

## Written Answers.

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**The following are questions tabled by Members for written response and the ministerial replies as received on the day from the Departments [unrevised].**

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*Questions Nos. 1 to 9, inclusive, answered orally.*

### Tourism Policy

10. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will outline the major issues that he will seek to address within his proposed new tourism policy; and the way members of the industry and the public will be able to engage with this review. [31025/13]

37. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide a progress report on the current review of the national tourism policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30947/13]

56. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he intends to publish a consultation document on the review of tourism policy and to seek contributions from stakeholders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30951/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 10, 37 and 56 together.

These questions relate to the development of a new tourism policy.

Commencing a review of tourism policy is one of my Departmental priorities for 2013. The purpose of this review is to develop a new tourism policy that will provide the necessary direction and framework to support a competitive and sustainable tourism industry over the coming five to ten years. This review will take account of the many factors that will impact on Irish tourism, including prospects for the national economy, expected developments in the international economy and anticipated trends in global tourism.

In order to ensure that the final tourism policy is robust and supports the competitiveness of the Irish tourist industry into the future, it is vital to secure the views of all relevant stakeholders. Therefore, I intend to publish a consultation document in the coming weeks presenting the various issues arising and inviting comments from all interested stakeholders and consumers. Furthermore, I also intend to engage in a round of consultations in the Autumn to facilitate active and meaningful engagement with the industry and other relevant stakeholders. As I have mentioned previously, I believe that the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Transport and Communications, which covers tourism, can also play an important role in the consultation process and will be inviting them to consider the matter. I would also welcome any contribution to the

consultation process from the Deputies or their parties.

The submissions received in response to the consultation process will inform my final statement of tourism policy which, in turn, will provide a robust foundation for the subsequent development of a broader tourism strategy and action plan.

### **VAT Rates Application**

11. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will seek to extend the 9% VAT rate for tourist related economic services; if there is ample evidence to suggest that the reduced VAT rate has increased activity in the tourist sector; his further plans to boost the sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31062/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring):** This question relates to the extension of the reduced VAT rate of 9% beyond the end of this year. I am very conscious that the tourism and hospitality industry would like to see the rate continued through 2014 and beyond.

I am also conscious that it has been estimated by the Department of Finance that the VAT reduction costs the Exchequer up to €350 million a year. In that context, I am supportive of retaining a reduced rate, but that can only be justified on the basis of clear evidence of the impact of the reduction.

In this regard, an examination of the VAT rate cut by the Department of Finance in late 2012 found that employment among accommodation and food providers increased by 6,200 from the second quarter of 2011 to the equivalent period in 2012. This amounted to an 8-9% increase in employment in the sector when compared to the decline in overall market services employment (excluding accommodation and food and public sector employment) in that period. It also found that inflation in the sector lagged the overall trend.

More recently, the VAT cut has also helped improve perceptions of value amongst our overseas visitors. When the percentage of people who had a negative perception of our value for money is subtracted from those with a positive perception, the figures have improved dramatically since 2009. 2009 had a negative rating of -11% and 2012 was +24%. Other positive indicators include hotel occupancy rates which were at their highest in 2012 since 2007 with a noticeable jump between 2011 and 2012 from 56% to 61%.

As the Deputy is aware, the final decision regarding matter of taxation policy is the responsibility of my colleague, the Minister for Finance.

### **Semi-State Bodies Annual Reports**

12. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the current financial position of CIE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31073/13]

70. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the financial situation of the CIE companies and the State funding that will be required to protect public transport operations in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31085/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 12 and 70 together.

These questions relate to the current financial position of the CIE Group.

Since 2008, the financial performance of CIÉ has been severely affected by the economic recession which has resulted in a significant reduction in passenger numbers. CIÉ recorded total losses in the three years 2009 to 2011 of over €137m. The current CIE business plan 2013-2017 provides for almost break even by 2015 and a return to profitability of the Group thereafter.

To compensate for the reduced passenger revenues and PSO subvention, CIÉ have engaged in a cost recovery programme over recent years. Further cost saving measures have now been agreed with Bus Éireann unions and the Labour Court has recently issued a recommendation in relation to the proposed cost reduction plan in Dublin Bus. The Labour Relations Committee has also facilitated discussions between unions and management at Irish Rail on further cost saving measures and recently issued its proposals.

In July 2012 the Government approved an increase in the 2012 subvention to CIE by €36 million to €278 million to ensure that the companies could continue to operate PSO services for the rest of 2012. Given the pressure on the public finances there will be no additional funding from the Exchequer in 2013. The implementation of a credible business plan will therefore be essential to CIE's financial recovery in the period ahead.

The Board of CIÉ are pursuing a range of measures to address the financial position. At the end of 2012 a significant voluntary severance programme was implemented in Irish Rail and the Group generated cash of €20 million by selling its interest in the ground lease in Spencer Dock. CIÉ will also benefit from the introduction of a fuel rebate in July and in addition, the Group has benefitted from fare increases approved by the NTA. The Group has recently negotiated improved bank facilities in relation to refinancing of the Group, which will ensure that the Group has sufficient funding into the future.

### **Light Rail Projects Status**

13. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the progress being achieved in the development of the Luas Cross City project. [30936/13]

23. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on the progress made with the Luas Cross City project; and the plans for a north and southbound station at Dawson Street, Dublin 2. [31032/13]

30. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when construction is due to commence on the Luas Cross City project; if there is a proposed completion date; the number of new jobs this project will create in 2013; if he foresees further Luas project extensions toward Dublin North; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31084/13]

71. **Deputy Paschal Donohoe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide a report on the progress being made to date in the development of the Luas Cross City project. [31078/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 13, 23, 30 and 71 together.

These relate to the Luas Cross City project.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the development of

public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), including the proposed Luas Cross City project.

Luas Cross City Line is a priority project under the Government's 5-year capital plan - *Infrastructure & Capital Investment Programme 2012-2016 - Medium Term Exchequer Framework*. In November 2012, following consideration by Government, I asked the NTA and the Railway Procurement Agency (RPA) to proceed with the procurement and contractual arrangements so that the enabling works for the project would commence mid-2013.

I understand that a building survey contract is now underway. Following the recent award of the two Cellars Infill and Investigation Contracts, works commenced this week which will locate, and where necessary infill, cellars which may be under footpaths and road ways along the route. The contract for the Heritage Works Contract is scheduled for award shortly and initial works are planned for September 2013. Works on the Utility Diversions Contract are also planned to commence in September 2013. Procurement for the main contract will commence in mid-2014 with main construction works due to start in early 2015. The target date for commencement of services is end-2017.

The NTA are consulting with business representatives in the Dawson Street area with regard to the re-instatement of a northbound stop on Dawson Street. A report on possible locations for a proposed stop is expected to be available in late-July 2013.

The new project will create up to 800 jobs during the construction phase with a further 60 permanent jobs on completion. A breakdown by year is not available.

There are no plans in the current Capital Programme to further extend the Luas lines. However, the NTA is currently preparing an Integrated Implementation Plan for investment to 2018 in the GDA as required under the DTA Act 2008. This plan will address the investment needs of the Area to 2018 based on available funding and will be subject to public consultation later this year.

### **Rugby World Cup Bid**

14. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the actions, if any, he has taken to advance the IRFU's bid for the Rugby World Cup in 2023 or 2027; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31069/13]

35. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on the possibility of Ireland bidding to host the Rugby World Cup in 2023 or 2027. [30937/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 14 and 35 together.

I am fully supportive of the concept of hosting the Rugby World Cup in Ireland but it is, of course, a matter for the IRFU to prepare and submit a bid. The IRFU recently presented to Minister Varadkar and myself a feasibility study which they commissioned on the potential for hosting the tournament. The findings of that report are being considered.

The support of other sporting organisations would be an important element in the bid process and I am pleased to note that on 23 March delegates at the GAA Congress approved a mo-

tion which would allow the inclusion of Croke Park and other GAA grounds in the list of venues that would be used for matches if Ireland was selected as the host country for the tournament.

