teacher numbers and allocating an ongoing cost to this would involve an inordinate amount of administrative time to compile.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

104. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a grant application in respect of a person (details supplied). [12259/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland that the student referred to by the Deputy has been awarded a grant and an award letter issued on 4th March, 2013.

Schools Building Projects Status

105. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the proposed building project for a school (details supplied) in County Cavan; the stage of this project at present; when it is proposed to have the project proceed to the next stage; the likely timescale for the project to advance to construction stage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12271/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Major Building Project for the school referred to by the Deputy is at an early stage of architectural planning. The schools Design Team are currently working on a Revised Stage 1 Submission. Due to competing demands on my Department's capital budget, imposed by the need to prioritise the limited funding available for the provision of additional school accommodation to meet increasing demographic requirements, it was not possible to include this project in the five year construction programme. School building projects which have not been included in the five year construction programme, but which were announced for initial inclusion in the building programme will continue to be progressed to final planning stages in anticipation of the possibility of further funds being available to my Department in future years. The project referred to by the Deputy remains available to be considered for progression in that context.

Exchequer Revenue

106. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount of income paid to the State annually by telecommunications companies for masts on Garda property; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12126/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): The following table shows the income received by the State under licences granted to telecommunications companies in respect Garda masts. The figure for 2003 includes arrears for the previous years due as a result of an arbitration process.

Year	€
1997	€282,624.56
1998	€383,615.65
1999	€919,804.26
2000	€72,044.76
2001	€628,308.43
2002	€93,824.74
2003	€4,481,189.61
2004	€921,030.86
2005	€618,610.01

Year	€
2006	€1,037,798.05
2007	€1,937,793.15
2008	€4,030,487.29
2009	€2,412,593.51
2010	€3,838,876.84
2011	€3,049,043.10
2012	€2,016,199.49

Parliamentary Party Allowances

107. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the total amount of funding allocated under the party leader's allowance in each of the past 10 years broken down by party; and the way in which the underlining rate per member applying to the party leader's allowance scheme has changed in each of these years. [12254/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Party Leader's Allowance is provided for in the Oireachtas (Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices) Act, 1938, as amended by the Oireachtas (Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices (Amendment) Act, 2001.

The allowance is paid to the parliamentary leader of a "qualifying party", as defined in the legislation underpinning the allowance, in relation to expenses arising from the parliamentary activities, including research, of the party. Payments are made in respect of members of the party elected to Dáil Éireann and members elected/nominated to Seanad Éireann at the last preceding general election, or a subsequent bye-election or, in the case of Seanad Éireann, nominated to it after the last preceding general election.

Under the legislation, the amount of the allowance is calculated based on the number of members elected at the time of election in accordance with the following table:

TDs	Rates: September 2008 to date €	Rates: September 2008 to date Government Parties* €
First 10 members	71,520	47,680
11 members to 30	57,214	38,143
More than 30 members	28,616	19,077
Senators	€	
First 5 members	46,766	
Over 5 members	23,383	

*The legislation provides that, in the case of a qualifying party forming part of the Government, the combined allowances due in respect of TDs of that party are reduced by one third.

The legislation also provides that payments may be made to a member of Dáil Éireann, who at the last preceding general election or at a subsequent bye-election was elected as a member other than as a member of a qualifying party. Such qualifying Independent TDs are currently entitled to an annual rate of €41,152. A similar provision in the Act provides for an annual payment, currently amounting to €23,383, for Independent Senators.

A table outlining the historic rates applicable for calculating the entitlement of qualifying Party Leaders and qualifying Independent Members for each of the years 2002 to 2012 is set out at Appendix 1.

The total amounts paid to each qualifying party leader in each of the years 2002 to 2012 is

set out at Appendix 2. Appendix 2 also illustrates the total amounts paid in respect of all qualifying Independent TDs and all qualifying Independent Senators in each of those years.

The rates of the allowances were adjusted automatically by reference to salary increases in the Civil Service in accordance with legislation.

As part of the reform of the political expenses regime, in the context of the Expenditure Estimates for 2013, I announced that a 10% reduction will be applied to the Party Leaders' Allowance rates payable to qualifying leaders of political parties and to qualifying Independent Members. I also announced my intention to amend the legislation to amend the legislation to improve the transparency of the allowance by providing for auditing provisions to apply to Independent Members in receipt of such payments. My Department is preparing the changes to primary legislation necessary to effect those changes.

Appendix 1

Rates applicable for calculating entitlement to the Party Leaders Allowance

	October 2001	October 2002	January 2004	July 2004	December 2004	June 2005	July 2005	December 2005	June 2006	December 2006	June 2007	March 2008	September 2008 to date
TDs													
First 10 Members	€51,217	€53,266	€54,864	€55,961	€57,080	€57,936	€60,109	€61,011	€64,795	€66,739	€68,074	€69,775	€71,520
11 to 30 Members	€40,973	€42,612	€43,890	€44,768	€45,663	€46,348	€48,086	€48,807	€51,835	€53,390	€54,458	€55,819	€57,214
31 Members and over	€20,491	€21,311	€21,950	€22,389	€22,837	€23,180	€24,049	€24,410	€25,925	€26,703	€27,237	€27,918	€28,616
Senators													
First 5 Members	€33,489	€34,829	€35,874	€36,591	€37,323	€37,883	€39,304	€39,894	€42,368	€43,639	€44,512	€45,25	€46,766
over 5 Members	€16,745	€17,415	€17,937	€18,296	€18,662	€18,942	€19,652	€19,947	€21,185	€21,821	€22,257	€22,813	€23,383
Independent Members													
Independent TDs	€29,470	€30,649	€31,568	€32,199	€32,843	€33,336	€34,586	€35,105	€37,283	€38,401	€39,170	€40,149	€41,152
Independent Senators	€16,745	€17,415	€17,937	€18,296	€18,662	€18,942	€19,652	€19,947	€21,185	€21,821	€22,257	€22,813	€23,383

Party Leaders Allowance - Total amounts paid in each year from 2002 to 2012

Party	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Fianna Fáil	€2,094,432.49	€2,257,360.56	€2,348,307.96	€2,472,866.29	€2,704,170.67	€2,730,839.76	€2,867,494.65	€2,915,876.00	€2,871,363.60	€1,746,500.88	€1,674,402.96
Fine Gael	€1,826,963.57	€1,754,505.96	€1,825,202.03	€1,927,929.22	€2,115,053.75	€2,435,377.93	€2,845,636.90	€2,921,385.00	€2,909,462.34	€2,579,029.69	€2,678,402.64
Labour	€1,052,611.19	€1,175,537.04	€1,222,906.50	€1,296,764.51	€1,417,104.63	€1,399,650.66	€1,536,056.85	€1,564,039.00	€1,499,36.06	€1,634,607.19	€1,789,782.96
Progressive Democrats	€331,620.05	€423,401.28	€440,463.36	€467,066.43	€510,410.09	€308,167.94	€185,080.70	€47,223.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00
Sinn Féin	€182,322.65	€266,325.00	€277,062.48	€293,795.41	€321,059.17	€297,321.50	€326,078.34	€332,846.00	€335,424.57	€933,875.54	€1,084,353.96
Socialist Party	€50,304.58	€53,265.00	€55,412.52	€58,759.09	€64,211.90	€22,408.31	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€120,902.86	€137,080.00
Green Party	€232,628.76	€319,596.00	€33,2475.00	€352,554.50	€385,271.00	€347,518.10	€371,893.05	€383,509.00	€426,378.00	€75,583.10	€0.00
People Before Profit	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00	€120,902.86	€143,040.00
Independent TDs	€328,472.72	€398,436.48	€414,485.63	€467,272.68	€514,158.64	€313,283.67	€201,581.62	€147,682.00	€164,07.84	€505,091.31	€652,552.50
Independent Senators	€85,400.80	€87,075.00	€90,582.60	€96,054.30	€104,970.85	€116,334.65	€160,354.39	€157,835.00	€140,297.76	€208,794.15	€275,601.20
Total	€6,184,756.81	€6,735,502.32	€7,006,898.08	€7,433,062.43	€8,136,410.70	€7,970,902.52	€8,494,176.50	€8,470,395.00	€8,347,270.17	€7,925,287.58	€8,435,216.22

Political Funding

108. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the total funding allocated under the Electoral (Amendment) Act, 2001 to the qualifying parties in each of the past 10 years broken down by party; and the way in which the underlining rate applying to allocations under this Act has changed in each of these years. [12255/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Responsibility for the Electoral Acts is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government.

Under section 17 of the Electoral Act 1997, as amended by section 50(c) of the Electoral (Amendment) Act 2001, provision is made for two payments to be made to qualified political parties.

Section 17(1)(a) of the Electoral Act 1997, as amended, provides for a fixed payment of €126,973.81 to be made to each qualified party in each period of 12 months.

Section 17(1)(b) of the Electoral Act 1997, as amended, provides for an annual sum to be shared among qualified political parties. When introduced in 2001, the legislation provided for this sum to be shared to amount to €3,809,214 (£3,000,000). In accordance with the legislation, the sum was increased in line with general increases in Civil Service remuneration, as set out in Appendix 1. The current sum shared amongst qualified parties amounts to €4,948,201.68, and €5,456,096.88 when the fixed amount referred to above is included.

Payments are calculated on the basis of the share of first preference votes obtained by an individual qualified party at the previous general election. These shares are calculated by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government. The variable percentages applicable in the time frame requested by the Deputy, are set out in Appendix 2.

Payments under the Electoral Acts are made from the Central Fund. The annual amounts paid to each party for the period requested by the Deputy are as set out in the tables in Appendix 3.

Appendix 1

Rates of the first preference votes payments under section 17(1)(b) of the Electoral Act 1997, as amended by section 50(c) of the 2001 Act

-	€
Civil Service increases	2001 Amount - €3,809,214.24
Final increase under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness 1 October 2002	€3,961,582.80
Sustaining Progress 1 January 2002	€4,080,430.29
Sustaining Progress 1 July 2004	€4,162,038.89
Sustaining Progress 1 December 2004	€4,245,279.67
Sustaining Progress 1 June 2005	€4,308,958.97
Sustaining Progress 1 December 2005	€4,373,593.35
Sustaining Progress 1 June 2006	€4,482,933.18
Towards 2016 – 1 December 2006	€4,617,421.18
Towards 2016 – 1 March 2008	€4,827,513.84
Towards 2016 – 1 September 2008	€4,948,201.68

Percentage shares applied to Electoral Act Funding under section 17(1)(b) of the Electoral Act 1997, as amended by the Electoral (Amendment) Act 2001

First Preference Votes in the 1997 General Election
Party First preference votes as a % of total first preference votes of qualified parties
Fianna Fáil 43.62%
Fine Gael 30.99%
Labour 11.53%
Progressive Democrats 5.19%
Green Party 3.06%
Sinn Féin 2.83%
Democratic Left 2.78%
Total 100%

First Preference Votes in the 2002 General Election
Party First preference votes as a % of total first preference votes of qualified parties
Fianna Fáil 46.58%
Fine Gael 25.24%
Labour 12.10%
Progressive Democrats 4.45%
Green Party 4.32%
Sinn Féin 7.31%
Total 100%

First Preference Votes in the 2007 General Election
Party First preference votes as a % of total first preference votes of qualified parties
Fianna Fáil 44.510%
Fine Gael 29.262%
Labour 10.844%
Progressive Democrats 2.924%
Green Party 5.025%
Sinn Féin 7.435%
Total 100%

First Preference Votes in the 2011 General Election
Party First preference votes as a % of total first preference votes of qualified parties
Fianna Fáil 21.036%
Fine Gael 43.533%
Labour 23.449%
Sinn Féin 11.983%
Total 100%

Appendix 3

Total Electoral Act Funding under sections 17(1)(a) and 17(1)(b) of the Electoral Act 1997, as amended by the Electoral (Amendment) Act 2001

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Fianna Fáil	€1,757,617.36	€1,972,279.08	€2,023,301.77	€2,107,850.06	€2,176,239.20	€2,247,246.89	€2,258,340.04	€2,329,418.08	€2,329,418.08	€1,635,707.59	1167856.24
Fine Gael	€1,168,425.88	€1,126,877.28	€1,154,524.62	€1,200,338.26	€1,237,395.84	€1,361,733.52	€1,528,187.91	€1,574,916.36	€1,574,916.36	€1,996,637.88	2281054.64
Labour Party	€602,203.68	€606,325.32	€619,579.40	€641,542.35	€659,307.67	€665,763.21	€646,239.94	€663,556.68	€663,556.68	€1,036,050.21	1287266.72

Questions - Written Answers

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Progressive Democrats	€292,366.40	€303,264.24	€308,138.67	€316,215.96	€322,749.48	€307,361.31	€266,989.88	€67,914.98	€0.00	€0.00	€0.00
Green Party	€243,747.03	€298,114.16	€302,846.21	€310,687.54	€317,030.19	€338,588.66	€367,596.48	€375,620.88	€375,620.88	€151,291.76	€0.00
Sinn Féin	€286,183.26	€416,565.52	€424,572.71	€437,841.25	€448,573.85	€467,226.64	€482,999.60	€494,872.56	€494,872.56	€629,275.48	719919.28
Total	€4,350,543.61	€4,723,425.60	€4,832,963.38	€5,014,475.42	€5,161,296.23	€5,387,920.23	€5,550,353.85	€5,506,299.54	€5,438,384.56	€5,448,962.92	€5,456,096.88

PEACE Programme

109. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will ensure that there will be widespread consultation both North and South in relation to the criteria for the new successor programme to the Peace III Programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12266/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): On 8 February 2013 the European Council agreement on the MFF included provision for funding of €150 million towards a new PEACE Programme as part of the new EU Budget. This budget is subject to European Parliament agreement. The total size of the programme, including funding from Ireland and the UK, will depend on the outcome of programme planning.

The planning process for a possible successor Programme for PEACE III was initiated last April, when my Department and the Northern Ireland Department of Finance and Personnel asked the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) to commence preparation of detailed programme proposals in close consultation with the relevant Government Departments. The programme preparation process began with a consultation process, including public consultation events organised by SEUPB across the eligible region.

The first consultation with stakeholders across the eligible regions (Northern Ireland/Border Region of Ireland/Western Scotland (for INTERREG only) ran from 28 August until 20 November 2012. Almost 1,000 people attended consultation events. A total of 173 responses have been received. The majority of responses relate to the PEACE Programme, with a total of 76 respondents answering the questions on this programme only. A total of 48 responses relate to the INTERREG Programme and 49 responses relate to both programmes.

The majority of these responses, a total of 103, were submitted by organisations from Northern Ireland, with 48 responses from Ireland and 13 responses from Scottish organisations. A total of 9 responses were received from cross border organisations. The responses received are from a range of organisations, with the highest number submitted by the local government sector, followed by the community and voluntary sector. Responses have also been received from political parties, government agencies, the education sector, youth sector, business organisations and current project partners.

On the 21st February 2013 the SEUPB published a summary of the responses received. The consultation responses will inform the drafting of the operational programmes. All responses received and the summary document are available on the SEUPB website at www.seupb.eu. Under the guidance of a Programme Development Steering Committee representing government departments, local representatives and social partners, the SEUPB will draft programme proposals and a further consultation period will then commence.

Ministerial Staff

110. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to introduce a reduction in the pay and pay scales for special advisors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12054/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Discussions have taken place between public service employers and the Public Services Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions regarding the Government's stated intention to reach agreement on securing the required overall savings of €1bn from the public service pay and pensions bill by 2015. Following intensive engagement between the parties, which was facilitated by the Labour Relations Commission (LRC), the LRC has developed and recommended a set of proposals for consideration and agreement. The stated intention of the Government is that these proposals when given effect will apply to all public servants including special advisors. The proposals which will involve inter alia a pay cut for special advisors are currently under consideration by all public servants and are available on the LRC website.

Action Plan for Jobs

111. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he has considered the Certified Public Accountants Ireland Entrepreneurship Report for 2012; his views on the recommendation to introduce a national skills register to allow employers to find the right persons with the required skills; the recommendation to introduce specific promotional and support programmes to address the low level of entrepreneurship amongst women; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12131/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Certified Public Accountants Ireland Entrepreneurship Report for 2012 was launched by the Taoiseach on 11 December 2012 and officials in my Department are currently examining the report in light of ongoing work on this issue at Department and EU level. The Deputy will be aware that my Department recently launched the Action Plan for Jobs 2013, which is a key element in rebuilding the economy and getting people back to work. This Plan has a specific section on driving entrepreneurship and start-up companies, and includes a commitment to publish a National Entrepreneurship Policy Statement.

To deliver on this commitment, a comprehensive work programme is being developed that will involve research and consultation with interested parties and relevant stakeholders and will include examination of the development of a national skills register. I will shortly be launching a public consultation as part of an assessment of the current environment for entrepreneurship activity. This focus on entrepreneurship is particularly timely given the work currently being undertaken to restructure the County Enterprise Boards and establish Local Enterprise Offices in Local Authorities to reform the system for delivery of support to start-ups and micro enterprises. The proposed National Entrepreneurship Policy Statement will complement this major reform programme, to ensure that the operating environment is more coherent, responsive and conducive to entrepreneurship.

Several Government Departments have a role to play in enhancing the entrepreneurial dynamic. Given the whole of Government approach to the Action Plan for Jobs, this is an ideal opportunity for a National Entrepreneurship Policy Statement to underpin the importance of entrepreneurship as an explicit policy priority for job creation. The Action Plan for Jobs also contains a commitment to implement a range of female entrepreneurship initiatives during 2013,

as a follow-on from the programme for female entrepreneurs launched by Enterprise Ireland in 2012.

Imports Statistics

112. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide information on imports from China in 2012 in relation to import value, details of the types of products being imported; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12146/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Below is a table showing the value and categories of goods imported from China (including Hong Kong and Macao) in 2012.

Country-specific services import figures for 2012 will not be available until Q3 2013.

In 2011, the last year for which full year figures are available, the total value of imports of goods and services from China (including Hong Kong and Macao) was €3,039 million, while the total value of exports of goods and services to China (including Hong Kong and Macao) amounted to €4,774 million.