The Programme for Government includes a commitment that event tourism will be prioritised in order to continue to bring major events to Ireland. As well as the primary purpose of bringing spectators to our shores, the hosting of sports events can provide a great showcase for Ireland. Fáilte Ireland continues to support the holding of sports and other events that can boost tourism and, where appropriate, will provide advice and assistance to the sporting body which is seeking to secure an international event. I understand that Fáilte Ireland has engaged with the IRFU in this regard and are considering the likely tourism impact of hosting the tournament.

The bid has also been discussed with the Northern Ireland Minister for Tourism, Arlene Foster MLA, and Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure, Carál Ní Chuilín MLA. They have met with the IRFU and have also indicated their support for a bid.

### **Tourism Promotion**

15. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to further promote the cruise ship tourism sector here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31068/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** This question is about cruise ship tourism.

The cruise ship sector has seen significant growth in recent years and is a sector that has considerable potential to contribute to the growth of the overall tourism sector in Ireland. In April 2013 the Irish Maritime Development Office published figures for 2012 which show a 14.5% increase in the number of large cruise vessel calls to the island of Ireland. Based on expected visits to Irish ports this summer, it is expected that there will be a further increase in cruise vessel calls in 2013.

The Government’s Integrated Marine Plan for Ireland includes an action to investigate opportunities to increase Ireland’s share of the cruise tourism market and develop Ireland as a turnaround destination, including supporting port companies in their plans to develop or expand cruise facilities using their own resources.

In line with this a number of port companies are developing proposals to facilitate greater volumes and provide better cruise related facilities within ports. All these developments have to be funded commercially by the port companies themselves as there is no scope for Exchequer financing under State Aid rules.

It is important to recognise that the nature of the cruise industry is that it is not a lucrative source of revenue for port companies and that it can be difficult for investments in this area to remunerate themselves from the charges the ports levy. However, such visits provide considerable benefit for the local and wider regional economy. Therefore in the context of the proposed development of larger scale cruise facilities, it is appropriate for each port company to consider whether they can fund these developments from their own resources on a commercial basis and if not, if those beneficiaries of cruise tourism, be they regional interests or the cruise operators, can contribute to development costs.

In relation to the further development of cruise tourism, the matters raised are of an operational nature and are for consideration by Fáilte Ireland. I have referred the Deputy’s question

to the agency for further information and direct reply. Please contact my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

*Question No. 16 answered with Question No. 8.*

### **State Airports**

17. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the legislation to merge Shannon Airport and Shannon Development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30984/13]

34. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to review the €3 travel tax; his plans to encourage further development of the air connections to Ireland; if he is satisfied with the activities of the newly independent Shannon Airport Authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31065/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 17 and 34 together.

These relate to the merger of Shannon Airport and Shannon Development. As I pointed out in my replies to Dáil Question Nos. 7 and 63 on 15th May last, work on the preparation of the Heads of a Bill to provide for the merger of the Shannon Airport Authority (SAA) and a restructured Shannon Development is on-going in my Department, in conjunction with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and with the assistance of the Attorney General's Office.

I expect to introduce the Bill to the House during the autumn session. When the Heads are finalised and approved by Government, I will refer them to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport for their consideration prior to drafting.

Of course, the plans and preparations for the merger are continuing and I am very satisfied with progress to date by the newly independent Shannon Airport Authority (SAA).

As I pointed out last month, the high-level Steering Group of key Departments continues to meet on a regular basis and the Chairman of SAA serves on this group. Transition teams at senior management level are also in situ in both Shannon Airport Authority and Shannon Development to ensure the smooth implementation and management of the merger while also ensuring that normal day-to-day business and operations carry on uninterrupted.

Following the successful conclusion last month of a facilitation process between management and union representatives in Shannon Development to address a number of staff issues, staff transfers from that company have commenced to Fáilte Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and the IDA. Some staff are also being redeployed to other agencies in the region. A voluntary early retirement and voluntary redundancy scheme was also successfully concluded last month in Shannon Development with 25 staff availing of the scheme.

The new Chief Executive of the Shannon Airport Authority and of the proposed new Shannon entity took up his post on 10th June and the key priority for him and the board of SAA is to halt the decline in passenger traffic, and then reverse it.

I am confident that Shannon can have a successful long-term sustainable future, now that the board and management are free to determine that future themselves.

As regards the travel tax, the Government's offer to abolish this tax in return for an increase

in capacity and the restoration of cancelled routes and reduced capacity stands. The purpose of the offer was to stimulate inbound tourist traffic. While there have been some positive developments in relation to additional capacity in 2013, particularly on US-Ireland routes, linked to both general traffic demand and the expected increased traffic relating to the Gathering, overall the response from the airlines to date has been inadequate. The Government has made it clear that it will need to see a significant growth in capacity and routes across the full range of sectors and airports before consideration can be given to abolishing the tax.

In relation to the development of air connections to Ireland, the three State airports offer a range of incentive schemes to airlines to maintain and grow their business at those airports. This includes the Growth Incentive Scheme which was introduced as part of the Government's Jobs Initiative aimed at encouraging inbound tourism. Under this Scheme, a total of €1.5m was rebated by the DAA to airlines in 2012 for increasing their passenger numbers during the year.

### **Public Transport Initiatives**

18. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to work with LUAS to allow for passengers to bring their bikes on board at off-peak times and to generally encourage accommodation of cyclists on public transport. [31038/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** This question relates to the accommodation of cyclists on public transport. The Programme for Government commits my Department to invest in the National Cycling Policy Framework. Objective 8 of this policy framework is to ensure proper integration between cycling and public transport, with a specific action to provide for the carriage of bicycles on LUAS when services are of a frequency and at a capacity that allows for it, that is when they do not interfere with the capacity for passengers.

The Railway Procurement Authority considered the carriage of bicycles in 2012 as part of a review of all Luas operations. They concluded that bicycles could not be carried on Luas trams, because, for the most part, bicycles would interfere with the capacity for passengers, particularly those who are mobility impaired.

Folded bicycles may be carried on the trams at all times.

My Department is currently reviewing the National Cycling Policy Framework and as part of this exercise has re-opened the issue of the carriage of bicycles on LUAS with the RPA. Consultation with the RPA on this matter is on-going.

It should be noted that while the RPA has not permitted the carriage of bicycles on trams they have provided over 750 secure bike parking places along the LUAS routes to enable LUAS passengers to 'bike and ride'.

With regard to carriage of bicycles on other public transport modes, Irish Rail allows bicycles to be carried on intercity trains at all times and on DART and other commuter services during the off-peak period.

### **Air Services Provision**

19. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his preferred options for the future development and control of and shareholding in Aer Lingus; the extent to which it is envisaged that Ryanair might be expected to be involved in any plans

in the context of the maximisation of air transport options and opportunities to and from this country worldwide; the extent to which it is intended to maximise opportunities for the possible development of an international air transport hub here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31081/13]

22. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on aviation policy; the measures being taken to develop and expand the number of routes and carriers operating from Cork Airport; his views on measures being taken to reduce operating costs at the airport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31027/13]

58. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the meaning of recent statements that the State will become a more active shareholder in Aer Lingus and what this means for the State's long-term plans for its stake. [31037/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 19, 22 and 58 together.

These questions relate to Irish aviation policy and Irish airlines.

As an island, air transport connectivity is clearly of vital importance to Ireland for both economic and social reasons. There is a healthy competitive market for air services in and out of the country and we benefit from a wide range of air connections, both short and long haul. New routes are being announced on a regular basis by both Irish and international airlines. Maintaining and developing this connectivity is certainly a key objective of national aviation policy.

A consultation process to develop a new national aviation policy is currently underway. An issues paper was published on 1 March this year inviting submissions from stakeholders and interested parties. The deadline for submissions has recently been extended to 12 July in response to a number of requests. I anticipate that all the major airlines and airports will have substantial contributions to make to the consultation process. They each have a role to play in maximising options and opportunities for the development of the aviation sector. I look forward to receiving their submissions along with the views of all interested parties.