Goods Imports from China (including Hong Kong and Macao) 2012

Category	SITC Code	2012 €000
Live animals other than animals of Division 03	00	10
Meat & meat preparations	01	4,190
Dairy products & birds' eggs	02	0
Fish, crustaceans, molluscs and preparations thereof	03	462
Cereals & cereal preparations	04	685
Vegetables & fruit	05	11,012
Sugar, sugar preparation & honey	06	3,379
Coffee, tea cocoa, spices & manufactures thereof	07	3,293
Feeding stuff for animals (excl. unmilled cereals)	08	1,127
Miscellaneous edible products & preparations	09	2,163
Beverages	11	710
Tobacco & tobacco manufactures	12	13
Hides, skins & furskins, raw	21	38
Oil seeds & oleaginous fruits	22	400
Crude rubber (include synthetic & reclaimed)	23	335
Cork & wood	24	7,216
Pulp & waste paper	25	0
Textile fibres & their wastes	26	498
Crude fertilisers & minerals, excl. coal, petroleum etc.	27	5,628
Metalliferous ores & metal scrap	28	140
Crude animal & vegetable materials nes	29	2,632
Coal, coke & briquettes	32	64
Petroleum, petroleum products & related materials	33	201
Gas, natural & manufactured	34	31
Fixed vegetable fats & oils	42	78
Animal or vegetable materials nes	43	72
Organic chemicals	51	75,882
Inorganic chemicals	52	2,207

Category	SITC Code	2012 €000
Dyeing, tanning & colouring materials	53	2,555
Medical & pharmaceutical products	54	61,872
Essential oils, perfume materials; toilet & cleansing preps	55	10,670
Fertilisers (other than those of Division 27)	56	1
Plastics in primary forms	57	2,182
Plastics in non-primary forms	58	12,520
Chemical materials & products nes	59	8,391
Leather; leather manufactures nes; dressed furskins	61	6,768
Rubber manufactures nes	62	42,891
Cork & wood manufactures (excl. furniture)	63	31,635
Paper, paperboard & articles thereof	64	27,208
Textile yarn, fabrics, made-up articles & related products	65	37,901
Non-metallic mineral manufactures nes	66	37,774
Iron & steel	67	14,053
Non-ferrous metals	68	8,534
Manufactures of metals nes	69	88,789
Power generating machinery & equipment	71	26,316
Machinery specialised for particular industries	72	28,452
Metalworking machinery	73	2,706
General industrial machinery & equipment nes & parts nes	74	50,030
Office machines & automatic data processing machines	75	595,431
Telecommunications & sound equipment	76	285,041
Electrical machinery, apparatus & appliances nes & parts	77	216,151
Road vehicles (include. air-cushion vehicles)	78	13,422
Other transport equipment	79	3,983
Prefab buildings; plumbing & electrical fixtures & fittings	81	38,748
Furniture & parts thereof; bedding, cushions etc	82	73,401
Travel goods, handbags & similar containers	83	51,539
Articles of apparel; clothing accessories	84	440,334
Footwear	85	119,823
Professional, scientific & controlling apparatus nes	87	28,799
Photographic apparatus; optical goods; watches clocks	88	24,803
Miscellaneous manufactured articles nes	89	312,777
Special transactions and commodities not classified according to kind	93	465
Coin (other than gold coin), not being legal tender	96	36
Gold, non-monetary (excluding gold ores and concentrates)	97	60
All other commodities and transactions	99	31,607
	Grand Total	2,860,134

Work Permit Criteria

113. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the reason a work permit is required in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12218/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Under the Employment Permits Acts 2003 and 2006, non-EEA nationals are prohibited from employment within the State unless they have been granted an Employment Permit from my Department or are exempt from obtaining an employment permit on some other basis under the Act such as being permitted to work as part of their immigration status as determined by the Department of Justice and Equality. I understand that the person concerned does not currently hold an immigration status which includes permission to work and therefore requires an employment permit.

An application for an employment permit in respect of this person was received in my Department on 3 January 2013. My Department wrote to the employer on 12 February 2013 seeking additional information relating to this application. Some of the information sought has been provided and I understand that officials of my Department are in contact with the Employer's accountants with a view to finalising these matters. When all of the above outstanding information has been received the application will then be given further consideration.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

114. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an invalidity application in respect of a person (details supplied). [12040/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 12th March 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 1 March 2013 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Illness Benefit Appeals

115. **Deputy Paudie Coffey** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Waterford will receive a decision on their application for illness benefit appeal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12043/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer on 24 January 2013, who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Question No. 116 withdrawn.

Child Benefit Payments

117. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of families that have voluntarily given up their child benefit payment either for financial or other

reasons. [12088/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department is only aware of two families that have voluntarily given up entitlement to child benefit by way of submitting a clear request that payment be discontinued. However, it may be possible that others have chosen not to respond to correspondence and have, by default, discontinued claiming child benefit.

Question No. 118 withdrawn.

Jobseeker's Allowance Applications

119. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will review the credit history of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9; the reason this person was told that they has been signed off; the way in which this error came in view of the fact that her Department were made aware of any changes to this persons circumstances; the way this matter will be resolved and the credits back dated and restored. [12136/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned made a claim for jobseeker's credits on 7 November 2011. His claim was automatically closed by the computer system from 15 July 2012 as he did not attend his Social Welfare Local Office to sign on in order to certify that he was still unemployed, despite being requested by letter to do so. Any documentation received from the person concerned after his claim was closed was held on file pending him submitting a new claim. I understand that the person concerned has attended his Local Office recently to re-open his credits claim. Any credits that are due to him will be applied when his claim is processed.

Social Welfare Payments

120. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a person (details supplied) is in receipt of all their benefits. [12137/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned is in receipt of one parent family payment and rent supplement from my Department. She should contact her local social welfare office or Citizens' Information Centre whereupon her full details can be provided and any further possible entitlements outlined in this regard.

Domestic Humanitarian Aid

121. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Social Protection in relation to persons who have applied for relocation following the flooding in Galway in 2009, the number of persons who have accepted contracts; the number of those who are waiting on contracts to be returned from her Department; when payments will be issued; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12144/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Government has provided various types of support to people affected by the November 2009 flooding. Humanitarian Aid payments were made, both in the immediate aftermath of the flooding and subsequently to enable eligible households to resume living at their home. Subject to certain conditions the Government also decided to offer support to a small number of families who are continuing to experience significant housing problems as a result of the November 2009 flooding and are

considering relocating rather than permanently returning to their original home.

The legal agreement necessary for the purpose of this scheme was the subject of much detailed discussion and negotiations between this Department, the Office of Public Works (OPW) and the Chief State Solicitor's Office (CSSO). The finalised agreement issued to 18 householders in December 2012. In view of the legal obligations attaching to the payment of monies in respect of relocation assistance, householders were advised to seek legal advice prior to signing the agreements. A number of householders have raised legal questions with the Department's legal advisors which are being progressed. To date 3 householders have returned signed agreements. The Department is finalising these agreements, in conjunction with the OPW, and will issue copies of the final contract to the householders. The contract provides for a number of terms and conditions that must be fulfilled before payment can issue. Payment will issue without delay when all the terms and conditions have been met.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

122. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will review a decision not to grant domiciliary care allowance to a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12151/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal, by the person concerned, was registered in that office on 4 March 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

123. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for a review of the decision to refuse their application for invalidity pension in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12169/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer on 25 February 2013, who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Invalidity Pension Applications

124. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a determination of eligibility for invalidity pension in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12220/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Invalidity pension is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the contribution conditions. This department received a claim for invalidity pension for the person concerned on 18 December 2012. The medical evidence provided by the claimant in support of his claim was examined by a medical assessor who was of the opinion that the person concerned is not eligible for invalidity pension as he does not satisfy the medical criteria. The claim for invalidity pension was disallowed by a deciding officer. The person in question was notified of this decision, the reason for it and of his right of review or appeal on 20 February 2013.

Rent Supplement Scheme Payments

125. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the correct level of rent support and maximum rent allowable in the case of persons (details supplied) in Dublin 15; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12221/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The rent of €900.00 is the maximum level of rent supplement allowable for a family of three dependent children in this area as set in legislation. In the case of the person concerned, the correct level of rent support has been applied.

Social Welfare Payments

126. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will arrange for urgent issue of basic social welfare payment in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12222/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application form to apply for basic supplementary welfare allowance has been posted to the person concerned. He should present himself to his local community welfare clinic at Kildare Health Centre with the completed form and his current GNIB card.

Disability Allowance Applications

127. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for disability allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 24; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12223/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): As part of a review of the person's continuing entitlement to disability allowance certain issues came to light. The person's application has been disallowed on the grounds that he failed to show that his means did not exceed the statutory limit allowed for disability allowance purposes. In addition the applicant failed to supply documentary evidence required to establish his residency. He was notified in writing of this decision on the 1 February 2013 and of his right to appeal to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office.

Family Income Supplement Applications

128. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the entitlement to family income supplement in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12224/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for jobseeker's allowance is currently being processed for the person concerned. A decision will issue shortly to the person concerned.

Jobseeker's Allowance Applications

129. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when it is expected that job seeker's allowance/basic payment while pending will issue in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12225/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The jobseeker's allowance application in respect of the person concerned is currently being processed. A decision will issue shortly to the person concerned.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

130. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the rent support payable in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Cavan; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12226/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned made an application for rent supplement on 25 September 2012 and had been requested on four different occasions to provide further information in order to process her claim. As the information requested was not furnished, the rent supplement application was disallowed and notification issued to the person concerned on 5 February 2013.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

131. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the maximum rent level in respect of which rent support is payable in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12228/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): No application for rent supplement has been received by my Department from the person concerned at her present address. She would need to provide details of her current circumstances to the local Rents Unit at Damastown before it can be ascertained what the maximum rent supplement payable would be in her case. Generally speaking however, the maximum rent level for rent supplement in the Dublin 15 area for a family of three dependent children is €900 per month.

State Pension (Contributory)

132. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding determination of an application for old age pension in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; the total number of recorded contributions annually since 1972 on their behalf; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12229/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): To be eligible for a State pension (contributory) at age 66, an applicant must: have entered insurable employment before attaining the age of age 56 years; have at least 520 paid contributions since entry into insurance, from employment or self-employment (or a minimum of 260 paid contributions if the applicant reaches age 66 prior to 6 April 2012); have a yearly average of 48 paid and/or credited contributions from 1979 to the end of the last complete tax year preceding their 66 birthday; or have a yearly average of at least ten paid and/or credited contributions recorded from 1953 or from their date of entry into insurable employment (whichever is the later) to the end of the tax year preceding their 66 birthday (to qualify for a maximum rate pension, a yearly average of 48 is required).

The person concerned reached 66 years of age on 1 February 2010. He submitted an application for State pension (contributory) in February 2012. According to the records of the Department, between 2002 and 2009, he has 416 (self-employed) PRSI contributions. He has no contributions recorded between 1970 and 2002. In addition to his Irish insurance record, he has 208 UK contributions and credits recorded from 1964 to 1970. As the date of entry of the person concerned into insurable employment was after his 56 birthday, he does not satisfy the first contribution condition, and consequently his claim for a standard State pension (contributory) under Irish social welfare legislation was disallowed. His entitlement to pension under EC Regulations was subsequently examined based on his combined Irish and UK records. He has been awarded an EU pro-rata State pension (contributory) at a weekly personal rate of €76.80 with effect from 09 August 2010, together with an increase for qualified adult of €51.20 per week, in respect of his spouse. This decision was notified to him on 5 March 2013. Arrears of pension will issue this week.

Back to Education Allowance Applications

133. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will confirm receipt of documentation in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9 in support of an application for back to education allowance; the reason a reply has not issued to date; and if she will expedite a decision on this application. [12241/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Further documentation was received by my Department recently in support of the application for back to education allowance from the person concerned. This confirmed that she did not complete her Veterinary Assistant Level 5 course in 2008. However, as she completed a level 5 course in Computers and wishes to do a course in Photography at the same level, she still does not qualify for back to education allowance as she does not meet the progression criteria stipulated in the qualifying conditions.

Child Benefit Eligibility

134. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Social Protection when the audit of the child benefit scheme will be published; the reason for the delay in publishing the report; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12247/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Fraud and error surveys are an

integral part of the Department's overall approach to control and tackling social welfare fraud. They provide the Department with an indicator of the estimated risk of non-compliance with scheme rules within the specific schemes surveyed and enable it to enhance procedures and processes to build control across the relevant schemes. The Department establishes the risk and exposure of fraud and error within its schemes by conducting fraud and error surveys at regular intervals. A key commitment in the Department's Fraud Initiative 2011-13 is to undertake at least two fraud and error surveys each year up to the end of 2017. Four fraud and error surveys have been completed by the Department in the past year. The survey on Child Benefit was completed in January 2013. The survey report is now finalised and will be published shortly.

The survey showed a very low level of fraud in relation to the scheme which underlines the effectiveness of the scheme's control policy. Survey results are presented in terms of the net rate of fraud and error. The net rate refers to the position after account is taken of decreases in weekly rate, increases in weekly rate, terminations of payment, transfers to other payments and the position following appeal of any cases affected. In order to ensure the measure of the fraud and error level for the scheme surveyed is accurate and is in line with the criteria that has been previously agreed with the Comptroller and Auditor General, a certain amount of time must be allowed following the survey to ensure that all cases that go back into payment or the outcomes of appeal cases are included in the final report.

Wildlife Conservation

135. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide an extension on prescribed gorse burning in view of the adverse weather conditions of the past year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12243/13]

136. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht his views on whether the 28 February deadline for gorse burning is too early; his further views on the fact that it is over six weeks earlier in this jurisdiction than in Northern Ireland; if he will review the date in view of the difficulty and impracticality that it causes for farmers and the fire services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12105/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 135 and 136 together.

Under Section 40 of the Wildlife Acts, the cutting, grubbing, burning or destruction by other means of vegetation growing on uncultivated land or in hedges or ditches is prohibited during the nesting and breeding season for birds and wildlife, from 1 March to 31 August subject to certain specific exceptions. Hedgerows are an important reservoir of biodiversity and habitat for birds, insects, wild flowers and other wildlife during the summer breeding season. The purpose of these provisions is to protect bird life during the nesting season, to prevent forest fires, and to protect vegetation and wildlife habitats during the months of growth and reproduction. I have no current plans to extend this period.

While hedgerows and scrub are important as wildlife habitats, they need to be managed in the interests of both farming and biodiversity. Accordingly, I included a commitment in the National Biodiversity Plan 2011-16 to review the overall policy in this area. The commitment is to review, in co-operation with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, both hedgerow and scrub regulation with a view to producing guidelines to encourage best practice for hedgerow and scrub management for wildlife. As part of that review, the potential for setting the relevant dates by statutory instrument, rather than in primary legislation as is the position currently, will be examined.

Wildlife Protection

137. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in view of the recent incident of a deer hunted by the Ward Union Hunt, based in Dunshaughlin, County Meath, into the River Boyne, during a search and recovery operation for a body, and previous incidents of deer hunted, which the Ward Union claim are accidental, if he will put a monitoring system in place to ensure that the Ward Union are obeying the 2010 Wildlife Amendment Act in order to reduce accidental hunting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12110/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I refer the Deputy to my reply to her Question No. 317 of 5 March 2013.

Public Service Reform Plan Measures

138. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will set out and itemise the precise details of the savings he specifically intends to accrue from his decision to abolish the statutory independent boards of the National Museum and the National Library; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12152/13]

139. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the costs incurred by his Department to date in preparing to abolish the statutory independent boards of the National Museum and National Library; if these costs reflect the cost of the input of his Department's personnel to date, the costs incurred by the Attorney General's office, the parliamentary draftsman's office, the Oireachtas and other agencies involved in the preparation and consideration of such legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12153/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 138 and 139 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Public Service Reform Plan published by the Government on 17 November 2011 outlined a series of rationalisation measures, some of which related to a number of the bodies funded from my Department's Vote Group. The Public Service Reform Plan is not solely focussed on monetary savings but also on creating efficiencies and streamlining services and structures. In this context, my Department developed a comprehensive and practical approach to the implementation of the various Government Decisions in this area, which was endorsed by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

As part of that process, my Department conducted an examination of the board structures of the National Library of Ireland (NLI) and the National Museum of Ireland (NMI), as well as the issue of shared services. My Department also examined the issues that would be involved in merging the National Archives of Ireland (NAI) and the Irish Manuscripts Commission (IMC) into the NLI, while maintaining separate identities. Arising from this, the Government has decided that the boards of the NMI and NLI will be discontinued and, as board fees totalling over €80,000 were paid out to members of these boards in 2012, direct recurring annual savings of that order will be made as a result. In addition, the current provision by my Department of shared corporate support services to the NAI will be extended to the NMI and NLI. This will lead to significant savings on administration, as it will facilitate greater sharing of staff and expertise, as well as freeing up staff of the institutions for frontline and core services. Savings of approximately €200,000 are expected to be achieved in staff costs, with a further €350,000 in savings to be achieved through additional shared services.

No specific additional costs were generated by my Department or by other bodies (such as the Office of the Attorney General or by the Oireachtas) in the development or implementation of these Government Decisions. The preparation of the relevant proposals for consideration by Government and the implementation of the Government Decisions in this area are part of the routine duties of the relevant civil and public servants involved.

Departmental Websites

140. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he intends to update the organisation chart posted on his Department's website and dated January 2012 to reflect changes in personnel and organisation since that date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12154/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I would like to advise the Deputy that the organisation chart referred to has now been updated and posted on my Department's website.

Departmental Appointments

141. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if further to the critical review of Culture Ireland he has appointed a Director at Principal Officer level within his Department; if he has as stated, acted to underpin the independence of his role by ensuring as promised that a Delegation Order under the Public Service Management Act 1997, from the Secretary General to the Director has been made; if he will publish the delegation order; the name of the Director and also state whatever if any other functions that person has within his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12155/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I can advise the Deputy that an officer was appointed on 20 June 2012, at Principal Officer level, to act as Director of my Department's Culture Ireland Unit. The officer does not hold other functions within my Department and is solely engaged in the overall management, development and promotion of the Culture Ireland programme of work. I can also advise the Deputy that a composite Delegation Order, made under the Public Service Management Act 1997 by the Secretary General of my Department on 31 January 2013, includes the appropriate delegation of functions to the Director. I understand that the Order will be published on my Department's website later this month.