Following receipt of submissions, a draft National Aviation Policy Statement will be issued in the second half of 2013. This will provide further opportunity for stakeholder input before the adoption of the new policy document in early 2014. The new policy will outline the actions to be taken by Government to help sustain and develop the aviation sector, in order to create jobs and support business and tourism.

In relation to the State's remaining shareholding in Aer Lingus, the Government continues to seek opportunities to dispose of the shareholding, but will only do so when market conditions are favourable and on terms and at a price that are acceptable. In the meantime the Government will continue to manage its shareholding actively to protect the State's interests and with the aim of maximising the value of the shareholding, securing dividends and encouraging new routes and additional capacity where commercially viable.

In relation to Cork airport questions regarding the development of routes and operating costs are day to day operational matters for the DAA and local management. I recently met with management at Cork Airport and welcomed their plans for the development of the Airport and for enhanced consultation by them with regional stakeholders.

## **Sports Funding**

20. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide a breakdown of the way the €43.798 million allocated to the Irish Sports Council in 2013 is to be spent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30948/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring):** The Irish Sports Council, which is funded by my Department, is the statutory body with responsibility for the promotion, development and co-ordination of sport, including the allocation of funding across its various programmes.

I have referred the Deputy's question to the Irish Sports Council for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within 10 days.

### Road Network

21. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the Tralee by-pass, County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31040/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for the NRA in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

*Question No. 22 answered with Question No. 19.*

*Question No. 23 answered with Question No. 13.*

### Cycling Facilities

24. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has considered redeveloping the toll paths along the Royal and Grand canals, including their branches, to allow for a cycle path/ walk way which would ultimately link the city of Dublin to the west and south east; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30940/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly):** My Department is fully supportive of the development of cycle ways along canal paths and recognises the benefits of these initiatives. In general, it is a matter for relevant local authorities to progress and submit proposals for the development of such routes to the Department.

In respect of the Grand Canal, I understand that the provision of a cycle way along the route from Dublin to Naas has been identified as a potential greenway on the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) cycle network. However, no applications for funding of this section has been received to date by my Department or the National Transport Authority (NTA) which manages a funding programme that includes cycle infrastructure projects in the GDA.

This year, a seed financing scheme was established by my Department to give start-up support to local authorities to help with the development of initial proposals for noteworthy cycle projects. As part of the scheme, Offaly County Council sought funding for the development of proposals for a 60km cycle route along the Grand Canal from Edenderry to Shannon Harbour. There was considerable interest in the scheme and significantly more proposals were submitted than funding was available so regrettably, on this occasion, the proposal submitted was not successful.

In relation to the Royal Canal, the planning phase for a proposed Dublin-Galway Greenway is already underway, which will encompass part of the canal route from Dublin to Mullingar.

As above, the NTA is responsible for the provision of cycling infrastructure in the GDA and is therefore proceeding with the planning of the Dublin City Centre to Maynooth section of the proposed Greenway.

The NRA is undertaking the detailed route alignment and design work for the Maynooth to Galway section of the route. The design of the section along the Royal Canal between Maynooth and Mullingar is complete and is currently the subject of planning processes in both Meath and Kildare. Furthermore, the section from the Meath/Westmeath county boundary to Mullingar is currently under construction and will be completed before the end of the year.

### **North-South Ministerial Council**

25. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide details of the agenda for the North/South Ministerial Council meeting to be held on 26 June in Armagh; if he will also provide specific details of the major tourism initiatives North-South planned for 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30941/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I attended the fourteenth North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) Tourism meeting in the NSMC Joint Secretariat offices, Armagh yesterday, 26 June 2013. The meeting was also attended by Arlene Foster MLA, Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, and John O'Dowd MLA, Minister for Education. At the meeting we received a presentation from Tourism Ireland on their Business Plan for 2013 and priorities for the remainder of the year.

The Council also discussed major tourism marketing initiatives including The Gathering Ireland 2013 and Derry-Londonderry UK City of Culture 2013, and noted the major role which Tourism Ireland is playing in their overseas promotion. Tourism Ireland's Annual Report and Accounts for 2012 were noted and there was also a useful discussion on the development of Tourism Ireland's Corporate Plan for the period 2014 to 2016.

In terms of other initiatives in the tourism area, there is ongoing cooperation between the tourism agencies and Government Departments north and south in a number of other areas including the selection of suitable tourism projects to benefit from Peace/INTERREG funds, work to harmonise and share tourism statistics north and south and specific initiatives by the agencies in relation to major events such as the Giro d'Italia. I look forward to this work continuing and to availing of any other beneficial opportunities for north/south cooperation in the tourism sector in the future.

### **Public Transport Provision**

26. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will report on his Department's plans to recommend improved transport provision to and from Dublin Airport across the northside of Dublin and within the greater Dublin area in the coming years up to 2015. [30907/13]

41. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the current status of the Metro North Project in Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31055/13]

47. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for the funds that were raised in levies during the planning period of the Metro North project; and if they will be ring-fenced for other Dublin-based infrastructure projects or repaid to residents. [31031/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 26, 41 and 47 together.

Following the comprehensive review of capital expenditure carried out in 2011 and against the background of difficult funding realities a decision was taken to defer the Metro North project together with a number of other proposed new projects. Given the limited funds available, the decision was taken that the main priority to 2016 is to protect investment made to date, to maintain safety standards, and to progress affordable projects, such as Luas Cross City, which add value to the existing network.

The National Transport Authority (NTA) is currently preparing an Integrated Implementation Plan for investment to 2018 in the GDA as required under the DTA Act 2008. This plan will address the investment needs of the Swords/Airport corridor to 2018 based on available funding and will be subject to public consultation later this year. Furthermore, I have asked my officials to prepare a Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport which will inform future investment plans and this work which will include a review of Metro North as well as other projects is underway. Metro North is postponed not cancelled and is kept under review.

My Department is providing funding, however, to the NTA under the Sustainable Transport Measures Grants (STMG) Scheme which facilitates investment in the various QBCs, cycling/walking, safety and traffic management projects throughout the seven local authorities in the GDA region. Included under this Scheme in 2013 is funding of over €4m to Fingal County Council for 23 projects one of which is for the design of the Swords Road QBC Upgrade within the Fingal area. In the City area, Dublin City Council is also being funded for the tender and construction of Phase 1 of the Swords Road QBC (removal of a pinch point at the Cat & Cage).

With regard to levies payable in respect of the Metro North project, the decision in relation to the payment of Section 49 development levies is a matter for the relevant planning authority in accordance with the Planning and Development Act, 2000 and I have no function in regard to the matter.

*Question No. 27 answered with Question No. 6.*

### **Sports Capital Programme Applications**

28. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he intends to seek applications for the next round of the Sports Capital Programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31076/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring):** The most recent round of the Sports Capital Programme was launched in March last year. The Deputy will be aware that this was the first round of the Programme since 2008.

The Department received 2,170 applications for funding under the 2012 Sports Capital Programme, the highest number of applications ever received. The allocations were announced last December. There were 648 allocations totalling €31m.

No decision has been taken on the timing of the next round. Any such decision will of course have to be taken in the context of the likely capital provision for the subhead in future years.

*Question No. 29 answered with Question No. 8.*

*Question No. 30 answered with Question No. 13.*

### **Road Safety Issues**

31. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his priorities for improving road safety. [30906/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** My main priorities for improving road safety are outlined in the Road Safety Strategy 2013 to 2020.

The two main objectives of the Strategy are (i) a reduction of road collision fatalities on Irish roads to 25 per million population or less by 2020, thereby reducing deaths from 162 in 2012 to 124 or fewer by 2020 and (ii) a provisional target for the reduction of serious injuries by 30% from 472 in 2011 to 330 or fewer by 2020 or 61 per million population.

The Strategy contains a large number of Actions that, when implemented, will contribute to the overall objective. The body/agency responsible for the implementation of each Action and the timescale for completion is identified in the Strategy.

### **National Roads Authority Expenditure**

32. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport following the report from the National Roads Authority regarding the volume of traffic on the M50 and the recent media speculation on the introduction of tolls to the M50, his plans in relation to these matters; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30904/13]

45. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to introduce tolls on the M50; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30903/13]

62. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to ensure safety standards on the M50 while avoiding increases in tolls and forcing drivers into residential or built up areas. [31033/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 32, 45 and 62 together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

I refer the Deputy to my response to Priority PQ 1 of 27th June 2013.

### State Airports

33. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the most recent safety consultation was conducted at Shannon Airport; if military operations were included in the assessments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31021/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The issue raised by the Deputy, the regulation of safety standards at airports, is a matter for the Irish Aviation Authority, an Agency under the remit of my Department. I have referred the Deputy's question to them for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

*Question No. 34 answered with Question No. 17.*

*Question No. 35 answered with Question No. 14.*

### State Airports

36. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will report on discussions with the management of Ireland West Airport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30901/13]

48. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to deliver on proposals by Ireland West Airport, Knock, to create 500 new jobs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30902/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 36 and 48 together.

These questions relate to future development at Knock Airport, including employment potential.

As Deputies will be aware, the Ireland West Airport Knock (IWAK) Study Group was established, under the Chairmanship of Deputy John O'Mahony, following a meeting of the Airport Board with the Taoiseach, myself and Minister of State Ring. The Group, while taking account of available funding and State Aid and Competition rules, is examining how the airport can survive and be further developed having regard to the implications for other regional airports.

The Group comprises representatives of the Airport Board and management, Mayo County Council, regional Business and Tourism sectors, the Departments of Transport, Tourism and Sport, Finance, Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and Enterprise Ireland.

Three meetings of the Group have taken place, two in Knock and one in Dublin and good progress continues to be made. For example, I am aware that the Group has already carried out an initial examination, including a survey of industry, of how the airport can best serve Industry needs and support economic development in its catchment area. However, it is recognised that a substantial body of work needs to be carried out before the Group can complete its report.

Following the conclusion of a tender process, the Study Group has selected Ernst & Young consultants to assist the Group in part of their work. This consultancy will be jointly funded

by my Department, Mayo County Council and the airport. The consultants have been asked to develop scenarios for a secure financially viable future for IWAK.

The IWAK Study Group expects to submit a report to myself and to the Taoiseach by Autumn 2013.

*Question No. 37 answered with Question No. 10.*

### **Semi-State Bodies Dividends**

38. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide detail of his efforts to ensure that all commercial semi-State companies under his Department's remit pay dividends to the Exchequer; the importance of such dividends; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30958/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The Government's position is that all profitable commercial State companies with distributable profits return a financial dividend to the State. The general guideline figure is 30% of after-tax profits. Depending on the financial circumstances of the particular company, the figure adopted may be more or less than this guideline 30% figure. However, dividend policies will need to take account of issues such as current and projected profitability, capital investment plans and pension funding. I have reviewed the capacity of all the commercial State companies under my Department's responsibility to pay a dividend in line with this policy. Many of these companies are not currently profitable and are not therefore in a position to pay. The capacity to pay dividends in 2013 in any material way is therefore limited to a small number of the larger and profitable State companies, specifically Dublin Port Company, the Irish Aviation Authority and the Port of Cork. A dividend has also been secured from Aer Lingus.

### **Road Projects Issues**

39. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will seek an urgent meeting with the Northern Ireland Executive to discuss the future of the A5 road project following recommendations within the Executive that funding set aside for the A5 be moved to other projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31023/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Contact with the Northern Ireland Road Authorities in relation to the A5 project is ongoing under the aegis of the North South Ministerial Council. The next Plenary meeting of the Council is scheduled for the 5th July.

### **Industrial Relations Issues**

40. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the Labour Relations Commission recommendation that Dublin Bus drivers' overtime and holiday payments be cut, as well as the number of sick leave days, in order for the company to achieve a required €11.7 million in savings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31057/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** This question relates to Dublin Bus and the recent recommendations issued by the Labour Court.

In order to ensure the viability of the company, Dublin Bus is seeking to achieve savings from direct payroll costs and from efficiency and productivity savings. Labour Court hearings were held on 15th March and 15th April. The Labour Court has now issued a recommendation and I understand that the Unions in Dublin Bus are now expected to ballot on the Labour Court recommendation.

I welcome the Labour Court recommendation and I hope the proposals will enable the implementation of necessary cost saving measures in Dublin Bus.

*Question No. 41 answered with Question No. 26.*

### **Public Transport Initiatives**

42. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to convert the Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann fleet to use low carbon and sustainable energy sources such as electricity, LPG or other fuels to reduce fuel costs, tackle pollution and encourage development of our natural resources; his plans to encourage a similar conversion among private car users in line with EU directives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31042/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly):** The National Transport Authority (NTA) is responsible for procuring Public Services Obligation (PSO) vehicles on behalf of Dublin Bus and Bus Eireann. EU Directive 2009/33/EC requires that the NTA take environmental and energy criteria into account when making such procurement decisions. As this matter is more appropriate to the NTA, I have forwarded your query to them for direct reply.

With regard to encouraging a switch to more sustainable energy sources for private car users, my Department and the Department of Energy, Communications and Natural Resources are actively promoting electric cars and the ESB is supporting the deployment of these vehicles by rolling out publicly accessible charge points.

The Government is continuing to incentivise the purchase of more energy efficient private cars through the motor tax and VRT systems. The proportion of new vehicles registered in emission bands A and B increased from 12% in 2005 to 92% in 2012.

### **Road Traffic Offences**

43. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the measures, both in legislative and policy terms, to tackle the problem of hit and run accidents, particularly those where there are fatalities or the persons struck by a vehicle are seriously injured; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30908/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Normally, where a driver is involved in a collision (with or without injury resulting from the collision) and fails to remain at the scene of the collision, they can be charged with an offence under Section 106 of the Road Traffic Act 1961. However, in instances where death or serious injury is caused, the charge preferred is under Section 53 of the Road Traffic Act 1961, as amended.

All such charges are at the discretion of the Director for Public Prosecutions.

### Tourism Promotion

44. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to support Loop Head tourism in view of the fact that the Loop Head Peninsula, County Clare, was recently voted the overall winner in *The Irish Times* best place to holiday in Ireland competition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30945/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The matter raised is an operational matter for Fáilte Ireland. I have referred the Deputy's Question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

*Question No. 45 answered with Question No. 32.*

*Question No. 46 answered with Question No. 6.*

*Question No. 47 answered with Question No. 26.*

*Question No. 48 answered with Question No. 36.*

### Rail Network

49. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans for the improvement and expansion of the State's rail network; and his plans to resist moves by the EU to encourage states to open rail lines to private operators. [31030/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The level of Exchequer funding available for the development of transport infrastructure has been greatly reduced in recent years. Accordingly, the focus is to protect previous investments and to maximise the efficiency of existing infrastructure. As this level of funding will not allow for significant investment in new public transport infrastructure, the Government, as set out in "Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2012-16: Medium term exchequer Framework" is aiming to make better use of the existing system and resources to make the public transport experience more responsive and passenger friendly.

Despite the reduced level of funding available, my Department has allocated over €135m towards the rail network this year. The bulk of this funding will go towards renewals and maintenance under the Railway Safety Programme, and enhancement projects such as signalling, the provision of automated ticketing facilities and the removal of level-crossings.

The investment regime for Iarnród Eireann for 2014 is currently being reviewed having regard to the anticipated completion of the Railway Safety Programme by the end of 2013 and new EU mandated infrastructure management contract requirements, allied to the need to ensure value for money in the spending of constrained Exchequer funding.

The European Commission announced a package of proposals last January aimed at delivering better quality and more choice in railway services across Europe. Among the proposals announced is the opening of domestic rail passenger markets from 2019 onwards. The package also contains a proposal that would lead to all public services obligation contracts being awarded by means of a competitive tender process from December 2019.