Departmental Expenditure

142. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide a list for 2012 of all relevant subheads within his Department's vote from which funding is provided for arts and culture purposes; if he will state in relation to each subhead its purpose and scope; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12156/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): As the Deputy will be aware, details of my Department allocations at subhead level are published each year in the Revised Estimates Volume and are available on the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's website. Details with regard to 2012 are available via the following link: <http://per.gov.ie/estpubexp2012/>

For the Deputy's convenience, the table below provides a listing of the subheads related to the Arts, Culture and Film programme area, together with a brief overview of the purpose of the subheads.

Subhead	Subhead Title	Subhead Description
A.1	Administration - Pay	This subhead covers Departmental pay costs associated with the Arts, Culture and Film functions.
A.2	Administration - Non-Pay	This subhead covers Departmental administrative costs associated with the Arts, Culture and Film functions.
A.3	Payments To Match Resources Generated By The National Archives	This subhead facilitates the National Archives in using earnings generated by its activities for its own development purposes.
A.4	General Expenses of the National Archives & National Archives Advisory Council	This subhead provides for the administration and general expenses of the National Archives.
A.5	General Expenses of the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Chester Beatty Library, National Concert Hall & the Crawford Gallery (grant-in-aid)	This subhead provides funding for the Irish Museum of Modern Art, the Chester Beatty Library, the National Concert Hall and the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork.
A.6	Regional Museums, Galleries, Cultural Centres & Projects	This subhead provides funding related to enhancing access to the arts, culture and film sectors and recognising the social and economic role of these sectors in Ireland.
A.7	Cultural Infrastructure & Development	This subhead provides for the capital cost of grants for the development of arts and culture infrastructure throughout the country. There is a current allocation in the subhead for providing grants to arts bodies, including Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann.
A.8	Culture Ireland	This subhead makes provision for the funding of the Culture Ireland Programme for the promotion of Irish arts and culture worldwide.
A.9	An Chomhairle Ealaíon (part funded by the National Lottery) (grant-in-aid)	This subhead provides funding to the Arts Council for its activities.
A.10	General Expenses of the National Museum of Ireland (grant-in-aid)	The current allocation is utilised in meeting costs arising from the day-to-day operations of the Museum. The capital allocation is in respect of general capital works in the Museum.
A.11	General Expenses of the National Library of Ireland (grant-in-aid)	The current allocation is used to fund the day-to-day operations of the Library. The capital allocation is provided to cover collection development, digitisation/IT projects, equipment and exhibitions, etc.
A.12	Irish Film Board (grant-in-aid)	The current allocation provides for the administration and general expenses of the Irish Film Board. The capital allocation is mainly for the provision of development and production loans to the independent film and television production sector.
A.13	EU Presidency - Cultural Programme	This subhead relates to my Department's role in coordinating and developing Ireland's Cultural Programme for the EU Presidency.

Departmental Expenditure

143. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if

he will itemise in tabular form the monies disbursed, together with a statement of their purpose, from the Crowley Bequest Fund in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12157/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The Crowley Project provides funding for archival work and the digitisation of the Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers 1818-1922. As the Deputy is aware, it is one of the most important collection of records relating to 19th century Ireland held anywhere in the world. In 2012, €46,812 was disbursed from the Crowley Bequest fund to pay the salaries of the archivists working on the records. My Department provided matching funding of €23,406, which was refunded to the Bequest. I understand that the Crowley Project website received 613,233 hits and 13,208 unique visitors in 2012, and that users of the website have praised its value for scholarship of the early 19th century and for genealogical research.

Departmental Expenditure

144. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in relation to subhead A.6 of his Department's vote, if he will list in tabular form the monies disbursed from it in 2012; if he will provide a statement of their purpose in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12158/13]

145. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in relation to subhead A.7 of his Department's vote, if he will list in tabular form the monies disbursed from it in 2012; if he will provide a statement of their purpose in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12159/13]

146. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the details if any of the advertisements by his Department of funds available from subheads A.6 and A.7 of his Department's vote in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12160/13]

147. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the application process if any that is administered by his Department in relation to funds disbursed from subheads A.6 and A.7 of his Department's vote; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12161/13]

148. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the written criteria applied to evaluating projects funded from funds disbursed from subheads A.6 and A.7 of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12162/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 144 to 148, inclusive, together.

Organisations funded under the A.6 subhead meet a specific cultural need and support the high-level goal of my Department in relation to enhancing access to the arts, culture and film sectors and recognising the social and economic role of these sectors in Ireland. The organisations in question make a very important contribution to the development and promotion of Ireland's cultural tourism offering, to the benefit of both the domestic and foreign tourist, and represent an important component of the delivery of the cultural tourism commitments in the Programme for Government.

Projects funded under the A.7 subhead relate to Cultural Infrastructure and Development and include a capital and current element. Capital investment in cultural infrastructure has greatly improved access to, and participation in, the arts for large numbers of people, including,

for example, the Smock Alley project. Current investment includes funding for programmes such as those operated by *Music Network* and provision towards the *Philanthropy Initiative* to support private fundraising by arts organisations - with arts in education being the major focus of this scheme in 2013 in support of the Arts in Education Charter, launched recently by myself and my colleague Ruairi Quinn, TD, Minister for Education and Skills. A copy of the 2013 philanthropy scheme is available at www.ahg.gov.ie/en/arts/schemes/.

The application and evaluation process in relation to projects funded under both subheads A.6 and A.7 is determined by the specific objectives of the projects themselves vis-à-vis Government Arts and Culture policy. For example, my Department is committed under the A.6 subhead to providing annual funding to certain cultural institutions that hold collections of moveable cultural heritage of national importance, or collections that are unique in the country. Institutions such as Archbishop Marsh's Library, the James Joyce Centre, the Hunt Museum and Foynes Flying Boat Museum receive an annual allocation of funding accordingly.

Projects funded under the *Local and Regional Museums Scheme* are required to comply with the detailed terms and conditions of that scheme, which are available on my Department's website, and an assessment and evaluation process is carried out within my Department to determine successful applicants. Projects seeking funding under the *Mobility of Collections Scheme*, the *Co-operation with Northern Ireland Scheme* and *Regional Culture Night* also go through similar processes. These schemes are also available at www.ahg.gov.ie/en/culture/schemes/.

In addition to the details available on my Department's website, relevant groups and/or associations are advised of the availability of funding each year, e.g., the Irish Museums' Association, the Local Authority Museums' Network, the Local Arts Officers Network, etc, as the case may be.

The Deputy will appreciate that as the audit of 2012 expenditure by my Department has yet to be completed by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General, I am not in a position at this time to release audited details of the monies disbursed in 2012 from subheads A.6 and A.7. I can, however, advise that the main funding allocations (including, in certain cases, both capital and current allocations) under these subheads in 2012 included the following:

-	€
Philanthropy Initiative	€200,000
Music Network	€200,000
Hunt Museum	€495,000
Archbishop Marsh's Library	€345,000
Irish Architectural Archive	€295,000
National Print Museum	€122,500
Foynes Flying Boat Museum	€110,000
James Joyce Centre	€152,000
National Maritime Museum	€9,000
Science Gallery	€375,000
Cork Butter Museum	€30,000
Irish Museums Association	€35,000
Regional Museums Programme	€70,000
Mobility of Collections	€10,000
Culture Night 2012	€200,000
Co-operation with Northern Ireland	€130,000
Irish Manuscripts Commission	€245,000
The Garage Theatre	€1,362,000

-	€
Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann	€1,675,000
Theatre Royal, Waterford	€578,000
Smock Alley Theatre	€357,000
IMMA	€45,000
Cinema Digitisation	€49,000
National Museum	€240,000
The Abbey Theatre	€450,000
National Sculptor Factory	€15,000
Other Voices	€100,000
Limerick City Gallery	€107,000
St. John Square, Limerick	€123,000
RIA Historic Books	€50,000
Gate Theatre	€24,000
Royal Irish Academy	€200,000
National Concert Hall	€110,000

Electricity Transmission Network

149. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the up to date plans to address the functional needs of the ESB network (details supplied) in County Galway; if he will indicate the time scale of such plans and if it will include a sub-station in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12045/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): This is a day to day operational matter for the ESB and not one in which I, as Minister, have a role or function. I have asked the company to communicate directly with the Deputy.

Sale of State Assets

150. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the power stations abroad that the ESB is selling; the reason they are selling same; if it is his policy; the expected yield for the ESB and the expected special dividend for the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12057/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): As part of the Government's asset disposal programme provided for in the Programme for Government and agreed with the Troika (i.e. the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund), the Government has agreed the sale of some non-strategic power generation assets of the ESB. The disposal process is overseen by a Steering Group co-chaired by officials from both my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and including officials from the Department of Finance and NewERA.

Significant progress was made during 2012 on preparing for the asset disposals. ESB made an announcement in October 2012 regarding the sale of some of its non-strategic generation capacity. This will involve a package of assets being brought to the market on a phased basis, commencing in 2013, with the objective of delivering up to €400m of special dividends to the Government by 2014. In this regard, ESB announced on 27 February 2013 its intention to sell its 50% shareholding in each of its international tolling plants, namely Marchwood Power Ltd in the UK and Bizkaia Energia SL in Spain. Details of further components of the package will

be announced at the appropriate junctures, subject to (i) the integrity of the sales processes and (ii) relevant commercial considerations.

Broadband Services Provision

151. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the plans in place to roll out broadband in the Oldtown, Ballyboughal, Naul and Garristown areas of north County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12111/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Ireland's telecommunications market has been liberalised since 1999 and since then has developed into a well-regulated market, supporting a multiplicity of commercial operators, providing services over a diverse range of technology platforms. Details of broadband services available on a County-by-County basis, including County Dublin, can be found on the website of the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) at www.callcosts.ie.

The State only becomes involved in the provision of services in instances of clear market failure, such as in the case of the National Broadband Scheme and the Rural Broadband Scheme. The combination of private investment and State interventions means that Ireland has met the EU Commission's Digital Agenda for Europe target of having a basic broadband service available to all areas by 2013, and the focus is now on accelerating the roll out of high speed services.

The Government's National Broadband Plan, which I published in August last, aims to radically change the broadband landscape in Ireland by ensuring that high speed services of at least 30 Mbps are available to all of our citizens and businesses, well in advance of the EU's target date of 2020, and that significantly higher speeds are available to as many homes and businesses as possible. Specifically, it commits to:

- 70 Mbps to 100 Mbps available from the commercial market operators to more than half of the population by 2015,
- At least 40 Mbps, and in many cases faster speeds, to at least a further 20% and potentially as much as 35% of the population, and
- A minimum of 30 Mbps for every remaining home and business in the country.

During the preparation of Ireland's National Broadband Plan, the commercial market operators indicated that they expect to provide 70 Mbps to 100 Mbps services to 50% of the population by 2015. The commercial sector is already making these investments in high speed services, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas. The Government is also committed in the Plan to investing in areas where high speed services are not commercially viable and will not be provided by the market.

My Department is making preparations to commence a formal national mapping exercise to identify where the market is expected to succeed and fail in the delivery of high speed broadband over the coming years. This will inform the level of Government interaction that may be required and the areas that need to be targeted for a State-led investment. It will also form a critical input to an EU State Aid application in respect of any State-led intervention.

Through the implementation of the National Broadband Plan, we are committed to increasing the availability of next generation speeds significantly, with a view to ensuring that all citizens and business can participate fully in a digitally enabled society. I would reiterate that the

Government remains committed to the delivery of the speeds referred to above, to ensure that all parts of Ireland, including areas such as, Oldtown, Ballyboughal, Naul and Garristown will have at least 30 Mbps connectivity.

Broadband Services Provision

152. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will confirm if the feasibility of using the existing electricity grid network for the provision of broadband internet services has been examined; if so if his policy favours the use of using such technology to bring broadband internet access to remote locations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12275/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): It has been Government policy for some time that State entities should avail of commercial opportunities to facilitate the deployment of infrastructure to the telecommunications market. A number of commercial State companies and non-commercial State bodies are currently leveraging their infrastructure in this way and have contributed to the marked improvement in broadband services in recent years. I am aware that the Electricity Supply Board (ESB), for example, recently sought a joint venture partner to deploy and manage, as a wholesale service provider, access to a fibre-to-the-building network capable of providing next generation broadband services, using the existing electricity network infrastructure. These initiatives are consistent with the National Broadband Plan (NBP) which reaffirms the Government's commitment to using State Assets to help accelerate the roll-out of next generation high speed broadband.

The NBP also recognises that Government intervention will be required to ensure a minimum marketed speed of 30 megabits per second will be available in those parts of the country the competitive market will not serve. The NBP estimates required public funding will be significant, in the region of €175 million. The actual level of investment will be decided in a future competitive procurement process managed by my Department. There will be a number of technologies and solutions capable of meeting the qualitative requirements. It is not appropriate for me to express a preference for any one potential solution or applicant over others prior to the completion of the procurement process.

Local Authority Housing Maintenance

153. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will make funding available to the local authorities to upgrade council houses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12047/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Under my Department's Social Housing Investment Programme, local authorities are allocated funding each year in respect of a range of measures to improve the standard and overall quality of their social housing stock. The programme includes a retrofitting measure aimed at improving the energy efficiency of older apartments and houses by reducing heat loss through the fabric of the building. Over the past four years, the retrofitting measure focussed on improvement works to vacant houses with the objective of returning as many as possible of these dwellings to productive use and combating dereliction and associated anti-social behaviour. Over that period some € 99.9 million was recouped to local authorities in respect of improvements carried out to 7,762 dwellings.

This year I will be focusing investment on improving the quality and standard of the ten-

anted social rented units. This will be done through a range of measures including regeneration, estate-wide remedial works and energy retrofitting of older houses and apartments. I am bringing in a new measure which will specifically target older properties and involves the insulation of attics and walls, draught-proofing of windows and doors and the fitting of heating controls.

Last week I allocated €111.4 million for a programme of works ranging from large scale regeneration works to a retrofitting scheme aimed at improving the energy efficiency of these properties. My Department also provides capital funding to local authorities to assist with the provision of necessary adaptations and extensions to their properties to meet the needs of tenants with a disability.

A second focus this year will be to undertake an audit of the 130,000 social housing units in conjunction with the local authorities, in order to better understand the quality and distribution of the national social housing stock and to facilitate the future planning of sound and robust improvement works programmes. This will provide a comprehensive database to inform future targeted interventions aimed at further improving the stock.

Fire Service Issues

154. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide the detailed data and risk assessment that his Department used to base its finding for Keeping Communities Safe document; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12050/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The recently published Keeping Communities Safe (KCS) sets the future direction of fire services in a way that aligns fire services and fire safety in Ireland with international good practice. KCS was developed by the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management in my Department following a review of relevant international literature which is referenced in Appendix D of the document. A collaborative process was used between central and local government in developing KCS, including expert input by Chief Fire Officers and fire services personnel; stakeholder consultation and engagement by the National Directorate with relevant technical organisations to ensure the best fit between up-to-date thinking and Ireland's needs. The document was recommended for adoption as national policy by the Management Board of the Directorate.

KCS is based on the systems approach to safety management in setting out the guidance and core standards for fire authorities to achieve the objective of keeping communities safe from fire. The systems approach is recognised internationally and is applied in many safety spheres. The Risk Management approach, which is described in Chapter 2 of KCS, is generally seen to involve five stages including identifying hazards and evaluating the risks these hazards pose, mitigating these risks by trying to reduce the probability of the event and/or its consequences if it does occur, planning and preparing to deal with the risk, responding to an event, and reviewing events with a view to learning for the future.

A common understanding in relation to terminology in risk management is important, hence the inclusion of relevant definitions in Appendix E of KCS. In particular, the term "Risk Assessment" as used in KCS is one stage of the risk management process outlined above. The National Directorate prepared a series of 'Task Analyses' to show how the recommended initial 'Pre-determined Attendance' (PDAs) responses may safely undertake tasks normally associated with the common range of fire scenarios set out in Appendix A to the document.

Under Section 19 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005, the phrase 'risk assessment' has a particular meaning, and requires employers to carry out risk assessments of their work activities. Guidance on relevant aspects of risk assessment for fire services, and meeting this legislative requirement, is provided through a number of approaches. The concept of 'Dynamic Risk Assessment' at fire service operations is embedded in the National Incident Command System introduced in 2007. The Fire Services Ancillary Safety Statement, also from 2007, developed generic risk assessment processes for fire services, and the Fire Service Standard Operational Guidance (SOGs) developed specific situational risk assessments for fire services activities. It is expected that individual fire services will prepare any additional risk assessments, which may be necessary to comply with their statutory responsibilities as employers on foot of changes arising from implementation of KCS, based on the Task Analyses referred to above. A Fire Services Safety Management System (SMS) support document is being developed as *part* of the KCS implementation process to ensure that occupational health and safety in fire services is fully aligned with recently adopted local government SMS policy.

Septic Tank Registration Scheme

155. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if septic tank registration will have to be renewed every five years; and if there will be a renewal charge on each occasion. [12055/13]

158. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of households who have registered their private waste water systems to date, broken down by county; the percentage who have registered in each county; if he intends to extend the deadline for registration for the purpose of being eligible for the upgrade grants to the date of the announcement of the details of these grants and the availability of application forms for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12076/13]

159. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the date on which he will announce details of the grant scheme for the upgrade of private waste water systems; if persons who have registered by that date will be eligible for the grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12077/13]

160. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when householders will be able to avail of grants to improve their septic tanks. [12079/13]

161. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if householders can be proactive and if they will be able to avail of grants to improve their septic tanks in advance of any inspection being carried out by their local authority or if they will have to wait to be inspected and failed. [12080/13]

164. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in view of the decision of the Environmental Protection Agency not to commence inspections until July 2013, if all householders who have registered their private waste water system by that date will be eligible for the grants announced by him for private waste water systems; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12118/13]

171. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will outline details of the proposed grant scheme for the upgrading of septic tanks; when the scheme will become operational; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12270/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 155, 158 to 161, inclusive, 164 and 171 together.

In relation to the grant scheme for septic tanks, I refer to the reply to Question No. 440 of 26 February 2013 which sets out the position in this matter. Section 70B(5) of the Water Services (Amendment) Act 2012 provides that a certificate of registration for a domestic waste water treatment system will be valid for five years. The legislation does not provide for a re-registration fee and I have no plans to introduce such a fee.