The discussions on these latest proposals have not commenced. I have therefore not yet taken a position. The proposals are being scrutinised by my Department and the approach to be

taken will have regard to the views of interested parties.

### **Rail Services**

50. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that automated ticket machines for LUAS and Iarnród Éireann services have been reported to be unable to process the new €5 note; and if he will ensure that any future currency changes will be dealt with in advance to avoid inconvenience to rail users. [31034/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The issue raised is a matter for Iarnród Éireann and the Railway Procurement Agency (RPA) and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to both companies for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

*Question No. 51 answered with Question No. 6.*

### **Road Toll Operators**

52. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Questions No. 216 and 708, his views regarding whether the replies furnished by the National Roads Authority, regarding the use of significant public Exchequer funds on enforcement action to collect tolls on the M50 toll road are complete; if he is satisfied that the replies furnished by the NRA fully address the questions posed by this Deputy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30909/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply and asked that they verify the information previously provided. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

### **Cycling Facilities**

53. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to support the Boyne Greenway Initiative which will run from the source of the Boyne to the estuary and which has the potential to become an international tourism product; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30952/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly):** My Department is currently administering a multi annual funding programme related to the development of the National Cycle Network (NCN) to cover the period 2012 to 2016. Significant investment has already been made in 2012 and 2013 with €7 million allocated to 16 projects across Ireland. One of the projects to benefit from this funding is a 3km section of cycle way from the Drogheda Ramparts to the Oldbridge entrance of the Battle of the Boyne

site. This 3km, which is part of a longer 45km route envisaged by Meath County Council, has been allocated €500,000 by my Department and will be constructed by end 2013. The 45km route, if fully developed, would link the towns of Drogheda, Slane, Navan and Trim with the potential to connect with the proposed Dublin to Galway Greenway. It is intended to initiate a new funding call under the NCN Programme later this year to provide, through competitive process, a further tranche of funding for the remainder of the years to 2016. As part of this competitive process, it would be a matter for Meath County Council to progress and submit proposals to the Department for the development of cycle projects in Co. Meath, including any proposal to develop a Boyne Greenway.

### **Integrated Ticketing**

54. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to incorporate the Dublin Bikes scheme into the Leap card system, further linking transport options in Dublin City. [31028/13]

66. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the work he is doing to ensure that public transport bodies are as accessible to the public as possible utilising integrated ticketing, smart phone applications, automated ticketing machines, online purchase and top-up services and other initiatives to make travel easier for commuters, tourists and all users. [31036/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 54 and 66 together.

Responsibility to develop, procure, implement, operate and maintain the integrated ticketing Leap Card system in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) is a function of the National Transport Authority (NTA). In addition among the Authority's principal functions is the promotion of an integrated, accessible public transport network as well as the development of a single public transport brand. The NTA has developed the Transport for Ireland website ([www.TransportforIreland.ie](http://www.TransportforIreland.ie)) as a "one stop shop" for public transport information. Alongside Real Time Passenger Information, the NTA has developed a National Journey Planner as well as the Leap Card Scheme. These services make it easier for public transport users, including visitors to Ireland, to access information on all aspects of travel, such as timetables, real time information and journey planners. Noting the NTA's responsibility in this regard I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for a more detailed response to the specific queries raised. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

*Question No. 55 answered with Question No. 6.*

*Question No. 56 answered with Question No. 10*

*Question No. 57 answered with Question No. 8.*

*Question No. 58 answered with Question No. 19.*

### **Sports Capital Programme Applications**

59. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will consider allowing local authorities whose applications for funding under the Sports Capital Programme 2012 were deemed incomplete due to the lack of an original signature and/or an inability to show evidence of title an opportunity to re-apply for funding, as was the case in

the local authority swimming pool programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30949/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring):** It would be neither tenable nor equitable to allow one category of unsuccessful applicants to reapply under the 2012 Sports Capital Programme after the closing date in order to resubmit applications that did not meet the eligibility criteria. The 2012 round of the SCP is closed and the full amount of the available funding has been allocated.

### **Sports Capital Programme Applications**

60. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update of his discussions with the Chief State Solicitor's Office and of his review of the operation of the 2012 Sports Capital Programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30946/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring):** My Department is conducting an internal review of the operation of the 2012 Sports Capital Programme. This review has included discussions with the Office of the Chief State Solicitor. A primary purpose of the review is to simplify and streamline the application process, thereby reducing the proportion of invalid applications. Consequently consideration is being given to the greater use of templates, including a template for applicants to provide evidence of title. A draft of such a template is being prepared in conjunction with the CSSO. It is however always the responsibility of applicants to ensure that they read the application form and guide carefully and provide the information required.

### **Tourism Promotion**

61. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 161 of 18 June 2013 regarding visitor numbers to Glendalough in County Wicklow, if in view of the recent visit to the Wicklow Mountains National Park by the First Lady of the United States of America, Michelle Obama and the First Family, he intends to commission a working group or some other similar arrangement with officials in the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Office of Public Works to develop a full cultural tourism plan for the Glendalough area in view of its exposure on both the national and international stage on foot of this recent high profile visit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31086/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The development of tourism in a particular region or area such as Glendalough is an operational matter for Fáilte Ireland. I have referred the Deputy's Question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

*Question No. 62 answered with Question No. 32.*

### **Marine Safety**

63. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps he is taking to improve maritime safety. [31079/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** One of my Ministerial Priorities for 2013 is to implement a Maritime ‘Safety at Sea’ initiative.

Ireland’s maritime safety agenda is constantly being developed in line with developments across the maritime sector, including internationally recognised safety conventions, safety standards, codes of practice, and the promotion of a culture of safety among those who go to sea for leisure or to earn their living. The importance of ensuring the provision of search and rescue response capability is also vital.

I am currently considering the need for a new national maritime safety strategy and how such a strategy could be progressed in an integrated way for the sector. I expect to complete this consideration shortly. The focus of this strategy will be on the development of a culture of safety amongst seafarers and the crucial role of regulation and enforcement, particularly in relation to vessel inspection and certification as well as the certification and training of seafarers.

Recent tragedies occurring in the fishing industry and leisure activities on the water reinforce the need for continued vigilance with regard to safety on the water across the recreational, fishing and maritime industry generally. The Government supports enhancements to existing safety initiatives designed to promote a culture of water safety and prevent further loss of life and serious injury. In March, a programme of visits to Primary Schools by Coast Guard Units got underway to promote a greater awareness of water safety among children during school holidays in the summer months. In April, the Marine Safety Working Group of the Department of Transport Tourism and Sport updated and re-launched its website [safetyonthewater.ie](http://safetyonthewater.ie) to provide safety advice and guidance to all involved in the maritime domain. On 12 June the Irish Coast Guard launched its new ‘Stay Safe on the Water’ TV advertising campaign aimed at families, leisure users and the fishing industry during the busy summer months.

In July, I and my colleague Minister Coveney will launch a joint initiative targeting increased safety in the fishing industry, concentrating on an integrated package of measures including mandatory training and grant aid for mandatory safety equipment. These measures are designed to enhance safety for fishermen and promote a culture of high safety standards within the industry.

### **Coast Guard Station Closures**

64. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans, if any, to reduce staffing levels and remove services at Malin Head Coast Guard Station, County Donegal; his plans to deal with the upcoming retirements at the station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31024/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Value for Money reviews undertaken last year into the Coast Guard and Marine Surveying functions of my Department identified a number of issues which need to be addressed in Ireland’s maritime transport safety and marine emergency response regimes. Among the primary matters addressed by the consultants was the level of resourcing necessary to deliver the broad range of services demanded nationally and internationally of the Irish maritime administration.

For the purposes of identifying the most suitable model for operating a national Coast Guard facility within limited resources, a supplementary review was undertaken earlier this year specifically focussed on Coast Guard operations and reflective of the existing staff profile, including potential retirements.

One of the consultants’ key recommendations was that the option of a 2 centre model for res-

cue coordination centres should be pursued in lieu of retaining the current 3 centre model. After careful consideration of all the various options presented I decided to maintain the three centres model. To that end, I asked my Department to examine the most appropriate way of maintaining this model given the current economic climate and utilising the assistance of a modern integrated communications and IT infrastructure. I expect to conclude very shortly on our overall response to the various deficiencies raised in the reviews which will include the level of staffing necessary to maintain a three centre Coast Guard model.

### **Public Bike Schemes**

65. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason for the limited expansion of the Dublin Bike scheme into the northside of Dublin city in view of the large increase on already existing hubs in the south side. [31029/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly):** The Dublin Bikes scheme is one of the most successful city bike rental schemes in operation, which has led to on-going calls for its expansion. The National Transport Authority has worked closely with Dublin City Council to draw up the plans for the current expansion of the scheme along an east/west axis, from Heuston Station to Docklands. I have referred the Deputy's question regarding expansion of the scheme to the northside of the city to the National Transport Authority for direct reply. If you do hear from the NTA within 10 working days please contact my private office.

*Question No. 66 answered with Question No. 54.*

*Question No. 67 answered with Question No. 6.*

### **Sports Facilities Provision**

68. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he expects to publish the final draft of the National Sports Facilities Strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30950/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring):** A draft National Sports Facilities Strategy was published as a discussion document on my Department's website in September 2012. A final strategy, taking account of submissions received, will be published shortly.

### **Peace and Reconciliation Programme**

69. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide details of the project that will benefit from Peace/INTERREG funds 2012/13; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30942/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) manages the cross-border European Union Structural Funds Programmes in Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and parts of Western Scotland. The current programmes (2007-2013) are the European Union's Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (otherwise known as the PEACE III Programme) and the European Union's Cross bor-

der Programme for Territorial Co-operation, Northern Ireland, the Border Region and Western Scotland (otherwise known as the Interreg IVA Programme). The SEUPB is an agency under the aegis of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and manages a range of projects across a number of functional areas and accordingly, your question may be better directed to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

*Question No. 70 answered with Question No. 12.*

*Question No. 71 answered with Question No. 13.*

### **Strategic Infrastructures Fund**

72. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will have access to funding from the Strategic Infrastructures Fund for projects which will have a positive cost benefit to the local economy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30939/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The Minister for Finance recently announced the drafting of a Bill to, inter alia, establish the Ireland Strategic Infrastructures Fund (ISIF). Once established the ISIF will invest in the Irish economy on commercial terms in support of economic activity and employment. It is difficult to create projects under the aegis of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport that are commercial. That is, projects that produce a revenue stream that can be used to repay the ESIF. To date, the only mechanism we have used are Public Private Partnerships (PPPs). This mechanism has been used for major new road projects. It can also be used for large scale public transport projects as well. Unfortunately doing so for projects that have a cost of less than €100 million (which would cover the vast majority of envisaged tourism and sports projects) is uneconomic and direct exchequer investment is preferred for those projects.

In line with this overall approach, three road projects have been included in the Government's Infrastructure Stimulus package announced in July 2012 - the N17/N18 Gort to Tuam PPP together with the N25 New Ross Bypass and the N11 Gorey to Enniscorthy PPP. In addition, under the investment plan announced recently by the Government an additional €50million has been made available to fund maintenance and repair work on regional and local roads.

The general approach I have taken is to keep under review projects at various stages of planning and design which have been evaluated and appraised with a view to having a pipeline of suitable "shovel ready" projects ready to avail of any funding opportunities that may arise. I have also put considerable emphasis on the need to direct resources to the maintenance and repair of existing infrastructure. Should further funding become available in the future my aim will be to develop a balanced package of measures covering infrastructure maintenance, safety schemes and targeted development projects across the transport sector to ensure that available resources are maximised to generate economic activity and create jobs in Ireland.

### **Diplomatic Representation Issues**

73. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the parameters of the discussions held recently between the Bulgarian Foreign Minister Kristian Vigenin and the Irish ambassador to Bulgaria, His Excellency John Rowan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31181/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** The newly appointed Bulgarian Foreign Minister, Mr. Kristian Vigenin, had a meeting, at his request, with Ambassador Rowan on 6 June. The meeting was one in a round of introductory meetings with Ambassadors in Sofia. The Minister recalled his good relations with Irish colleagues during his time as a Member of the European Parliament and discussed matters of mutual interest in a European context. He offered his best wishes for a successful conclusion to our term of office as EU Presidency.

### Shorter Working Year Scheme

74. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of staff in his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31207/13]

75. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31223/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 74 and 75 together.

The information sought by the Deputy is set out in the table below.

### Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade - Operation of the Shorter Working Year Scheme

Year	Number of staff that availed of the scheme	Total duration (weeks)	Average duration(weeks)
2012	47	263	5.6
2013	52	269	5.2

There are no State agencies under the aegis of my Department.

### Departmental Staff Training

76. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of staff in his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31239/13]

77. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31255/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** I pro-

pose to take Questions Nos. 76 and 77 together.

The information requested by the Deputy for 2012 is set out in the table following. Normal salary was paid in all cases.

No. of staff who availed of Study & Exam Leave in 2012	Average duration of Study & Exam Leave in 2012
44	6.07 days

Based on the number of applications received in the year to date it is expected that the figures for 2013 will be broadly similar to those for last year. Study and exam leave normally arise in cases where staff of the Department undertake qualifying third level courses in their own time and receive financial assistance under a refund of fees scheme sanctioned by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade strongly encourages and supports its staff in continuing their professional development where the courses are relevant to the work of the Department. There are no State Agencies under the aegis of my Department.

### European Court of Human Rights Nominations

78. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade further to Parliamentary Question No. 61 of 18 June 2013, if he will outline the lists of three candidates that Ireland has put forward, on each occasion it is asked, for possible selection as a Judge of the European Court of Human Rights; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31274/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** As explained in my reply to the Deputy's PQ No. 61 of 18 June, a judge is elected to serve on the Court in respect of each High Contracting Party (State party) to the ECHR, although judges sit on the Court in their individual capacity. The judges are elected by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) from a list of three candidates nominated by a state party. In the time available, it is not possible to provide the lists of candidates put forward by Ireland for election to the European Court of Human Rights on each occasion since the Court was established in 1959. However, I set out below the lists of three candidates nominated for election to the Court since it was established on a full-time basis on 1 November 1998, pursuant to Protocol 11 to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Ireland has submitted lists of candidates in respect of three elections to the full-time Court - in 1997, 2004 and 2007. Details of the lists of candidates put forward are as follows:

1997 (in advance of the setting up of the full time Court)

Mr. John Hedigan S.C. (elected in January 1998)

Mr. Gerard Hogan S.C.

Mr. Denis Vaughan Buckley S.C.

2004 (in advance of the expiry of Judge Hedigan's first term of office)

Judge John Hedigan (re-elected in April 2004)

Professor Fionnuala Ní Aoláin

Mr. Roger Sweetman S.C.

(on the resignation of Judge Hedigan)

Mr. David Keane B.L.

Ms Ann Power S.C. (elected in January 2008)

Mr. Roger Sweetman S.C.

The ECHR sets out certain criteria required of judges of the European Court of Human Rights, including the requirement to be of high moral character and to possess the qualifications required for appointment to high judicial office or to be jurisconsults of recognised competence. In addition to this, PACE has adopted a number of texts on the standards to be adhered to by states in preparing the list of three candidates. I would refer the Deputy to an information document (reference AS/Jur/Inf (2013)02 10 January 2013) prepared by the Council of Europe Secretariat for the Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights of the PACE on the procedure for electing judges to the European Court of Human Rights which lists the relevant texts and includes information on its own procedures. This document is available on the Council of Europe website at: [http://assembly.coe.int/CommitteeDocs/2013/ajinfdoc02\\_2013.pdf](http://assembly.coe.int/CommitteeDocs/2013/ajinfdoc02_2013.pdf).