As of 5 March 2013, applications in respect of the on-site wastewater treatment systems of 389,891 owners had been processed and approximately 35,000 additional registration applications were awaiting processing by the bureau operated by the Local Government Management Agency. Details of the number of processed registrations for each County and City Council are set out in the table below. Registration facilities have been available since 26 June 2012 and have been comprehensively publicised. The deadline for householders to register was 1 February 2013 and I have no plans to extend this date. However, owners of domestic wastewater systems who have not yet registered may still do so and there are no late payment fees payable.

Registrations processed as of 5 March 2013

Water Services Authority	Estimated total number of on-site waste water treatment systems	Number of on-site waste water treatment systems registered	Number of on-site waste water treatment systems registered as a percentage of the estimated total number
Carlow County Council	7190	5,440	76%
Cavan County Council	14477	12,369	85%
Clare County Council	19769	18,085	91%
Cork City Council	586	511	87%
Cork County Council	57993	41,690	72%
Donegal County Council	32955	21,255	64%
Dublin City Council	2718	110	4%
Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council	1928	1,028	53%
Fingal County Council	5213	2,928	56%
Galway City Council	1145	671	59%
Galway County Council	42161	33,473	79%
Kerry County Council	28277	28,598	100%
Kildare County Council	16795	12,518	75%
Kilkenny County Council	15368	12,011	78%
Laois County Council	11309	8,843	78%
Leitrim County Council	7005	6,488	93%
Limerick City Council	420	240	57%
Limerick County Council	24207	18,510	76%
Longford County Council	7556	6,233	82%
Louth County Council	11633	8,255	71%
Mayo County Council	26659	23,094	87%
Meath County Council	21687	16,459	76%
Monaghan County Council	12065	8,095	67%
North Tipperary County Council	12342	10,565	86%
Offaly County Council	11170	8,403	75%
Roscommon County Council	14297	12,627	88%
Sligo County Council	11192	9,493	85%
South Dublin County Council	2266	1,119	49%
South Tipperary County Council	14442	11,257	78%
Waterford City Council	488	348	71%
Waterford County Council	11466	7,944	69%

Water Services Authority	Estimated total number of on-site waste water treatment systems	Number of on-site waste water treatment systems registered	Number of on-site waste water treatment systems registered as a percentage of the estimated total number
Westmeath County Council	12165	9,741	80%
Wexford County Council	26267	21,432	82%
Wicklow County Council	12070	10,058	83%

Water Meters

156. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will be making regulations, or if there will be any specifications regarding the pricing structure for the installation for water meters; if there will be any maximum amount which can be spent on various aspects of the installation, such as digging up a footpath, when taking into consideration that different houses will require different amounts of digging to install water meters. [12056/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the reply to Question No. 219 of 27 February 2013, which sets out the position in relation to the procurement process for the water metering programme. I have previously indicated that there will be a proportion of households which will not be metered in the initial metering programme due to either the high cost or the technical difficulty of doing so. For those properties that will be encompassed by the metering programme, the works involved will not be extensive and will only require excavation and installation of a boundary box. The procurement process is governed by a legal framework of European and national legislation and it would not be appropriate to introduce specific regulations concerning the installation of the water meters. As the procurement process is currently underway it would be inappropriate for me to comment further.

Local Authority Housing Provision

157. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position regarding funding (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12074/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): This year I allocated some €5.777 million to Kerry County Council in respect of the various measures supported under my Department's Social Housing Investment Programme. In July 2012, I approved €420,000 for the construction of rural houses in the county over the period 2012-2014 and this is reflected in the Council's capital allocation for 2013. Given the existing high level of commitments under the housing programme it is not possible to approve additional construction projects at this time. Details of the amounts allocated under the various housing measures are set out in the following table:

Measure	2013 Allocation
Housing Projects*	€617,382
Capital Assistance Scheme Projects	€670,000
Regeneration (Tralee)	€4,000,000
Remedial Works Schemes	€120,487
Adaptations and Extensions	€76,811
Energy Retrofitting	€292,936

Measure	2013 Allocation

*Includes €400,000 for single rural dwellings

Questions Nos. 158 to 161, inclusive, answered with Question No. 155.

Departmental Correspondence

162. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding response times; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12081/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Under the terms of my Department's Customer Charter there is a commitment to respond to letter and email correspondence within fifteen working days. My Department endeavours to meet this deadline having regard to other competing demands on resources. In the event, I understand that the matter raised in this instance is the responsibility of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and a reply confirming this will issue today.

Local Authority Funding

163. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the criteria used in assessing the allocation of funding to the local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12097/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I assume that the Question refers to general purpose grants from the Local Government Fund. General purpose grants are my Department's contribution towards meeting the cost to local authorities of providing a reasonable level of services to their customers. Some €640m in general purpose grants has been allocated to local authorities for 2013. I am satisfied that the general purpose allocations provided for 2013, together with the income available from other sources, will enable local authorities to provide a reasonable level of services to their customers.

Local authorities cost and income bases vary significantly from one another and calculating an appropriate distribution of these grants is complex. General purpose grants from the Local Government Fund are structured to bring about equalisation over time; that is a position of balance where the financial needs of local authorities are met by their resources and they are able to provide an appropriate level of service to their customers. In determining these grants a number of factors are taken into account including the overall funding available for this purpose, the estimated cost to each authority of providing a reasonable level of services to their customers, the income each authority should generate from local sources and the necessity to provide each authority with a baseline allocation that will support its financial stability.

Question No. 164 answered with Question No. 155.

Local Government Reform

165. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if the programme for reform of local government will include improving communication directly between citizens and the agencies or Departments delivering the relevant local services; if greater clarity will be provided to citizens in relation to which level or agency of Government is responsible for delivering particular services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12141/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Government's Action Programme for Effective Local Government outline, inter alia, proposals for the implementation of a range of measures to maximise operational and organisational efficiency and performance in local government and ensure that the best possible standard of service and responsiveness is provided by local authorities to customers, citizens and taxpayers. It also provides that the role of local government will be widened by using its capacity to undertake functions with or on behalf of other sectors and performing a coordination and leadership role locally. Local authorities continue to give priority to maintaining the highest possible standard of customer service in the context of more efficient use of resources, including increased innovation in the delivery of services, for example through area offices and the growing use of online information and service provision and use of social media.

The Action Programme provides that local authority customer charters will be reviewed where they are more than three years old or where significant changes have been made in service provision to ensure continuing improvement in the provision of the optimum level of service to the citizen, and furthermore, in future each City and County Council will ensure that it has a dedicated, suitably trained, Customer Service Officer. This will provide greater clarity to citizens in relation to services provided by local authorities. The *Fixtyourstreet.ie* website, which assists citizens in reporting problems with street lighting, drainage, graffiti, waste collection and road and path maintenance in their neighbourhoods is now accessible in all local authority areas. As part of the Action Programme, a set of Performance Indicators and Performance Standards against which local authorities can demonstrate their performance will be put in place. Increased emphasis will be placed on identifying customers' expectations and requirements and their experience of service delivery in their local authority.

To optimise the benefits of Performance Standards and Performance Indicators, local authorities will prepare annual Service Plans and set targets to be achieved in the delivery of services against each of the Performance Standards. The Service Plans, which will cover each service division in each local authority and will set out the decisions taken in relation to the services and levels of standards to which they are expected to be provided, will be adopted by the elected members as a reserved function.

Building Regulations

166. **Deputy Paschal Donohoe** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the discussions his Department has had with the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists with regards the draft Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2012; if he will confirm if the CIAT will have an opportunity to make a formal submission to him before these regulations are commenced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12168/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Ho-

gan): Following a comprehensive public consultation process undertaken in 2012, I am currently finalising the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2013 for signature into law. The new regulations will provide, among other things, for the introduction of mandatory certificates of compliance by builders and designers of buildings confirming that the statutory requirements of the Building Regulations have been met in relation to the building concerned. In addition a building owner will be required to assign a registered professional to inspect the work during construction and also to certify that the completed building is in compliance with the requirements of the Building Regulations. The roles of lead designer and assigned certifier may only be undertaken by competent persons who are included on the registers of Architects or Building Surveyors as provided for under the Building Control Act 2007 or who are Chartered Engineers.

Depending on their own personal circumstances, it may be open to members of the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists (CIAT) to seek inclusion on one or other of the registers of Architects or Building Surveyors. My Department has had discussions and correspondence with the executive of CIAT in recent months in relation to the options for registration under the Building Control Act 2007 that are currently open to their members and the potential for further developing the registration process in line with the Act of 2007. It is intended to meet with CIAT again in the near future and my Department is happy to continue to advise and assist CIAT on this basis in relation to the matter.

Local Authority Expenditure

167. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if it has been brought to his attention that in 2008 Sligo County Council sought approval from his Department to the raising of a loan of €6.4 million for a new Sligo Museum and an extension to the Model Arts and Niland Gallery, that the total capital cost of the new Museum and extension to the Model and Niland Gallery was an estimated €23.5 million; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the balance of the capital funding was to be provided by way of a contribution of €2 million from the Model Niland Gallery, a grant of €4.6 million from the Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism ACCESS I and II and Government grants of €10.5 million from the Gateway Innovation Fund and ACCESS III; if the loan was approved by his Department conditional on the balance of the funding being made available from the other sources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12171/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The elected members of a local authority have direct responsibility in law for all reserved functions of the authority, which include adopting the annual budget and authorising borrowing, and are democratically accountable for all expenditure by the local authority. Section 106 of the Local Government Act 2001 requires that borrowings by a local authority are sanctioned by the appropriate Minister. Strategic investment in arts and cultural infrastructure is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Waste Management Issues

168. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to introduce a national waste management bin collection waiver for senior citizens and low income families in view of the fact that many senior citizens and low income families do not have the sufficient financial resources to meet additional household payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12187/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Government's new waste policy, A Resource Opportunity - Waste Management Policy in Ireland, was published in July 2012. Among the measures included in the policy is the establishment of an interdepartmental working group to report to Government with options to minimise the impact of waste charges on low income households. The working group, which comprises representatives of my Department and the Departments of Social Protection; Public Expenditure and Reform; Finance; and the Tánaiste's Office, submitted its first report to Government on 11 December 2012. Government considered the report and the working group is to continue to examine the design and implementation of measures to address the issue and will provide a further report to Government by 31 March 2013.

Another measure of the Government's waste policy is the revision of the current regulatory regime, to ensure, *inter alia*, that waste collection providers have Customer Charters in place. The Customer Charters will be required clearly to set out information for customers in relation to issues such as charging structures, procedures for dealing with customers who may fall into arrears, and arrangements for switching from one waste collector to another. I wrote to the waste management industry in September and October, 2012 in relation to the development of such charters and I understand that a number of waste collection providers have already put in place a Customer Charter ahead of the development of the new regulatory regime. I further understand that a number of waste collection operators have notified former local authority customers of the offers and discounts available to those previously in receipt of a local authority waste collection waiver.

Voluntary Housing Sector

169. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to date of dialogue between his Department and Kildare County Council in the matter of the regularisation of issues appertaining to the operation of a housing association (details supplied) and similarly constituted housing associations in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12219/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Léim an Bhradáin Housing Association received approved housing body status for voluntary housing purposes from my Department in September 1997. The association has a four-person Board of Directors and currently manages and operates a 32-unit voluntary housing scheme at Sli an Chanail, Easton Road, Leixlip, Co. Kildare. My Department's role in relation to the voluntary housing capital funding schemes relates primarily to the provision of funds to support the annual construction and housing acquisitions programmes by the sector. It is a matter for the relevant housing authority to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of the schemes and to have appropriate oversight and liaison arrangements in place for the effective administration of the schemes and for ensuring that the investment in voluntary housing is safeguarded.

Kildare County Council has been engaging closely with the Léim an Bhradáin housing association on a range of issues pertaining to the management and operation of the housing scheme and has kept my Department informed of progress on these issues. My Department will be arranging a meeting with the Director of Service and senior housing officials in Kildare County Council as soon as possible to discuss the council's social housing programme for 2013. The management of a number of schemes operated by approved housing bodies in County Kildare will be a specific matter for discussion at this meeting.

Housing Adaptation Grants Funding

170. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has finalised the allocations to local authorities for private housing grants for 2013; the grants schemes to be covered by these allocations; and if he will provide a breakdown of the 2011, 2012 and 2013 allocations by grants scheme and by local authority. [12257/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): My Department’s involvement with the Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability relates primarily to the recoupment of a proportion of local authority expenditure on the payment of individual grants. These schemes are funded by 80% recoupments available from my Department together with a 20% contribution from the resources of the local authority. The suite of grants include three separate grant measures: the Mobility Aids Grant scheme with grants of up to €6,000, the Housing Aid for Older People scheme with grants of up to €10,500 and the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability with grants of up to €30,000, depending on household income.

The schemes are administered by the local authorities and it is a matter for each local authority to apportion the funding between the various grant measures. Allocations for 2013 in respect of these grant schemes were announced on Friday 1 March 2013 and details of these, together with the additional information sought in relation to allocations in 2011 and 2012, are set out in the following table.

Local Authority	2011 Allocation	2012 Allocation	2013 Allocation
Carlow	€1,349,014	€1,349,014	€747,078.97
Cavan	€1,879,903	€1,625,000	€1,038,155.24
Clare	€3,000,000	€1,445,000	€1,445,000.00
Cork	€6,250,364	€6,250,364	€4,561,159.71
Donegal	€3,100,769	€2,448,146	€827,280.49
D’Laoghaire/Rathdown	€1,165,228	€1,110,602	€731,197.36
Fingal	€2,072,365	€2,072,365	€1,588,467.61
Galway	€2,387,900	€2,375,000	€1,644,386.59
Kerry	€3,459,023	€3,257,865	€1,445,971.16
Kildare	€3,563,545	€2,025,000	€2,025,000.00
Kilkenny	€1,867,500	€1,867,500	€1,406,161.86
Laois	€1,146,093	€1,084,827	€260,923.46
Leitrim	€990,189	€576,305	€65,953.25
Limerick	€1,719,225	€1,473,454	€1,473,455.00
Longford	€1,260,000	€1,243,575	€687,674.34
Louth	€1,345,716	€1,186,266	€1,103,144.70
Mayo	€2,724,401	€2,575,216	€2,575,216.25
Meath	€1,464,096	€997,208	€487,123.12
Monaghan	€1,319,083	€1,152,172	€837,210.57
North Tipperary	€1,607,181	€1,200,000	€425,757.37
Offaly	€2,059,313	€1,125,000	€625,000.00
Roscommon	€2,562,790	€1,009,251	€709,956.68
Sligo	€997,800	€997,684	€276,983.80

Local Authority	2011 Allocation	2012 Allocation	2013 Allocation
South Dublin	€3,084,098	€2,728,308	€1,213,986.05
South Tipperary	€3,125,000	€3,111,713	€1,087,988.81
Waterford	€1,238,324	€994,766	€414,024.05
Westmeath	€1,143,266	€988,155	€435,722.48
Wexford	€2,603,404	€2,566,772	€1,210,764.56
Wicklow	€1,151,969	€954,794	€567,117.69
Cork City	€2,707,916	€1,749,741	€1,749,741.25
Dublin City	€11,361,211	€10,629,459	€4,932,319.56
Galway City	€1,024,632	€928,352	€301,280.08
Limerick City	€1,525,000	€1,525,000	€1,010,884.61
Waterford City	€790,310	€740,282	€348,841.83
Sligo Borough Council	€418,084	€385,844	(with Sligo Co Co figure for 2013)

Question No. 171 answered with Question No. 155.

Building Regulations

172. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will report on the progress, if any, of his request that his Department work with the registration body as envisaged under the Building Control Act and the proposed Building Control Amendment Regulations to ensure that those working as architects, with many years of experience, are not excluded from the professions owing to the new qualification requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12276/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Part 3 of the Building Control Act 2007 set out statutory arrangements for the registration of Architects. There are no new qualifications requirements. A variety of routes to registration are provided for in the Act, including specific provision for the registration of practically trained persons who have no formal academic qualifications or education.

I share the concerns of those who feel that the number of applications to date from practically-trained architects is less than might reasonably be expected notwithstanding the provision in that regard in the Act. I have recently asked Mr Garret Fennell, Solicitor, who is currently serving as the Chairperson of the Admissions Board relevant to the register of Architects, to carry out an independent review of the experience to date in relation to the operation of the register with a view to identifying any further improvements that can be made at this point. I have particularly asked for his recommendations or views on how the registration of practically trained architects can be further encouraged.

An Bord Pleanála Appeals

173. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a list of all An Bord Pleanála decisions where the board has overturned the decision of the local inspectors report on a project in the years 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012; the number of times local groups who were opposed to the projects have paid for their submissions to the process including the amount each of them paid in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12279/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The information sought is not available in my Department. Information in relation to the decisions of the Board not to accept inspectors’ recommendations and fees income from submissions made is available in the Board’s Annual Reports for the years in question. These can be accessed at www.pleanala.ie.

Garda Vetting Applications

174. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an application for Garda clearance was received in 2012 from the Irish Wheelchair Association, seeking clearance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Leitrim; when the application is expected to be processed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12034/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that a vetting application on behalf of the person concerned was received by the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) on 18 December 2012. The application is currently being processed and it is anticipated that a response will issue to the registered organisation involved shortly.

Road Traffic Offences

175. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of incidents in which the intoxilyzer 6000 has been deemed to be faulty in relation to prosecutions for drink driving. [12036/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the Medical Bureau of Road Safety (MBRS), which is under the aegis of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, has statutory responsibility for the testing, approval and supply and maintenance of evidential testing machines and roadside breath testing screening devices to An Garda Síochána. I am further informed that the Garda authorities are unaware of any reported incidents where the Intoxilyzer/Evidenzer machine has been deemed faulty in relation to prosecutions for drink driving offences.

Proposed Legislation

176. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress being made in the consultation process relating to the laws on prostitution which he hopes to introduce; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12037/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Our legislation on prostitution is currently being reviewed. As part of that review, in June 2012, I published a discussion document on the future direction of legislation on prostitution. The purpose of the discussion document is to facilitate a public consultation process. On its publication, I referred the discussion document to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality. The joint committee is conducting the consultation process independently and will report back to me when it has completed its work. In addition, my Department hosted a conference in October to discuss the consultation paper.

The report of the joint committee and the views expressed at the October conference will be fully considered in the framing of any necessary legislative proposals to be submitted to Gov-

ernment in due course. For further background for the Deputy, I am appending the text of my statement of 22 June last when publishing the discussion document.