In preparing lists of candidates, states are expected, amongst other things: to issue public and open calls for candidatures; to transmit the names of candidates in alphabetical order rather than in order of preference; to ensure that candidates possess an active knowledge of one and a passive knowledge of the other official language of the Council of Europe (French and English); and, as a general rule, to ensure that the list of candidates includes both women and men.

Although it has no formal role under the ECHR, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has adopted measures seeking to ensure that only high quality candidates are put forward by Governments for election to the Court. In 2010 the Committee set up an Advisory Panel of experts on candidates for election as judges to the Court. The Panel's role is to advise State parties on whether the candidates that they propose to nominate to PACE for election meet the criteria set out in the ECHR. On 28 March 2012 the Committee of Ministers also adopted Guidelines on the selection of candidates for the post of judge at the European Court of Human Rights, together with an Explanatory Memorandum identifying good practices. The Guidelines support the standards laid down by the PACE and deal with the criteria for the establishment of lists of candidates; the procedure for eliciting candidates; the procedure for drawing up the recommended list of candidates and the finalisation of lists of candidates. These are available on the Council of Europe website at: <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1919137&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=EDB021&BackColorLogged=F5D383> and [https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CM\(2012\)40&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=addfinal&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=EDB021&BackColorLogged=F5D383](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CM(2012)40&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=addfinal&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=EDB021&BackColorLogged=F5D383).

In submitting its list of three candidates, Ireland has ensured that it has complied with the evolving standards set down by the Council of Europe. In 2007, the nominations procedure included a public newspaper advertisement, an advertisement on my Department's website and a notice informing the judiciary, the legal professions and universities of the vacancy. A review of all applications was conducted by an expert panel created by the Attorney General to assist him in recommending the three most suitable candidates to the Government. The decision on the submission of the three candidates was taken by Government on foot of a Memorandum submitted by my predecessor. PACE has commended the quality of the candidates put forward for election in respect of Ireland by the Government and the Committee of Ministers has cited

Ireland in its Memorandum on Good Practices.

### **Passports for Investment Scheme**

79. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if a decision has been made on an application for an investment visa in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31275/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** Visa and immigration decisions are solely a matter for the authorities of the country to which the application relates and are therefore outside of my remit. The person should contact the relevant Embassy directly to ascertain the current status of his application.

### **Northern Ireland Issues**

80. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will outline the most recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and with Members of the Northern Executive in relation to the proposed Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31291/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** I believe that all parties in this house will share my frustration at the lack of progress on a Bill of Rights. A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland is a very important outstanding provision of the Good Friday Agreement. I believe that many of the contentious issues around parades, flags and identities have rights at their core and resolution of these issues can only be facilitated through progress on a Bill of Rights. I am in ongoing regular contact with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on issues related to implementation of the Agreement and will remain so.

### **Departmental Staff Recruitment**

81. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has received any request from Irish embassies seeking permission to employ additional staff during the period from 1 January 2012 to date in 2013; the number of requests that have been approved, pending or refused; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31303/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** The Government's Employment Control Framework has established a staffing ceiling for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of 1,348 posts by end 2015. This figure represents a significant reduction in staff numbers compared with an equivalent figure of 1,572 from March 2009 - a loss of a total of 224 or approximately one in every seven posts since the introduction of the moratorium on recruitment. In common with all others, my Department has already sustained heavy losses under the moratorium. Permanent Departmental staff numbers have fallen by 190, or about 12%, since 2009.

In order to try to ameliorate the impact of the ongoing reductions in staffing, a major restructuring of the Department's Headquarters operations was completed earlier last year. Other functions and staff are routinely reorganized or reallocated to maximize continuity of work output and minimize disruption to service delivery to the citizen. This, of course, places additional pressure on individual officers.

The Deputy will appreciate that the Employment Control Framework restrictions apply equally to Irish Missions and it has therefore not been possible during the period in question to accommodate requests for additional permanent posts. In fact, it proved necessary to close three Missions during 2012 and a number of others have been downsized. By way of example, a total of 8 Missions now have only one Diplomatic Officer assigned from Headquarters.

However, in recognition of added responsibilities and tasks arising from Ireland's Chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 2012 and our current Presidency of the European Union, some 38 temporary posts at Missions were sanctioned and filled since 1 January 2012, most notably in the Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels. In addition, five temporary staff were employed on short contracts to cover short-term vacancies or where replacements for departing permanent staff could not be sanctioned, and 4.5 posts previously filled by staff from Headquarters were filled by local recruitment.

### **European Council Meetings**

82. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council meeting that took place in Luxembourg on 24 June 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31312/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** I attended the most recent meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg on Monday 24 June. As you will be aware, the Council had a very busy agenda; the final Council Conclusions agreed may be accessed on the official EU website [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137593.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/137593.pdf). Before dealing in detail with the outcome of the meeting, I should mention that the Council adopted new Guidelines on Freedom of Religion or Belief, and Guidelines to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI). Advances on these important issues are to be welcomed at any time but I am particularly pleased that both sets of Guidelines, which were priority concerns for Ireland, were adopted at the final Council meeting of the Irish Presidency.

The first item on the agenda at Monday's meeting was the Eastern Partnership. Ministers took stock of preparations for an Eastern Partnership Ministerial meeting scheduled for Brussels in July and for the Eastern Partnership Summit that will take place in Vilnius in November. A progress report was presented on the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) Agreements with Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine was presented. Ministers considered developments in the six Eastern Partnership countries and were broadly supportive of the work being done in preparation for the Summit in November. I expressed the hope that Heads of State and Government would be in a position to take positive decisions at that meeting.

Next, the Council discussed EU Climate Diplomacy and the global cross-cutting challenges which are presented by the impacts of climate change. There was general agreement on the need for Foreign Ministers to consider the strategic and security dimensions of climate change and to avail of opportunities in their contacts with third countries to build support for actions to address these challenges. In my intervention, I recalled the successful conference on climate change, nutrition and hunger which I co-hosted in Dublin in April. I also emphasised the importance of pursuing a holistic approach to the climate change agenda. Preparations for the 2015 UN Conference on Climate Change in Paris are advancing well and the Council expects to return to this issue next year. Comprehensive Conclusions were adopted which are firmly in line with the Conclusions on Post-2015 which were agreed at the Development Foreign Affairs Council in May.

Ministers reviewed recent developments in relation to the Middle East Peace Process, including current efforts by the US to achieve a resumption of direct negotiations. Following this discussion, HR Ashton reaffirmed the EU's commitment to the two-State solution and full EU support for the US efforts.

Over lunch, which was attended also by the NATO Secretary General, Ministers discussed the current situation on the ground in Afghanistan and the prospects in the region, particularly in the context of forthcoming Presidential elections. They examined political, developmental and security aspects of this issue and Council Conclusions were agreed. The EU is resolutely committed to supporting State-building and long-term development in Afghanistan.

After lunch, discussions moved to the Southern Neighbourhood agenda item. HR Ashton briefed the Council on her recent visit to several countries in the region. Ministers had an exchange of views on the ongoing crisis in Syria and also had a broad discussion of the effectiveness of the EU's response to the 'Arab Spring' developments. They reiterated the need for a political settlement of the Syrian crisis and discussed how the EU can best maintain pressure on all sides so as to bring about an end to the violence and to secure their engagement in a political process of transition. There was agreement that the Geneva II process is critical. Following the Council meeting, HR Ashton repeated the EU's firm support for a political solution and noted the EU's commitment to humanitarian assistance in Syria, where the contribution by the EU and its member States is in excess of €1 billion. Ireland's total contribution to date stands at €9.8 million.

Finally, Ministers discussed the Western Balkans, in advance of decisions to be taken at this week's European Council. I intervened to confirm Ireland's support both for an agreement to open accession talks with Serbia and for an agreement to open negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Kosovo. Substantive discussions on this issue continued at the General Affairs Council on the following day (25 June).