Shatter Announces Publication of Discussion Document on the Future Direction of Legislation on Prostitution

The Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence today published a discussion document on the future direction of legislation on prostitution. Publication of the discussion document follows the Minister's announcement that he would be arranging a public consultation process as part of the current review of prostitution legislation. Announcing publication of the discussion document, Minister Shatter said:

“The criminal law in this area is being reviewed primarily because of the changed nature of prostitution in Ireland. Prostitution was once mainly a street-based phenomenon. That is no longer the case. The organisation of prostitution is now much more sophisticated, highly mobile and is easily facilitated by the use of mobile phones and the internet.

There is, of course, already a clear consensus on the great evils of child prostitution and trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. However, I am aware that there are differing and genuinely held views on the approach the criminal law should take to other aspects of prostitution. While there is a significant amount of criminal legislation in this area already, there is always scope for change and improvement. It is important to review the law periodically to ensure it is up to date and comprehensively responds to altered circumstances.”

The Minister added that: **“Prostitution is an issue which affects individuals, communities and society as a whole. It is important that I facilitate the expression of all views on this subject and that those views are examined in due course. Public debate should therefore, be open to the widest possible audience and I want to ensure that everyone who wishes to make a contribution to this important debate is given the opportunity to do so. It is for that reason I have decided on a consultation process before charting the way forward.**

My Department will hold a conference in the autumn to discuss the document. The widest possible participation will be encouraged in order that we have an open and transparent discussion on all aspects of this very important issue.

This discussion document will now be referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Equality and Defence. Interested groups and members of the public, I expect, will be invited to make submissions to the Committee which will hold such hearings as it deems appropriate. I am asking Mr. David Stanton T.D., Chairman of the Joint Committee, that it publish its report and recommendations by the 30th November 2012 and that the report be furnished to me together with any submissions received. I expect it is likely that the Committee's report will also be lodged in the Oireachtas Library and that a debate on it will subsequently take place in both the Dáil and the Seanad. The report received by me from the Joint Oireachtas Committee will be fully considered in the framing of any necessary new legislative proposals to be submitted to Government in due course.

I look forward to the results of the consultation process.”

The discussion document will be made available on the Department's website, *www.justice.ie*. This discussion document does not favour any particular approach but simply tries to assist reflection. The arguments contained in the document are not exhaustive and the questions posed are not intended to limit in any way the range of questions readers might want to consider.

22 June, 2012.

Magdalen Laundries Issues

177. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason, having included the laundries of the Sisters of Mercy, the laundry in Athy, County Kildare was not included in the redress scheme under the chairmanship of Mr. Justice Quirke; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12064/13]

180. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding a facility in relation to recent statements of responsibility within his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12107/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 177 and 180 together.

The Government decision of 19 February relates to Magdalen Laundries which were examined by the Inter-Departmental Committee set up to establish the facts of State involvement. There were a wide variety of institutions which had laundries run by different religious congregations and no decision has been made to include them all within the scope of the Magdalen Scheme. As regards the specific institution referred to by the Deputies, I have seen no evidence to suggest that the institution in question shares the characteristics associated with the 10 Magdalen Laundries. In particular key factors include State involvement, an enclosed residential institution, loss of identity, women who did not choose to be there and women having to work without pay in a commercial laundry.

Court Procedures

178. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there is a legal requirement to have a legal person involved in a representation in a child custody case; and if so, if it is free for a long term unemployed parent. [12091/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I understand that the Deputy's question relates to whether a parent involved in a custody dispute must be represented by a solicitor. I can confirm that there is no obligation on either parent to be represented by a solicitor. While there is no such obligation, a person may still wish to be represented in court. In this context I should point out that the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 makes provision for the grant by the State of legal aid and advice to persons of modest means in civil cases who meet the requirements of the Act and Regulations. The scope of the Act is very broad and covers most areas of civil law, including matters related to the welfare of (including the custody of or access to) a child.

As the Deputy will know, the civil legal aid scheme is administered by the Legal Aid Board which is independent in the performance of its functions. The applicant must satisfy a means test and be found to be financially eligible under the provisions of the Act and Regulations. In the vast majority of cases, the applicant is liable for a contribution which is also determined under the provisions of the Act and Regulations.

Deportation Orders

179. **Deputy Paschal Donohoe** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding an application for repatriation in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 1; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12103/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned has been in the State without permission since February, 2003. Consequently, in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was notified, by letter dated 13th January, 2010, that the then Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making written representations to the then Minister setting out the reasons why he should not have a Deportation Order made against him. Written representations have been submitted by and on behalf of the person concerned.

The position in the State of the person concerned will now be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of *refoulement*. All representations submitted will be considered before a final decision is made. Once a decision has been made, this decision, and the consequences of the decision, will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned.

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.

Question No. 180 answered with Question No. 177.

Garda Transport

181. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount the State paid to repair Garda patrol cars in 2011 and 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12112/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The arrangements made in relation to the maintenance of Garda transport are a matter for the Garda Commissioner and the Commissioner is the Accounting Officer for the Garda Vote. In that context, I am informed by the Garda authorities that the maintenance costs for Garda vehicles, including the provision of spare parts, tyres and towing, for the years referred to by the Deputy were as set out in the table.

Year	Cost
2011	€11,496,945
2012	€10,703,431

Firearms Licences

182. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a gun licence is removed from a person and is not renewed within a number of years can the Garda have the gun destroyed. [12119/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have asked the Garda Commissioner for a report on the matter and I will write to the Deputy as soon as it is available

Garda Vetting Applications

183. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps he has taken to ensure a reduction in waiting times for processing of vetting applications. [12123/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) provides employment vetting for approximately 20,000 organisations in Ireland which employ personnel to work in a full time part time, voluntary or student capacity with children and or vulnerable adults and who are registered with the Unit for this purpose. The Unit processed approximately 328,000 vetting applications on behalf of these organisations in 2012.

The current average processing time is approximately 8 to 10 weeks. However, seasonal fluctuations and the necessity to seek additional information on particular applications can result in this processing time being exceeded on occasion. All organisations are aware of the processing time frames for the receipt of Garda vetting and have been advised to factor this into their recruitment and selection processes. It is my objective that processing times should be kept to a minimum, while maintaining the overall integrity of the vetting system. In that regard, following recent discussions with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, sanction was recently granted for an additional 25 staff to be re-deployed from the Department of Agriculture to the Garda Central Vetting Unit in the near future.

The Deputy may wish to note that Garda Central Vetting Unit will become the National Vetting Bureau under the provisions of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 and will have a substantially expanded role under that legislation. I am currently engaged with An Garda Síochána and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in addressing the staffing issues relevant to the coming into force of the 2012 Act.

Civil Partnerships

184. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a heterosexual couple can register their relationship as a civil partnership; if not, his plans to introduce same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12133/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): In accordance with section 3 of the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010, civil partners must be of the same sex. Under the provisions of section 2 (2A) of the Civil Registration Act 2004, as inserted by the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010, there is an impediment to the registration of a civil partnership if the parties to the intended civil partnership are of opposite sexes. I have no plans to amend this. In any case it would be constitutionally impermissible to do so: the legal advice available to the Government is that making a relationship with many of the rights and obligations of marriage available to opposite sex couples, who have the option of marriage, would violate the constitutional protection for the institution of marriage.

Domestic Violence Policy

185. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the way the recently secured agreement with the European Parliament on improving the protection of victims

of domestic violence across Europe will enable victims and other vulnerable persons to have continuity of protection under the law when they move between Member States; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12150/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The agreement the Deputy refers to is an agreement on a Proposal for a Regulation on mutual recognition of protection measures in civil matters, also known as European Protection Order (Civil) or EPO civil. This proposal forms part of the Commission's 'Victims package' and aims to further develop the European area of justice by enabling the free movement of **civil** protection measures where a person protected by the measure travels to or moves to another Member State. Protection measures issued in one member state, and which comply with the criteria in the proposal for a Regulation, will be recognised automatically in other Member States and enforceable for up to twelve months.

Measures will be recognised on submission to the competent authority of the second Member State, accompanied by a multi-lingual standard certificate which guarantees that procedural protections were afforded to the person causing the risk, including notification of proceedings and rights of appeal against the protection measure. The sanctions for breaching a certified protection measure will be governed by the law of the Member State of recognition. The measures covered by the regulation include in particular the types of protection afforded in Ireland under the domestic violence code.

This means that someone who obtains an order under the Domestic Violence Acts in Ireland may, if leaving the jurisdiction for another EU member state, be able to obtain a certificate in a standard multi-lingual form and be able to have that recognised in the second member state without the need for any new proceedings. This will give people continuity of protection on trips abroad for up to a year, or afford them a substantial transitional period in a new long-term home abroad before deciding whether any new legal proceedings are required.

Residency Permits

186. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedures followed to date and progress likely in respect of an application for long term residency/eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 22; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12203/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned is a failed asylum applicant. Arising from the refusal of her asylum application, and in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was notified, by letter dated 30th March, 2009, that the then Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of her. She was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why a Deportation Order should not be made against her. In addition, she was notified of her entitlement to apply for subsidiary protection in accordance with the provisions of the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations 2006.

The person concerned submitted an application for subsidiary protection. When consideration of this application has been completed, the person concerned will be notified in writing of the outcome. In the event that the application for subsidiary protection is refused, the position in the State of the person concerned will then be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996

(as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. All representations submitted will be fully considered before a final decision is made. Once a decision has been made, this decision, and the consequences of the decision, will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned.

The Deputy might wish to note that as the person concerned has not yet had a final decision taken in her case, she does not have legal residence in the State and accordingly it is not the policy of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service to facilitate travel abroad in such circumstances. However, the option of voluntary return remains open to her. In this context, and having regard for the Deputy's indication that the person concerned wishes to leave the State for a specific purpose, the Deputy should note that a formal voluntary return arrangement could only be concluded in circumstances where the person concerned leaves the State to travel to her country of origin or to another State where she holds a right of residency.

The Deputy will appreciate that as the person concerned has no current right of residency in the State, the issue of an application for naturalisation does not arise at this time. Neither would the person concerned be in a position to meet the eligibility criteria applicable to persons applying for Long Term Residency status as she does not have the required periods of lawful residency on work permit or work authorisation conditions.

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

187. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current position and procedures yet to be followed or complied with in respect of determination of residency/eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12204/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned is a failed asylum applicant. Arising from the refusal of his asylum application, and in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was notified, by letter dated 30th September, 2005, that the then Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the then Minister setting out the reasons why a Deportation Order should not be made against him. He was subsequently notified of his entitlement to apply for subsidiary protection in accordance with the provisions of the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations 2006.

The person concerned submitted an application for subsidiary protection. When consideration of this application has been completed, the person concerned will be notified in writing of the outcome. In the event that the application for subsidiary protection is refused, the position in the State of the person concerned will then be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. All representations submitted will be fully considered before a final decision is made. Once a decision has been made, this decision, and the consequences of the decision, will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned.

The Deputy will appreciate that as the person concerned has no current right of residency in the State, the issue of an application for a certificate of naturalisation does not arise at this time.

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

188. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the process to date and procedure to be followed to progress the application for long term residency/eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 2; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12205/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned is a failed asylum applicant. Following the consideration of her case in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement, a Deportation Order was made in respect of the person concerned on 24th November, 2011.

The person concerned initiated judicial review proceedings in the High Court, challenging the decision to make a Deportation Order against her. These proceedings were 'settled' with the agreed Terms of Settlement providing, among other things, for the Deportation Order to be revoked and the person concerned being given the facility to submit fresh representations within a defined period. While no such further representations have been received to date, the person concerned has been allowed until 7th March, 2013 to submit any such further representations. Upon receipt of any such representations, the position in the State of the person concerned will be further considered.

The Deputy will appreciate that as the person concerned has no current right of residency in the State, the issue of an application for a certificate of naturalisation does not arise at this time. Neither would she be in a position to meet the eligibility criteria applicable to persons applying for the immigration status of Long Term Residency as she does not have the required periods of lawful residency on work permit or work authorisation conditions.

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

189. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress made to date and procedure yet to be followed to facilitate long term residency/eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12206/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned applied for asylum in February, 2004. In accordance with the provisions of Section 9 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended), the person concerned was entitled to remain in the State until his application for asylum was decided. 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.

Arising from the refusal of his asylum application, and in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was notified, by letter dated 25th July, 2008, that the then Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the then Minister setting out the reasons why a Deportation Order should not be made against him. In addition, he was notified of his entitlement to apply for subsidiary protection in accordance with the provisions of the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations 2006.

The person concerned initiated Judicial Review proceedings in the High Court, challenging the decision of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal in his case. The Judicial Review proceedings were struck out on 4th October, 2012 meaning that the earlier decisions of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal and the Minister stood. The person concerned submitted an application for subsidiary protection. When consideration of this application has been completed, the person concerned will be notified in writing of the outcome.

In the event that the application for subsidiary protection is refused, the position in the State of the person concerned will then be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. All representations submitted will be considered before a final decision is made. Once a decision has been made, this decision, and the consequences of the decision, will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned.

Given that the person concerned has no current right of residency in the State, the issue of an application for a certificate of naturalisation does not arise at this time. Neither would the person concerned be in a position to meet the eligibility criteria applicable to persons applying for the status of Long Term Residency as he does not have the required periods of lawful residency on work permit or work authorisation conditions.

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

190. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress made to date in regard to determination of eligibility in respect of residency/naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12207/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned is a

failed asylum applicant. Arising from the refusal of his asylum application, and in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was notified, by letter dated 30th April, 2010, that the then Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the then Minister setting out the reasons why a Deportation Order should not be made against him. In addition, he was notified of his entitlement to apply for subsidiary protection in accordance with the provisions of the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations 2006.

The person concerned submitted an application for subsidiary protection. When consideration of this application has been completed, the person concerned will be notified in writing of the outcome. In the event that the application for subsidiary protection is refused, the position in the State of the person concerned will then be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. All representations submitted will be fully considered before a final decision is made. Once a decision has been made, this decision, and the consequences of the decision, will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned. The Deputy will appreciate that as the person concerned has no current right of residency in the State, the issue of an application for a certificate of naturalisation does not arise at this time.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to the INIS by Email 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

191. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has studied the papers associated with the refugee, asylum and residency application in the case of a person (details supplied); if consideration will be given to the revocation of deportation order in this case on the basis of the considerable doubt and subjective nature of conclusions appertaining to this case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12208/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have previously outlined the position in respect of this case in response to numerous Parliamentary Questions from the Deputy. The person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order signed on 28th June, 2004. He has been evading his deportation since 3rd November, 2009 and as such he is committing an offence. 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 matter of policy, I do not intend to reward persons who have failed a very fair, thorough and comprehensive asylum process, and who have then proceeded to evade their deportation for several years.

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.

Family Reunification

192. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding family reunification application in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12209/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The individual referred to currently has a visa application under consideration. The visa application was received in the Visa Office, Abuja on 15 November 2012. A preliminary assessment of the application has been completed. Cases of this type are dealt with in chronological order and a comprehensive examination of the application referred to will take place in due course. The actual processing time for dealing with such applications can vary depending on the particular circumstances of each individual case and the type of investigation required. The nature of the application referred to by the Deputy requires more in depth consideration than straightforward 'visit' visas.

Queries in relation to general immigration matters 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.

Deportation Orders

193. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the process to be followed in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 20; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12210/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I refer the Deputy to my reply below to Parliamentary Question Number 2223/13 of 17th January, 2013. The situation is unchanged since then.

The person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order signed on 20 April 2010, following a comprehensive and thorough examination of his asylum claim and his application for subsidiary protection, and a detailed examination of the representations he submitted for consideration under Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). The effect of the Deportation Order is that the person concerned must leave the state and remain thereafter outside the State. The enforcement of the Deportation Order is an operational matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

However, if new information or circumstances have come to light, which have a direct bearing on his case and which have arisen since the original Deportation Order was made, there remains the option of applying to me for revocation of the Deportation Order pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 (11) of the Immigration Act, 1999, as amended. However I wish to make clear that such an application would require substantial grounds to be successful.

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

194. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding determination of eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 20 [12211/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can inform the Deputy that the application has entered the final stage of processing and I intend to grant citizenship. A letter has issued to the person referred to by the Deputy asking them to submit the prescribed fee and other documents. Upon receipt of the fees and documentation, the case will be finalised and a certificate of naturalisation will issue.

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.

Naturalisation Applications

195. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding residency/eligibility for naturalisation entitlement in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12212/13]

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 October, 2012. 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.

The person was granted permission to reside in the State on Stamp 4 conditions under the Long Term Residency scheme. This permission is valid until 08/06/2015. 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.

Naturalisation Applications

196. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the residency status/entitlement to long term residency/eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12213/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Dáil Questions Nos 1215 of 18th September, 2012, and 152 of 27 September 2012 which relate to the person the subject of this question also. In my reply of 18th September I stated “*the person referred to by the Deputy has permission to remain and work in the State until 6 January 2013. He has not contacted INIS in relation to an extension of permission to remain in the State beyond that date or to change the status of that permission.*”

This remains the position. The person referred to by the Deputy should make an application regarding an extension of his immigration permission, to the General Immigration Section of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS), 13/14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2.

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.

Naturalisation Applications

197. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the determination of entitlement to naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12214/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the person referred to had her application granted and was presented with a Certificate of Naturalisation at a citizenship ceremony held at the Convention Centre, Dublin on 30 August 2012. Where sections 6A and 6B of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, are applicable, a child born in the island of Ireland on or after 1 January 2005 has an entitlement to Irish citizenship if, at the time of the birth of the child, one of his or her parents had, during the period of 4 years immediately preceding the person’s birth, been resident in the island of Ireland for a period of not less than 3 years or periods the aggregate of which is not less than 3 years. Periods of unlawful residence, periods of residence which were for the sole purpose of having an application for refugee status determined or periods of residence where permission was granted for the purposes of study are excluded from the determination of periods of reckonable residence. Entitlement of a child to Irish citizenship is determined by the Passport Office following receipt of an application for a passport on the child’s behalf.

Where a child born in the State did not at birth have an entitlement to Irish citizenship, the parent or guardian or person who is in loco parentis to the child may lodge an application for naturalisation on behalf of the child if and when the conditions for naturalisation are satisfied.

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

198. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current and expected position regarding determination of residency status in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 7; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12215/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that the person in question was granted a short term permission to allow her to apply for a work permit in 2011. It appears from our records that she was not granted a work permit and did not renew her permission. Further enquiries are being carried out regarding her immigration status in the State and INIS will be in touch with her in the coming weeks.

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.

Naturalisation Applications

199. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding determination of residency update/eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 24; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12216/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised that an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy was received in the Citizenship Division of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) in October, 2006 and my predecessor, in his absolute discretion, decided to refuse the application. The person concerned was informed of this and the reasons for it in a letter issued on 12th January, 2009. It is open to the person in question to lodge a new application if and when he is in a position to meet the statutory residency requirements applicable at that time. 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.

Garda Districts

200. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an assurance that any proposed amalgamation of Castlerea and Boyle Garda Districts will not affect existing resources in both districts and Roscommon/Longford Garda Division. [12282/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Garda Policing Plan for 2013 sets out the Commissioner's proposals to amalgamate a number of Garda Districts, including the Castlerea and Boyle Districts, into one enlarged Castlerea District. The decision to amalgamate the relevant Districts follows on from a comprehensive review of current District structures carried out by the Garda authorities. This review was designed to identify strategic reforms which would lead to increased efficiencies, improved operational capacity and enhanced Garda service delivery. While no specific date has been set for the amalgamation of these Districts, it is expected that they will be amalgamated in the coming months.

The Garda Commissioner is responsible for the detailed allocation of resources, including personnel, throughout the organisation and I have no direct function in the matter. This allocation of resources is constantly monitored in the context of demographics, crime trends, policing needs and other operational strategies in place on a District, Divisional and Regional level to ensure optimum use is made of Garda resources and the best possible Garda service is provided to the public.

I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that the total strength, as of the 31 January 2013 the latest date for which figures are readily available, of the Roscommon/Longford Division was 280 Gardaí, 17 Garda Reserves and 24 civilians, of which 32 and 26 Gardaí are assigned to the Castlerea and Boyle Garda Districts. Castlerea Garda Station will remain as district headquarters and will open to the public on a 24 hour basis. Boyle Garda Station will support Castlerea Garda Station and will continue to provide a 24 hour policing service. Boyle Garda station will be open to the public between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. and as required. I am advised by the Garda authorities that, following the amalgamation, a full and comprehensive policing service will continue to be delivered to the communities concerned.

Garda Transport

201. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of new Garda patrol cars coming on stream in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12291/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy will be aware, I made an additional €3 million available to An Garda Síochána towards the end of last year enabling the Commissioner to procure 171 Garda vehicles. This brought total investment in the Garda fleet in 2012 to €4 million and resulted in a total of 213 new vehicles being procured during the year. The roll out of the most recently purchased vehicles is currently on-going.

In addition, €5 million has been made available for the purchase and fit-out of Garda transport in 2013. That funding will enable An Garda Síochána to obtain a significant number of new vehicles and it is a matter which is under active consideration by Garda authorities. At this stage, however, the specific details involved have yet to be finalised but the Deputy can be assured that the vehicles will be deployed as effectively as possible in line with operational circumstances.

This funding represents a very considerable financial investment in Garda transport, particularly at a time when the level of funding available across the public sector is severely limited. It is a clear indication of my commitment to ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, An Garda Síochána will have sufficient resources to enable them to provide an effective and efficient policing service.

Departmental Funding

202. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding grant aid for an association (details supplied) for 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12038/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department is currently considering a request for grant-aid by the association.

Agriculture Schemes Payments

203. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if additional entitlements will be awarded to a person (details provided) in County Kerry or if they will be permitted to apply for further entitlements as a new entrant in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12052/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted an application for an allocation of entitlements from the 2012 National Reserve. The 2012 National Reserve caters for farmers', who commenced farming after 17 May, 2010. Applicants are required to submit a 2012 Single Payment application form detailing all lands which they are currently farming. In addition, applicants are required to meet certain criteria with regard to income limits and educational qualifications. Off-farm income cannot exceed €30,000 and total income, including farm income, cannot exceed €40,000. Applicants must have obtained a FETAC Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Agriculture or its equivalent. The green certificate in farming is regarded as equivalent for this purpose.

The person named does not currently hold the necessary qualification and has forwarded documentation informing my Department that he is currently attending an Agricultural Educational course, on completion of which, it is indicated, he will obtain the necessary educational qualifications. On completion of this course, and on submission of the required certification, my Department will be in a position to finalise this case.

Forestry Sector

204. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if Coillte will have to seek his permission under Section 14 of the 1988 Forestry Act, for the sale of approximately 250 hectares in County Donegal; the criteria under which he would consider giving approval if his permission is required; the reason he stated that it would be inappropriate for him to interfere in this process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12075/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Coillte Teoranta was established as a private commercial company under the Forestry Act, 1988 and day-to-day operational matters, such as the sale and acquisition of land, are the responsibility of the company. While the Forestry Act 1988 provides, under Section 14, that "*The company shall submit to and agree with the Minister each year a programme for the sale and acquisition of land and the sale of timber, whether standing or felled* ", this programme states the overall area of land for which agreement is sought for possible sale in the year ahead. The implementation of the programme, and the actual land parcels involved, is a matter for the company. On this basis, the company does not seek my permission in relation to each specific proposed sale. The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, with which Coillte, as a state body,

must comply, outlines procedures to be followed in the disposal of State assets, including oversight requirements.

Scéim na Limistéar faoi Mhíbhuntáiste

205. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cén uair a dhéanfar deontas a íoc faoi scéim na limistéar faoi mhíbhuntáiste le feirmeoir i mo dháilcheantar (sonraí leis seo); agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [12099/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Faoi Scéim Limistéar faoi Mhíbhuntáiste 2012, éilíodh ar na gabháltais d'iarratasóirí incháilithe an t-íosdlús stocála de 0.15 aonad beostoic a chomhlíonadh ar feadh tréimhse coinneála de shé mhí chomhleanúnacha, chomh maith le meánaonad beostoic bliantúil de 0.15 a choimeád atá ríofa thar tréimhse 12 mhí de bhliain na Scéime. Ós rud é nár léirigh an t-iarratasóir go fóill go gcomhlíonann an gabháltas riachtanais íosdlúis stocála na scéime i leith Scéim 2012.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

206. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the single payment per hectare on a flat rate basis that would be payable on all land in a holding over 33 hectares if €350 per hectare single payment was paid on the first 33 hectares; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12100/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The data requested by the Deputy is currently being compiled by my Department and a detailed response will issue directly when this is completed.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

207. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the disadvantaged area payment will be paid to a person (details supplied) in County Galway; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12101/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, the holdings of eligible applicants were required to have met a minimum stocking density of 0.15 livestock units for a retention period of six consecutive months, in addition to maintaining an annual average of 0.15 livestock units calculated over the twelve months of the scheme year. As the applicant has not as yet demonstrated that the holding satisfies the scheme minimum stocking density requirements, as of now, no payment is due in respect of the 2012 Scheme.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Eligibility

208. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 561 of 26 February 2013, the reason this Deputy was informed that the Department has not received any evidence of livestock on the holding (details supplied) in County Galway; when passport for horses were provided to his Department as requested and returned to the applicant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12102/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, the holdings of eligible applicants were required to have met a minimum stocking density of 0.15 livestock units for a retention period of six consecutive months, in addition to maintaining an annual average of 0.15 livestock units calculated over the twelve months of the scheme year. The relevant records in my Department have been checked and no evidence of receipt of the passports referred to has been found. However, my Department has made direct contact with the person named, who confirmed that he would submit the horse passports immediately. On the assumption that the documentation demonstrates compliance with the stocking requirements, payment will issue shortly thereafter.

EU Regulations

209. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the way EU Reg 995/2010 (details supplied) will be enforced here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12106/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The new EU Timber Regulation (EUTR - Regulation (EU) No 995/2010) is now in effect. It is part of a package of measures aimed at ensuring that all products containing wood placed on the market in the EU are from legally harvested timber. It applies to wood and wood products being placed for the first time on the EU market. It counters the trade in illegally harvested timber and timber products by imposing three key obligations:

- Placing illegally harvested timber and products derived from such timber on the EU market, for the first time, is prohibited.

- EU operators - those who place timber products on the EU market for the first time - are required to exercise 'due diligence'.

- Traders - those who buy or sell timber and timber products already on the market - are required to keep information about their suppliers and customers to make timber easily traceable.

My Department is currently drafting the appropriate legislation that will oversee and enforce these rules in Ireland. I can assure the Deputy that my Department will lay out effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties, where appropriate, to ensure compliance. Official checks will also be carried out which may include visits to premises to monitor and audit material. It is expected, however, that for the vast majority of those affected, this regulation will involve the reaffirmation of their current business practice. It will require them to ensure that their paper trail is in a format which can be checked to verify compliance. The key change this regulation will bring about is to impose a greater responsibility on those placing timber on the market to ensure that their products have been legally harvested.

Land Issues

210. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the incentives available from the State to encourage the early transfer of land to young qualified farmers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12125/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Recent analysis shows that there are more farmers over 80 than under 35 in Ireland. I have been working to encourage more new entrants to take up farming as a career. Budget 2013 saw the extension of key reliefs that were already in place for young new entrants (such as the 100% relief from Stamp Duty and the 100% stock relief for Young Trained Farmers). These provide an incentive both for early inter-generational farm transfer and also encourage young qualified farmers to expand their enterprise. Extending these reliefs is not straightforward given that there is a requirement for EU State Aid approval for such measures. The deputy will also be aware that changes were made to retirement relief in budget 2012 to encourage earlier inter-generational land transfers.

I am delighted that the number of applicants for Teagasc courses has greatly increased the last two years. Teagasc has responded well to this demand have introduced new courses to cater for a variety of needs. For example, last year Teagasc has launched a new Professional Diploma in Dairy Farm Management (Level 7) in association with University College Dublin (UCD). Teagasc have also developed a new Level 6 Specific Purpose Certificate in Farm Administration course to help meet the training requirements for full-time or part-time farmers.

Measures to provide targeted support to young farmers are part of the current negotiations on the reform of the CAP and will I hope form part of any final agreement. I have strongly supported the proposal for a top-up for young farmers under pillar 1 of the CAP, and indeed Ireland was one of the first countries to suggest this measure in the negotiations. I am also happy that the new farm restructuring CGT relief has been announced in the 2013 budget, subject to EU State Aid approval. This is the result of detailed work which analysed the reasons why the old stamp duty consolidation relief was not working. I am confident that the new relief in relation to Capital Gains Taxes will be more effective, especially given that Stamp Duty rates have been reduced. Re-structuring is essential for us to meet the Food Harvest 2020 targets.

We need to use land more productively and encourage more young farmers to make the best use of the land. A recent EU Commission study found that *'younger[farm] managers tend to perform better than the EU average, with 46% more area and 57% more economic potential for 21% more labour force'*. Ireland has a very low level of land sales, with most land staying within the same family for generations. Only 0.4% of land changes hand in any given year. Young farmers that want to expand need to be able to access land. According to the latest census of agriculture the average farm has 3.8 land parcels. This means that our farmers are wasting time and diesel driving between plots of land, increasing the stress and the risk of accidents. Young farmers will now have an opportunity to consolidate their holdings and increase efficiency.

I am hopeful therefore that the measures that I have both retained and introduced will encourage more young people into farming and address the age profile imbalance in Irish farming.

Harbour Authority Properties

211. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the proposed parking plan at Howth, County Dublin. [12134/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The documents enclosed are further submissions from the Howth Sutton Baldoyle Chamber of Commerce and the Howth Yacht Club addressing the issue of pay parking within the Fishery Harbour Centre at Howth. I have received previous submissions from both parties in relation to

this matter. I am considering all aspects of the matter at present and I will take account of these further submissions and all of the previous correspondence received in coming to a decision.

Afforestation Programme

212. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason that there is a significant difference between the rate of grant paid to farmers and non-farmers for afforestation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12231/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The higher rate of premium payable to farmers under the afforestation schemes is to compensate farmers for the loss of farm income arising from the conversion of the land from agricultural production to forestry. Landowners who are not engaged in farming do not incur such loss and are paid at a reduced rate of premium.

Animal Diseases

213. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he has taken to deal with the threat of schmallenberg virus and ensure that it does not become widespread here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12232/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Schmallenberg virus (SBV) is transmitted by vector (biting midges) during the vector active season which, in most years in Ireland, extends from the beginning of April through to the beginning of December. This virus causes mild transient disease manifesting as a drop in milk production, fever and sometimes diarrhoea in adult cattle. When infection occurs in animals that are not pregnant, the impact is very limited. However if ruminant animals are infected during the early stages of pregnancy, they may subsequently abort or give birth to malformed offspring.

It would be impractical to attempt midge control measures, except for valuable breeding stock. Exposure of non-pregnant animals to the virus may, in fact, be beneficial pending the development of an effective vaccine. Exposed animals develop a strong immunity and are unlikely to suffer any ill-effects if exposed to the virus on a subsequent occasion. If this viral infection becomes endemic, the ill-effects are likely to be confined to younger animals and cows and ewes that have not been previously exposed. Based on Australian experience in vaccinating against a similar virus/disease (Akabane virus infection), the expert view is that vaccination is likely to be an effective tool in control of the SBV infection. The development of a vaccine is in progress and my Department will continue to monitor developments closely.

Meanwhile, farmers are advised to contact their veterinary practitioner if they encounter cases of aborted fetuses or newborn animals showing malformations or nervous signs and also in cases where lambs or calves cannot be delivered naturally.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Appeals

214. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a revised decision will be made on an application for disadvantaged area scheme payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12233/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named is one of a number of applicants under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, whose cases are impacted by the requirement of a minimum stocking density of 0.3 livestock units per forage hectare and who applied for and were refused derogation in this regard. The person named subsequently availed of the option to appeal to the independently chaired DAS Appeals Committee. The Committee has adjudicated on this appeal and the person concerned has been notified of the unsuccessful outcome and the reasons for this (records supplied by applicant in support of derogation application show animal in question going to factory on 10 December 2010, rather than 2011), in writing, on 31 January 2013. As advised in that letter, it is open to the person named to pursue the matter with the Office of the Ombudsman.

Harbours and Piers

215. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to carry out repairs to the old pier in Roundstone, County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12234/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department provides funding for the development, maintenance and repair of harbours, piers and slipways as part of the Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme on an annual basis subject to the availability of exchequer funding. The 2013 programme is currently under consideration.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

216. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the disadvantaged area payment will be paid to a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary who has complied with REP scheme plan stocking level; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12235/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As the holding of the person named has recently been confirmed as having met the minimum stocking density requirements of the Scheme, payment will shortly issue to the nominated bank account.

Suckler Welfare Scheme Eligibility

217. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason suckler welfare scheme payments were not paid for the years 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012, in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12237/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Terms and Conditions of this Scheme require that applicants undertake to carry out and notify to my Department details of all the specified measures for the full 5 year duration of the Scheme. Weaning information was not received in respect of animals born in 2009 and so payment could not be made for animals born in that year or subsequent years.

Correspondence has recently been received from an agent, on behalf of the person named, and based on this new information, it is appropriate to reconsider the position. My Department is in the process of contacting the agent concerned in relation to submission of data for the 2009

born animals. On receipt of the data, and subject to confirmation of compliance with the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme, payment will be made for animals born in each of the years specified.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

218. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a headage payment will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12246/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Full payment under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme issued to the person named on 26 September, 2012 (the first day of payment under the 2012 Scheme) directly to the nominated bank account.

Departmental Programmes

219. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the proposals, if any, he has to introduce a compensatory programme in respect of losses incurred by farmers under the BVD eradication programme; his plans to re-introduce the €100 welfare payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12278/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The provision of funding for compensation in the context of the compulsory phase of the BVD programme must be placed in the context of the economic benefits accruing to farmers arising from the eradication of this disease and, particularly, the short payback time involved for individual farmers as well as the scarce budgetary resources available to my Department. It has been estimated that the eradication of this disease is very beneficial to farmers. I should also emphasise that the strategy of my Department is to concentrate its scarce resources in continuing to support Animal Health Ireland in its ongoing work in establishing control programmes for non-regulated diseases of livestock in Ireland.

Single Payment Scheme Expenditure

220. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the average single farm payment per hectare in every county; and if he will furnish this information broken down by county. [12288/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The average Single Farm Payment per hectare per county is as follows:

COUNTY	AVERAGE PAID PER HECTARE
CARLOW	373.26
CAVAN	286.62
CLARE	252.38
CORK	341.85
DONEGAL	191.89
DUBLIN	317.09
GALWAY	243.65
KERRY	198.15

COUNTY	AVERAGE PAID PER HECTARE
KILDARE	333.83
KILKENNY	376.78
LAOIS	377.71
LEITRIM	193.47
LIMERICK	303.63
LONGFORD	310.58
LOUTH	363.33
MAYO	193.70
MEATH	368.16
MONAGHAN	349.93
OFFALY	338.41
ROSCOMMON	278.13
SLIGO	212.54
TIPPERARY	354.33
WATERFORD	336.60
WESTMEATH	319.83
WEXFORD	370.95
WICKLOW	270.48

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

221. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when disadvantaged area scheme payments will be issued to a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon. [12289/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named is one of a number, their derogation applications having been unsuccessful, who were offered the option to appeal to the independently chaired DAS Appeals Committee. To date, this option has not been availed of. Should the applicant choose to lodge an appeal, it will be referred to the Committee for its consideration.

Agriculture Schemes Appeals

222. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide an update in the appeal in respect of person (details supplied) in County Roscommon [12290/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An appeal was received from the applicant and is being examined. The applicant will be informed of the outcome when the examination has been completed. It is expected that this process will be completed shortly.

Early Childhood Education

223. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the extent of her Department's involvement in the development of the early childhood care and education sector here; her views on the importance of social policy in relation to the health and well being of children; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12104/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department is currently developing a new Children and Young People's Policy Framework which will set out high-level goals for both my own and other Departments for the next five years. The Policy Framework is expected to be published in mid 2013 and will build on *Our Children - Their Lives*, Ireland's first Children's Strategy which was published in 2000. This is relevant to the National Early Years Strategy as the Strategy is one of three, more detailed strategies which will be developed under the Framework.

The Early Years Strategy, which will be Ireland's first ever national strategy for early years, is already under development and is expected to be completed and published later this year. It is expected that it will cover a range of issues affecting children in their first years of life such as health, including physical and mental development, vaccination programmes and population health issues such as nutrition and exercise, as well as parenting and family support, learning and development, play and recreation and early childhood care and education, including literacy and numeracy.

The Strategy will bring together and consider a significant amount of international and domestic research on the importance of early years for child development, including findings from the 'Growing up in Ireland' study. It will also be informed by the evaluations from the Prevention and Early Interventions Projects which have been funded jointly by my Department and philanthropic organisations, as well as an analysis of existing service provision and associated resources. The major programme of institutional change which is currently underway, including the establishment of the Child and Family Support Agency, will also be taken into account. The results of a public consultation, undertaken as part of the development of the Children and Young People's Policy Framework, is currently being analysed and will inform both the Framework and the Early Years Strategy. A further, focussed consultation with key stakeholders in relation to the Early Years Strategy, is also proposed.

My Department provides funding to support three childcare programmes - the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) programme, the Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) programme and the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme - which provide a range of supports to parents of preschool children and also after-school care for children older than 6 years.

The CCS programme is provided through community-based childcare services and enables those services to provide childcare at reduced rates to disadvantaged and low income families. For the purpose of the CCS programme, disadvantage and low income are determined by reference to a range of means-tested allowances and payments including receipt of a social welfare payment, Family Income Supplement (FIS) and qualification for a medical or GP visit card.

My Department also implements the CETS programme which was introduced in September 2010. The eligibility criteria under which trainees and students qualify for the programme is determined by FÁS and the Vocational Educational Committees (VECs) and €145 towards the weekly cost of full time childcare places is provided by my Department to those deemed qualified. Students on part-time courses are funded on a pro rata basis.

The ECCE programme was introduced in January 2010 and provides a free pre-school year to all eligible children in the year before commencing primary school.

A new School Age Childcare initiative was announced in Budget 2013 as part of a packet of measures to support children and families. It will be implemented as a joint venture by my Department and the Department of Social Protection. Under the initiative, over 6,000 after school childcare places will be made available for children of parents availing of employment opportunities. My Department has been given a full year allocation of €14 million to provide

for the scheme which is expected to be fully rolled out in September 2013. This Department provides in the region of €260 million annually to support parents with the cost of childcare under these programmes and despite the budgetary situation the programmes have been maintained and expanded.

Child Poverty

224. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the measures that will be taken between her Department and the Department of Social Protection to end child poverty here, in line with the new EU recommendations Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12142/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The European Commission Recommendation “Investing in Children - Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage” is part of the “Social Investment Package” published by the European Commission in February. Because of the complex nature of the package, it will be necessary to coordinate initial positions across all relevant Government Departments. The Department of Social Protection recently wrote to my Department proposing that the Department of Children and Youth Affairs nominate a representative to a network of relevant Departments which the Department of Social Protection is establishing to facilitate appropriate input for all of the relevant policy areas in the development of Ireland’s position on the Social Investment Package. I am glad to say that my Department will be part of the network and I look forward to working with my colleague the Minister for Social Protection and other colleagues in relation to the Social Investment Package and the European Commission Recommendation on Investing in Children.

Adoption Legislation

225. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she has considered the recommendations of the Adoption Rights Alliance regarding adoption legislation; if measures will be taken to address the 44 recommendations; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12143/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have received detailed submissions from the group which outline suggested amendments to the Adoption Act, 2010 and proposals in relation to information and tracing for those affected by adoption. I am currently examining a number of proposals in relation to amendments to the Adoption Act, 2010. I intend to bring forward any changes to the legislation in conjunction with the draft Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2013.

Work is ongoing on the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill, which will provide for a structured and regulated approach to providing access to adoption information and will facilitate contact for those affected by adoption, including in circumstances where an adoption order was not effected. It is intended that the Bill will provide for the Adoption Authority to have access to all adoption records. The Bill will provide for a National Index of Adoption Records to be maintained by the Adoption Authority containing information as to where all known adoption records are located within the State. It is envisaged that only the Authority, the HSE and accredited bodies will hold adoption records, with the Authority having overall charge of those records.

It is also intended that the Bill will provide for placing the National Contact Preference Register on a statutory basis. The purpose of the Register is to allow persons affected by adoption to

register their names with a view to receiving information about a person from whom they have been separated as a result of adoption and will allow for registering a preference, as to whether or not, they want to have contact with that person.

A National Tracing Service will be established, the operation of which will be subject to guidelines which will be set out in regulations. It is intended that the Tracing Service will be made available to adopted persons, birth parents and relatives with the Adoption Authority having the overarching responsibility for the service. It is intended that prior to the release of adoption information, counselling will be offered by the Adoption Authority, the HSE or by an accredited body to an adopted person, a birth parent or to an adoptive parent if, in the opinion of the Authority, the HSE or an accredited body, such counselling would be beneficial in the circumstances, or if such counselling is requested by the applicant seeking the adoption information.

Complex issues have arisen during the course of the preparation of the Bill including the criteria for balancing an adopted person's right to information about his or her identity as against a birth parent's right to privacy. My own view is that persons affected by adoption should be provided with as much information as possible within permissible Constitutional boundaries. Consideration of legal and policy issues is ongoing and once these have been satisfactorily resolved, I intend to seek Government approval to publish the Heads of Bill. It is my intention to bring this Bill before the Houses of the Oireachtas in the coming months.

Child Care Services

226. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will clarify if the tax free exemption of €15,000 for voluntary notified child minders will remain in place following the abolition of the child minding advisory officers; if she will clarify who currently provides the voluntary notified certificate to the child minders which is a requirement for them to avail of this scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12179/13]

227. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if the tax exemption for child minders will be available for new entrants; the way this will be administered; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12180/13]

228. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will outline the way current child minders can continue to avail of the exemption for child minders; if she will outline who will administer the schemes at a local level; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12181/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 226 to 228, inclusive, together.

Section 58 of the Child Care Act 1991 provides for exemptions for certain categories of childminders from the provisions of Section 51 of the same Act which requires a person carrying on a pre-school service to give notice to the Health Service Executive (HSE) of their service. Those childminders exempted under Section 58 of the Act can voluntarily notify the HSE of their service and avail of a range of benefits and supports that enables them to improve the standards of their childcare service. These supports include the Childminders Tax Exemption scheme which provides for a tax exemption for those childminders who have satisfactorily participated in the Voluntary Notification process and whose annual income from childminding does not exceed €15,000. While taxation matters are not within my remit, there is no change, nor is any planned, to the Childminder Tax Exemption.

In 2002, the HSE agreed to fund a Childminding Advisory Officer in each county, who would work with the City/County Childcare Committees (CCCs). I understand that HSE funding for the Childminding Advisory Officer posts has gradually decreased in recent years and while this is not a welcome development, I would point to the fact that the CCCs are now well-established and effective bodies at local level, and that supporting the childminding sector is an integral part of their work. As a result, childminders continue to have access to support including the necessary support for childminders wishing to participate in the Voluntary Notification process.

My Department provides annual funding to each CCC to enable them to support and advise all childcare providers at local level. In 2012, the total amount allocated to the CCCs was €11.3m. In addition, in 2012 my Department provided €220,000 to the CCCs for Childminding Development Grants. My Department also provides annual funding, totalling €2.85m in 2012, to seven National Voluntary Childcare Organisations to provide support at a local level to their members. This included €358,000 for Childminding Ireland, the representative body for childminders

My Department has commenced work on Ireland's first Early Years Strategy. I have received Government approval for the approach I am taking in developing this Strategy as an innovative and dynamic blueprint for the future development of our Early Years sector, aimed at providing a coherent approach to seeking to improve the lives of children from birth to the age of six. One of the policy issues which I have identified for consideration in the preparation of the Early Years Strategy is the development of the childminding sector as a fully-integrated component of early childhood care and education, in particular for the under-one age group.

Regulation of Child Care Services

229. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will examine the option of registration for all early years services including child minders rather than a notification system; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12182/13]

231. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to a publication by Dr. Mary Daly carried out by Waterford City and County Vocational Education Committee and the Health Service Executive South in 2010 which called for a registration system for all childcare services including child minders, the removal of the exemptions in the 1991 Act and reform of the inspection system to ensure its appropriateness for child minding services; if she will confirm if her Department has considered the implications and findings of this report; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12184/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 229 and 231 together.

Under the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006, services providing care for children who have not yet commenced primary school are required to notify their service to the Pre-School Inspectorate of the HSE. Childminders taking care of not more than three pre-school children from different families are not covered by the Regulations and are not required to notify.

As is the case with all regulatory requirements, the Child Care Regulations set the minimum standards which services are legally required to comply with. However, my Department is proactive in monitoring, promoting and developing the highest standards of care and education throughout the sector, including the regulatory environment, given the important role which

these services play in this crucial phase of children's lives.

My Department has commenced work on Ireland's first Early Years Strategy. One of the policy issues which I have identified for consideration in the preparation of the Early Years Strategy is the development of the childminding sector as a fully-integrated component of early childhood care and education, in particular for the under-one age group. Decisions on how best to regulate and support the childminding sector will continue to form part of the ongoing work on the Early Years Strategy.

Childcare Education and Training Scheme

230. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will consider opening up State run programmes such as CETS to child minders who provide a vital service particularly in rural areas; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12183/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): At present childminders are excluded from participating in the Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) programme. In the absence of additional funding to provide for extra CETS places, there are no plans to change this position. Future developments relating to early years care and education, including the design of schemes and eligibility of providers, will be considered during the preparation of the new National Early Years Strategy which is currently being developed by my Department.

Question No. 231 answered with Question No. 229.

Child Protection

232. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the way child protection and foster care services will be improved, particularly in the areas of staffing levels and supervision; if she will provide an update on the standard of provision of child protection and foster care services in Counties Longford and Westmeath; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12239/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the HSE that as part of the transition to the Child and Family Support Agency, child protection and welfare services are currently being reorganised and restructured to ensure optimal delivery of services to children and their families. New National Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Children were published by HIQA in July 2010. They are also subject to independent inspection by HIQA to ensure compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements.

Currently there are 132 children placed in care with 70 approved foster carers in Counties Longford and Westmeath. A further 4 relative foster carers are awaiting approval. Ninety eight per cent of children in care are attending full-time education. Notwithstanding the moratorium on recruitment in the public service, a number of vacant positions in the Area have been prioritised for filling and are being processed by the HSE National Recruitment Service. All frontline staff currently receive supervision in line with the HSE Supervision Policy. This level of supervision will continue and be developed further, following the transition to the Child and Family Support Agency.

Family Support Services

233. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children waiting for social work services by LHO area or if unavailable by ISA with a breakdown for the reasons they require a social work service and length of time waiting; and if she will provide a comparison with the two previous years for which figures are available. [12258/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department has sought the information requested by the Deputy from the HSE and I will provide the Deputy with the information as soon as it becomes available.

Health Services

234. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the purpose of the Health Service Executive review of incontinence wear supplies in counties Cavan and Monaghan as referenced on page 34 of the HSE Dublin North East Regional Service Plan; if he will direct the HSE to ensure that there is no reduction of either service and supply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12041/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): A review of the existing governance arrangements for incontinence wear supplies in Cavan and Monaghan is planned in order to identify any improvements in terms of service and supply of incontinence wear. The scope of the review will include community nursing continence assessments, order and approval processes, supply efficiencies, and overall data management of a patient management system for clients in receipt of incontinence wear from the Public Health Nursing Service.

Health Service Executive Agency Staff Issues

235. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health if agency nurses have been employed in the medical wards in Sligo General Hospital at any time since the 1 January 2013; the number employed each month; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12053/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As the use of agency staff is a matter for the HSE in the first instance, the Deputy's enquiry has been referred to the Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Services

236. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of children currently awaiting insulin pump therapy in Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin, Dublin; the number of nurses on leave from this Department and if this is impacting on the delivery of this very important therapy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12058/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): 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 Waiting Lists

237. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will arrange an appointment

at the earliest possible date in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12072/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to waiting list management in general, the National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2013*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, recently been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists. In relation to this particular query raised by the Deputy, I have asked the Health Service Executive to investigate the situation and respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Medical Card Applications

238. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health his views on correspondence regarding medical cards (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12073/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Staff

239. **Deputy Gerald Nash** asked the Minister for Health the number of paediatric orthopaedic surgeons in the Health Service Executive system; the facilities in which they are based; his plans to recruit necessary additional specialist surgeons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12082/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Subject to overall parameters set by Government, the Health Service Executive has the responsibility for determining the composition of its staffing complement. In that regard, it is a matter for the Executive to recruit, manage and deploy staff to best meet the requirements of its Annual Service Plan for the delivery of health and personal social services to the public. The Executive is the appropriate body to consider the matter raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Medical Card Review

240. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if a review will be undertaken regarding the recent refusal of a medical card in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12083/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Ambulance Service

241. **Deputy Gerald Nash** asked the Minister for Health the current provision of ambulance services in the Drogheda, Dundalk and general County Louth area; the number of paramedic personnel engaged in the service; if the Health Service Executive plans to retain the existing number of ambulances in the service; if the Health Service Executive intends to continue with current levels of staffing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12084/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The National Ambulance Service (NAS) is not a static service. The Service deploys its resources in a dynamic manner and works on an area and national, rather than a local, basis. The dynamic deployment of ambulance resources ensures that the nearest appropriate resource is mobilised to the location of any incident.

The NAS has been taking a number of steps to improve response times. These include development of a Performance Improvement Action Plan, an Intermediate Care Service, the control centre reconfiguration project and a trial emergency aeromedical service. Following a referral to the Labour Court under the Public Service Agreement, the NAS is currently progressing a number of efficiencies arising from LCR 20313, including the issue of removal of overtime built in to rosters. New rosters are now in place and are operating successfully. In relation to the specific queries raised by the Deputy, as these are service matters they have been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Services

242. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Health if he will outline the investigations that have taken place at Mayo General Hospital following the death of a person (details supplied); the steps that have been put in place to ensure the prevention of a similar occurrence in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12085/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Firstly, I wish to offer my sincere condolences to the relatives of the person who died.

Under the Acute Coronary Syndrome Programme, patients with symptoms and ECG findings indicative of a STEMI-type acute heart attack are treated according to the National STEMI Protocol, which was officially launched in October 2012. It has been in use in the west of Ireland since July 2012. Under the protocol, if patients can be transported to a primary PCI centre providing 24/7 treatment of STEMIs within 90 minutes of diagnosis, then they are brought directly to that centre. The primary PCI centre in the west of Ireland is the cardiology centre in University Hospital Galway (UHG). This unit has 2 cardiac catheter laboratories and a dedicated team of interventional cardiologists, nursing, technical and radiography staff on call 24/7. Based on international best practice, a unit such as this will serve the population of the west of Ireland for management of STEMI.

If transport to UHG within 90 minutes is not feasible, then STEMI patients are taken to the nearest emergency department equipped to stabilise patients, such as Mayo General or Portiuncula Hospitals, for thrombolysis (administration of clot-bursting drugs) to stabilise the situation. They are then transferred to UHG for assessment as to whether further immediate intervention is needed. This is accepted international best practice for management of STEMI patients, particularly in remote areas. In addition to the national protocol, the Code STEMI Protocol, approved by the Medical Director of the HSE National Ambulance Service (NAS) and through the HSE Clinical Care Programmes, outlines the actions required by hospital and NAS staff when a STEMI patient is to be transferred from a hospital to a PCI centre.

The incident raised by the Deputy was reported to the National Incident Management Team at national and regional level for review. The NAS also carried out an internal review and in parallel requested an independent review, which was conducted by the State Claims Agency. A review was also conducted between the NAS and Mayo General Hospital to ensure that the CODE STEMI protocol is followed for this type of incident.

The outcomes of the reviews have been raised with the clinical programme lead of the Acute Coronary Syndrome Programme, and the Director of the NAS and actions highlighted by these reviews have been implemented. These include training of staff, a written protocol between Mayo General Hospital and the NAS, additional auditing of calls within the Ambulance Control and the re-circulation by the NAS of the Code STEMI protocol. Since this incident, all such transfers are treated as an emergency and six STEMI's have occurred in Mayo General, all following the protocol.

In relation to the incident itself, the NAS has informed me that, at 19:30 on 17 August 2013, the patient began to experience symptoms and, about an hour later, self-presented to Mayo General Hospital Emergency Department, where an ECG was carried out. At 21.06 the NAS received a call from Mayo ED to organise an emergency transfer from Mayo to Galway for a patient with a myocardial infarction. However, the patient was described as for angioplasty, not as a Code STEMI, and the CODE STEMI protocol was not initiated. At 21.20, an ambulance was assigned. Mayo ED was notified that an ambulance was en route, but the ED advised that the patient was being thrombolysed and the ambulance was not required.

The NAS has confirmed that there were two ambulances at Mayo General ED at the time of the incident. An ambulance is not available for further duty until the patient is transferred to medical staff in the ED and the ambulance is reported as available. Depending on the previous call, once the hand-over is completed, the ambulance may need to be restocked, refuelled or cleaned before being ready for duty. Both ambulances had responded to previous calls and the hand-over of patients had not been completed at that point. The ambulance based in Castlebar was available and was tasked, in line with the transfer request from the hospital, but was stood down on advice from the hospital.

Health Service Staff

243. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin** asked the Minister for Health the reason six trainee medical scientists in Beaumont Hospital, Dublin, who are close to the completion of their five month clinical placement which is a compulsory part of their training, have yet to receive their monthly trainee allowance of €903.98 despite the Health Service Executive memo dated 6 February 2013 outlining that all trainees were entitled to such an allowance; and if he will give an assurance that this allowance will be paid prior to the completion of these trainees' placements [12086/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The HSE has in the past confirmed to all health sector employers that Student Medical Scientists on placement must be paid the monthly training allowance as set out in my Department's consolidated salary scales. This allowance was approved for continued award to new beneficiaries, following the review of public sector allowances conducted in 2012. The current rate payable is €813.58 per month. The HSE memo dated 6 February 2013 reiterated in clear terms to hospitals that this allowance should be paid to all Student Medical Scientists on work placement. As the payment of this allowance in Beaumont Hospital is a matter for the HSE in the first instance, the Deputy's enquiry has been referred to the Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Services

244. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Health the action he will take to ensure that persons living in rural areas, in particular in County Mayo, who suffer a heart attack will receive treatment at their nearest cardiac specialist unit at University Hospital Galway within the medically desired time of 90 minutes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12087/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): All patients with symptoms and ECG findings indicative of a STEMI-type acute heart attack are treated according to the national STEMI protocol, which has been defined by the Acute Coronary Syndrome Clinical Programme, in accordance with international best practice. If patients can be transported to a primary PCI centre dedicated to 24/7 treatment of STEMIs within ninety minutes, then they go directly to that centre. If transport to a PCI centre within 90 minutes is not feasible, then STEMI patients are taken to the nearest emergency department where thrombolysis (administration of clot-busting drugs) can be given, to stabilise the patient before transport to the PCI centre. This is accepted international best practice for management of STEMI patients, particularly in remote areas. Unfortunately, STEMI incidents are extremely serious and some STEMI cases have poor outcomes, irrespective of treatment.

The national STEMI protocol was launched in Oct 2012. The National Ambulance Service, with by the Emergency Aeromedical Support Service helicopter and the Coast Guard, has been implementing this protocol and patients are managed according to the protocol. The PCI centre in the West of Ireland is the cardiology centre in University Hospital Galway (UHG). This unit has 2 cardiac catheter laboratories and a dedicated team of interventional cardiologists, nursing, technical and radiography staff on call 24/7. Based on international best practice, a unit such as this will serve the population of the west of Ireland for management of STEMI incidents. If transport to UHG within 90 minutes is not feasible, then STEMI patients are taken to the nearest emergency department (eg Mayo General or Portlinculla) for thrombolysis, to stabilise the patient before transport. They are then transferred to UHG for assessment as to whether further intervention is needed.

Orthodontic Services

245. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 455 of 18 October 2011, the position regarding an application for orthodontic treatment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12109/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The HSE provides orthodontic treatment to patients based on their level of clinical need. An individual's access to orthodontic treatment is determined against a set of clinical guidelines and priority is given to patients with greatest needs. The patient (details supplied) had an assessment by the Consultant Orthodontist in the HSE Orthodontic Unit in St. James's Hospital on 23 March 2011. The outcome was that the patient is not eligible for HSE orthodontic treatment as she does not meet the HSE Orthodontic eligibility guidelines. This was communicated to the Deputy in a reply from the HSE dated 18 October 2011.

Departmental Strategies

246. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he will commit to producing an implementation plan for the national neurorehabilitation strategy; and if he will ensure that this is done in time for the upcoming European Brain month in May. [12120/13]

247. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the national neurorehabilitation strategy; if he will request the Health Service Executive to prioritise an implementation plan for this strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12124/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 246 and 247 together.

The report "*National Policy and Strategy for the Provision of Neuro-rehabilitation Services in Ireland 2011 - 2015*" published in December 2011, is the overarching policy on neuro-rehabilitation services. There are no proposals to publish an implementation plan in respect of this report as the report includes proposals for a framework for the future of neuro-rehabilitation services in Ireland. It also contains proposals on implementing the report including key elements such as: guiding principles; implementation structure; methodology for implementation; and information and communication. The report recognises that given the current economic climate, the focus in the short to medium term has to be on re-configuration of services, structures and resources and the enhancement of the skills and competencies required to meet the changing context.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

248. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Health the up to date position with the Nursing Home Support Scheme Fair Deal Review; when he expects the review to be complete; if he intends to publish the Review Report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12185/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): A public consultation to inform the review was concluded in July 2012. A summary report of the submissions received was published on the Department's website in December. Work will continue on the review in the coming months and the Department will shortly be seeking tenders through the public procurement process for external input to this review. It is envisaged that the review will be completed in 2013.

Medical Card Eligibility

249. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding eligibility for a medical card in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12217/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Medical Card Applications

250. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical

card application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12238/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Medicinal Products

251. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the measures he is taking to reduce the cost of generic drugs in view of reports that the Health Service Executive pays up to 24 times more than the National Health Service for some generic drugs; if he will outline a timeframe for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12260/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The prices of drugs vary between countries for a number of reasons, including different prices set by manufacturers, different wholesale and pharmacy mark-ups, different dispensing fees and different rates of VAT. In recent years, a number of changes to the pricing and reimbursement system have been successfully introduced in Ireland. These have resulted in reductions in the prices of thousands of medicines.

The Department and the HSE have successfully finalised discussions with the Association of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers in Ireland (APMI), which represents the generic industry, on a new agreement to deliver further savings in the cost of generic drugs. Under this Agreement, from 1 November 2012, the HSE will only reimburse generic products which have been priced at 50% or less of the initial price of an originator medicine. In the event that an originator medicine is priced at less than 50% of its initial price the HSE will require a generic price to be priced below the originator price. This represents a significant structural change in generic drug pricing and should lead to an increase in the generic prescribing rate. In addition, the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill 2012, which is currently before the House, provides for the introduction of a system of generic substitution and reference pricing for prescribed drugs and medicines. These reforms will promote price competition among suppliers and ensure that lower prices are paid for these medicines resulting in further savings for taxpayers and patients.

Home Help Service Provision

252. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will clarify the situation regarding the provision of home help hours in the Health Service Executive Dublin North East area; if the technical adjustment will mean 400,000 hours will be lost in this region; if he will reassure service users that their service will remain in place and those who have lost hours in the past 12 months will have them reinstated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12261/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The target for Home Help hours in the HSE National Service Plan 2012 was incorrectly set at 10.7 million hours, due to a data collection error in the Dublin/North East region. The correct original target for 2012 should have been 10.3 million hours, and this is the target now also set for 2013. The error was purely methodological and there was, therefore, no loss of 400,000 hours. As is the case with all aspects of HSE service plans, the Home Help services are reviewed on a regular basis, in the context of achieving agreed targets or taking account of evolving circumstances over the course of 2013.

Hospital Services

253. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will detail plans for service change at Navan Hospital, County Meath, for the full year 2013; the services that will be lost and gained; the staff changes expected for the same period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12262/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the specific queries raised by the Deputy, I will arrange for a senior official at the Department of Health to write to you on these queries.

Hospital Trusts

254. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will details plans for hospital groups for all hospitals in the Health Service Executive Dublin North East area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12263/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Recommendations on the formation of specific groups and arrangements for the management and governance of all groups have been included as part of a report on the establishment of hospital groups as a transition to hospital trusts. This report is based on a comprehensive consultation process, as well as a significant number of submissions from stakeholders and individual citizens. These recommendations have been considered and endorsed by a Strategic Board composed of representatives with national and international expertise in health service delivery, governance and linkages with academic institutions.

The report on the establishment of hospital groups as a transition to independent hospital trust has been presented to me by the Chair of the Strategic Board, Professor John Higgins. I intend to prioritise consideration of this report, which will then be submitted to and presented to Government for decision on the hospital groups composition in light of the recommendations of the Report.

The Government will then decide on the initial make up of hospital groups which will be established on an administrative basis pending the legislation required to set up hospital trusts by 2015. Before those trusts are established the composition and functioning of the Groups will be reviewed and if changes prove necessary then they will be made with Government approval when the hospital trusts are being formed. As such I cannot comment at this time on the final composition of the new Hospital Groups and will not be publishing the Report or its recommendations prior to it going to Cabinet.

Hospital Services

255. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the reason for the upgrade of tele conferencing facilities at Roscommon County Hospital; the cost of the project and the timetable for completion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12267/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): 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.

Mental Health Services

256. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide the necessary staff to allow Killorglin and district Mental Health association to open their new low support mental health facility adjacent to Ard Alainn Day Care Centre, Killorglin, County Kerry, that is enacting the Vision for Change strategy proposed by the Health Service Executive that was purchased and renovated at a cost of €343,000 at the request of the HSE that was due to open last September; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12274/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue, this matter has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Cancer Screening Programme

257. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Health his plans for the roll out of a National Cancer Screening programme with specific plans for the involvement of Roscommon County Hospital. [12283/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The HSE's national colorectal screening programme, BowelScreen, commenced in November 2012 and is being introduced on a phased basis to men and women between the ages of 60-69 years. When fully implemented the programme will offer free screening to men and women aged 55-74 every two years. The screening test, known as a Faecal Immunochemical Test (FIT), is a home based test and approximately 94 to 95 per cent of people will receive a normal result and will be invited for routine screening again in two years time. A small number, in the region of five to six per cent, will receive a not normal result and will require an additional test. They will be referred for a colonoscopy to a Screening Colonoscopy Unit within a hospital contracted by the HSE's National Cancer Screening Service (NCSS) for provision of this service.

Over half of the initially selected fifteen candidate screening colonoscopy units have been accredited to date, giving geographic spread to support the screening programme, and maintaining service requirements for symptomatic patients within national targets. The remainder of units continue to work to achieve this benchmark. Also a number of additional units, including Roscommon County Hospital, are pursuing NHS Joint Advisory Group (JAG) accreditation and the NCSS continues to work in close partnership with Roscommon County Hospital in this regard. The HSE is working to develop the appropriate capacity in colonoscopy services nationwide to support the introduction, sustainability and growth of the screening programme, while maintaining and enhancing the capability of the symptomatic endoscopy service.

Hospital Services

258. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Health his plans for a medical rehabilitation centre at Roscommon County Hospital. [12284/13]

259. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Health if his plans for a medical rehabilitation centre at Roscommon County Hospital includes a capital development; and if so, the costings. [12285/13]

260. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Health when a consultant in medical rehabilitation will be posted at Roscommon County Hospital in view of the fact that interviews for the post have now taken place. [12286/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 258 to 260,

inclusive, together.

In relation to the specific queries raised by the Deputy, as these are service matters they have been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Hospital Services

261. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Health his plans for a new eight bed Palliative Care Centre at Roscommon County Hospital. [12287/13]

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.

Taxi Regulations

262. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport; Tourism and Sport the current number of SPSV license holders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12048/13]

263. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport; Tourism and Sport the number of enforcement officers attached to the National Transport Authority to invigilate the taxi sector; the number of enforcement officers as a percentage of the total number of taxi license holders, that is, the number of enforcement officers per head of the taxi population; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12049/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 262 and 263 together.

I am informed by the National Transport Authority (NTA) that the current number of SPSV driver licence holders is 33,717 and there are currently 22,830 SPSV vehicle licences. There are eight enforcement officers in the NTA. An Garda Síochána also plays a major part in the enforcement regime.

Concerning 'on street' enforcement specifically, there has been very good cooperation between An Garda Síochána and the NTA. The NTA carried out over fourteen and a half thousand on-street vehicle checks as part of their enforcement activities during 2012. In addition, An Garda Síochána also carried out a significant number of vehicle checks on small public service vehicles, both as part of joint operations carried out in conjunction with the NTA and as part of their normal road traffic policing activities. The NTA is currently drafting an enforcement plan for 2013 which will be coordinated with An Garda Síochána's policing plan for 2013. That will assist with continued co-operation during 2013.

In addition, under Actions 21 and 25 of the Taxi Regulation Review Report published last year, Garda powers are to be extended to allow members of An Garda Síochána to issue fixed charged notices with respect to 11 additional SPSV fixed charge offences. The Taxi Regulation Bill 2012 specifically provides for this and will further support measures to ensure that operators and drivers can operate under a robust regulatory framework supported by an effective enforcement regime. The Bill passed the Committee Stage in the Seanad on the 27th February last. Following enactment of the Taxi Regulation Bill later this year, I envisage a significant stepping-up of the enforcement effort with regard to the taxi regulations.

Sports Capital Programme Expenditure

264. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a sports club (details supplied) who have had National Lottery funding committed to it, can have the draw down period for that funding extended, in view of unforeseen, but resolvable, problems that have arisen from a decision of the local planning authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12068/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): The club referred to by the Deputy was allocated a grant of €300,000 under the 2006 Sports Capital Programme towards the provision of a sports hall and dressings rooms. The club has made very little progress in drawing down this grant and the Deputy will appreciate that grants cannot be kept open indefinitely. The club have been reminded on several occasions of the need to progress this project and draw down the grant. The club now needs to engage with my officials and ensure that all outstanding documentation is sent to the Department as soon as possible.

Tourism Industry

265. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of tourists between the ages of 18 and 35 years who visit here as two out of every five tourist are under 35 years of age. [12069/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The matter raised is an operational one for Failte Ireland, which collects such information under its tourism research function, through its surveys of overseas travellers. I have referred the Deputy's Question to Failte Ireland for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Parking Regulations

266. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to examine the operation of clamping companies and the practice of clamping by local authorities. [12070/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Section 101B of the Road Traffic Act, 1961 (inserted by Section 9 of the Dublin Transport Authority (Dissolution) Act, 1987), provides for the clamping and/or towing of vehicles illegally parked on a public road or in local authority car parks by either a member of the *Gárda Síochána*, a person appointed in writing by a local authority for said purposes, or a traffic warden. There is currently no regulation of clamping companies nor of the activity of clamping on private land.

In line with the commitment in the Programme for Government to regulate the vehicle clamping industry, I presented a discussion document to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Environment, Transport, Culture and the Gaeltacht in which I outlined the principal issues to be addressed in regulating the industry, my proposals on the shape of appropriate legislation and invited their views. The Committee responded to me in a comprehensive report which contained a number of recommendations, many of which I hope to include in the resulting legislation. Preparation of the General Scheme of the Bill is at an advanced stage in my Department and I hope to be in a position to bring legislation before the Oireachtas in 2013.

Rural Transport

267. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for the delivery of rural transport in County Westmeath in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12121/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly): Westmeath Rural Community Transport Association Ltd has been allocated €129,353.00 of the 2013 RTP budget from January to June 2013, with a further proposed, allocation of €129,353.00 from July to December. Additionally, €32,234.50 of Free Travel Pass funding has been allocated to Westmeath Rural Community Transport Association Ltd from January to June, 2013, with a further proposed, allocation of €32,234.00 from July to December. This represents a total 2013 allocation of €323,174.50, of combined RTP and FTP funding for the provision of the RTP service in Westmeath.

My aim is to strengthen the RTP by ensuring a more efficient delivery structure by maximising integration with other state transport services and by making the programme a sustainable part of the public transport system. This is in line with the Programme for Government commitment to maintain and extend the RTP with other local transport services. Since becoming Minister for Public and Commuter Transport the developments I have initiated have been aimed at ensuring that into the future there is a more complete and cost effective transport service offering in rural areas that better meets the transport needs of all users. To this end national responsibility for local and rural transport services integration, including the RTP, was assigned to the National Transport Authority (NTA) with effect from 1 April 2012, putting such services in a broader transport context. I also established the National Integrated Rural Transport (NIRT) Committee in April 2012, comprising key stakeholders and chaired by the NTA, to oversee and manage a partnership approach to implementing integrated local and rural transport.

I am well aware of the very valuable work done by the RTP Groups in identifying and delivering the transport needs of their local community. However, given resources are limited and that the Value for Money and Policy Review of the RTP, published last year, recommended organisational restructuring to achieve efficiencies and the better alignment of the 35 RTP groups with local authorities, it is necessary that the current delivery mechanisms and structures are examined and revised. To not do this would mean that vital services would be threatened. The current structures of the RTP are not sustainable if the required efficiencies and savings are to be achieved. If these are not achieved then with the limited resources available services will decline.

Work is underway to determine the optimal structure for the delivery of rural transport from an efficiency and service perspective. One of the proposals being examined is that the RTPs be “aligned” with local authorities and that a number of Coordination Units be established. I would emphasise that no decision has been taken but I am hopeful that I will be in a position to recommend a new structure later this year which will allow for the maximising of spend on services and the reduction of administration costs.

I will be ensuring that any future structure for the RTP will be based on community input, local flexibility and involving the voluntary sector. Rural Transport by its nature is community-based and this will remain under any new structure. While I can understand and fully appreciate that this restructuring creates a level of uncertainty for RTP groups, I am hopeful that the outcome will be a better service delivered more efficiently. I will work with all involved over the coming months to make any transition as smooth as possible.

Cycling Facilities

268. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he is currently reviewing the application of traffic regulations that apply to cycle tracks; if he will clarify if traffic regulations SI 181/97, 182/97, 273/98, 274/98 define a cycle track in the same manner as other traffic lanes and if they define a duty to yield for other traffic crossing the cycle track; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12173/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The 1998 Regulations to which the Deputy refers amend the 1997 Regulations in order to provide a uniform definition of a cycle track as ‘part of a road, including part of a footway or part of a roadway, which is provided primarily for the use of pedal cycles’. Cycle tracks are defined on the ground by signage, including markings on roads or footpaths as set out in the Road Traffic (Signs) Regulations 1997-2012.

A cycle track is specifically called a track in the regulations and is not identified as a ‘lane’. I presume that the Deputy’s reference to a duty to yield refers to Regulation 8 of S.I. No. 182 of 1997, which deals with Yielding Right of way, and refers to lanes. This Regulation does not apply to cycle tracks as, when a cycle track ‘crosses’ other traffic, the crossing is not part of the cycle track. Cycle traffic moving from one section of cycle track to another through a junction must abide by the controls at the junction, such as traffic lights or yield signs, on the same basis as any other traffic. I am not currently reviewing the regulations in respect of cycle tracks.

Driving Licences

269. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will address the genuine issues raised in correspondence regarding driving licences (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12268/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Irish driver licensing rules operate within the framework of an EU-wide licensing system. The criteria essential for recognition of licences from other countries are testing and licensing regimes which meet the requirement of the EU directive on driver licences. On this basis Ireland recognises licences from, and has mutual recognition and exchange of licence arrangements with, other EU Member States and a number of other jurisdictions where research and discussion has shown that standards in those jurisdictions match those here.

Driver licensing regimes in the United States of America vary between the different States, and not all of the States meet the required standards. As a result, the USA is not one of those countries with which Ireland has mutual recognition of licences.

In the absence of an exchange agreement, persons taking up Irish residence are treated as beginners and must go through the procedure of obtaining a driving licence by passing the theory test, obtaining a learner permit, taking lessons and sitting the driving test. While this can seem demanding in individual cases where people have a safe driving record in another jurisdiction, the overriding policy concern behind these regulations is that the Irish system must be satisfied that people are properly qualified to drive on our roads. However, I would point out that the normal rule that learners cannot take the test until they have been learners for six months is waived for applicants who come to Ireland with a full licence from another country.