### **European Council Meetings**

83. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the outcomes of the General Affairs Council meeting that took place in Luxembourg on 25 June 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31314/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** On 25 June 2013, I chaired the final General Affairs Council (GAC) meeting of the Irish Presidency. The main items on the agenda were the enlargement and stabilisation process; a proposal by some Member States for an initiative on democracy, fundamental values and rule of law; preparation of the European Council of 27/28 June 2013; and the Multiannual Financial Framework. Ministers discussed the next steps for Serbia and Kosovo in the enlargement and stabilisation and association process. The GAC recommended that, following completion of national parliamentary procedures and subject to the endorsement of the June European Council, accession negotiations be opened with Serbia. The Council also agreed in principle on draft Council decisions authorising the opening of negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Kosovo. The Council also agreed to open chapter 22 (on regional policy) with Turkey. Ministers held a further discussion on the proposal by the Foreign Ministers of four Member States (Germany, Netherlands, Denmark and Finland) for a new and more effective mechanism to safeguard fundamental values in EU Member States. The GAC will return to this issue after the summer, during the course of the Lithuanian Presidency.

Preparations for the European Council meeting of 27/28 June were also discussed at the

GAC. Ministers considered the draft European Council conclusions. President Van Rompuy has stated that he intends to make youth unemployment and financing of the economy the focus of the June European Council. Leaders will also conclude the European Semester 2013 by endorsing country specific recommendations for the forthcoming national budget cycles across the Union; review the Compact for Growth and Jobs, one year on from its adoption; be briefed by President Van Rompuy on the outcome of his consultations on the questions on EMU set by the December 2012 European Council; consider enlargement in light of the debate at the GAC; and note Latvia's application to adopt the Euro as its currency.

Finally, I briefed the GAC in detail on the state of play in the discussions between the Irish Presidency and representatives of the European Parliament and of the Commission on the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework for 2014-2020.

I expect to provide an overview of the outcome of the June General Affairs Council to the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs in a statement in July.

### **Diplomatic Representation Issues**

84. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the rationale for the appointment of a new Honorary Consul for Kazakhstan in Almaty, in view of the fact that his Department is currently conducting a review of the Honorary Consul Service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31329/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** The decision to appoint an Honorary Consul in Almaty had been made prior to the commencement of the review of the Honorary Consulate network. The appointment, which was approved by the Kazakhstani authorities last month, is expected to raise Ireland's profile in Kazakhstan and to assist in promoting trade between the countries.

### **Diplomatic Representation Issues**

85. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the current status of the outstanding nominees for the positions of Honorary Consuls in Nairobi, Kenya; Kathmandu, Nepal and Antalya, Turkey; if he will detail if and when the nominations will be accepted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31330/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** The appointments of our nominees for Honorary Consul in Kathmandu and Antalya were both approved recently by the Nepalese and Turkish authorities respectively. The Honorary Consul in Antalya has already commenced providing consular services and will be fully operational very shortly. The Honorary Consul in Kathmandu is also in the process of being established and is expected to be operational by September. My Department is currently awaiting the formal approval of the Kenyan authorities to the appointment of our nominee for Honorary Consul in Nairobi. The outgoing Honorary Consul is continuing in that role pending the completion of the formalities for the appointment of his successor.

### **Departmental Staff Redeployment**

86. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of officials that have been seconded from his Department, including Irish Aid, to

other Government Departments, EU institutions and bodies, international organisations, NGOs, other nation states and any other body; the level, grade and rank of each official that is on secondment; the name of each body an official is currently with; the length of each secondment, detailing time seconded to date and expected secondment remaining; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31335/13]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** The following table sets out details by grade and institution or body of staff currently on secondment from my Department. The durations of staff secondments to other Government Departments vary as they may be terminated at relatively short notice, or extended, by agreement with the other Department and the staff member concerned. Secondments to international organisations are approved under the terms of Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circular 33/1991. In such cases, unless waived by that Department in exceptional cases, the maximum durations are 10 years in the case of EU institutions and 5 years in all other cases.

Grade	Number of officers	Organisation
Counsellor	2	Department of the Taoiseach
First Secretary	5	Department of the Taoiseach
Third Secretary	4	Department of the Taoiseach
Counsellor	1	Department of Finance
Third Secretary	1	Department of Finance
Third Secretary	1	Houses of the Oireachtas
Clerical Officer	1	Áras an Uachtaráin
Principal Officer	1	European External Action Service
Development Specialist	1	European External Action Service
First Secretary	2	European External Action Service
Third Secretary	2	European External Action Service
Accountant	1	European External Action Service
First Secretary	1	European Parliament
Clerical Officer	1	European Parliament
First Secretary	1	European Commission
Legal Adviser	1	United Nations Legal Service
Counsellor	1	United Nations Legal Service
Development Specialist	1	UN World Food Programme
Third Secretary	1	UN Office for Project Services
First Secretary	1	Maritime Affairs Attaché post in the Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels; co-funded by several other Government Departments
Senior Development Specialist	1	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
First Secretary	1	International Atomic Agency
Clerical Officer	1	World Bank
Clerical Officer	1	Sportslink

### VAT Exemptions

87. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Finance in view of the decision of the British Government not to impose VAT on debt management or insolvency services, in line with EU law on VAT, if VAT will be charged on the services of personal insolvency practitioners here; if so, the rate at which such VAT will be charged; if VAT will be charged on persons who,

while not being official personal insolvency practitioners, are providing a debt management service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31294/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I have been advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the fees charged by insolvency practitioners, including Personal Insolvency Practitioners (PIPs) are liable to VAT at the standard rate, currently 23%. A PIP will be involved in Debt Settlement Arrangements and Personal Insolvency Arrangements as provided for in the Personal Insolvency Act 2012. It has to be said that a PIP is acting in a capacity not entirely unlike insolvency practitioners, such as, liquidators, receivers or examiners, whose services are also subject to VAT at the standard rate. Having regard to the activities carried out by a PIP, Revenue has formed the opinion that the service provided by a PIP is not one that qualifies for exemption in accordance with the VAT Directive, Irish VAT Law, and relevant decisions of the European Court of Justice. It should be noted that exemptions for VAT are to be construed strictly and the activities of PIP practitioners do not fall within the exempted activities outlined under paragraph 6 of Schedule 1 of the Value-Added Tax Consolidation Act 2010.

I understand that the position in the UK is that most insolvency services, such as those of liquidators and receivers, are liable to VAT. However, a VAT exemption is applied to individual voluntary arrangements, company voluntary arrangements, partnership voluntary arrangements and protected trust deeds (applicable only in Scotland). The exemption arises from a decision of a UK First Tier VAT Tribunal based on the facts presented before it rather than a Government decision. I am advised by Revenue that there are distinct differences between the activities undertaken by UK practitioners and Irish PIPs and between UK and Irish VAT legislation. Where a person who is not an official PIP provides services similar to a PIP, such services are also liable to VAT at the standard rate.

### Vehicle Registration Issues

88. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Finance the number of test centres in County Donegal that cater for VRT for the changeover and registration for vehicles that are purchased in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31309/13]

89. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Finance the number of vehicles over the past number of years that have been changed over and paid VRT at the test centre in Letterkenny that are subsequently registered in Inishowen; the revenue this has created; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31311/13]

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

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that they have appointed the National Car Testing Service (NCTS) to carry out a range of vehicle registration functions in relation to used vehicles. There are two NCTS centres in County Donegal, one in Letterkenny and the other in Donegal Town.

The register of vehicles is available for each county only. The register does not facilitate the extraction of reliable information relating to vehicles registered to addresses within a geographical area of any county, such as Inishowen in County Donegal. The numbers of used vehicles registered with a “DL” index mark by the NCTS Centre in Letterkenny are set out as follows.

Because these vehicles were registered via the NCTS, it can be inferred that they were originally purchased outside the State, but data are not maintained on the original country of purchase. While the number of vehicles imported from Northern Ireland cannot be ascertained

with any accuracy, I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that it is likely that the vast majority were imported from the United Kingdom.

Year	Number registered at NCTS Letterkenny	VRT involved
2010 *	1,161	€1,256,663
2011	3,801	€4,761,077
2012	3,224	€4,163,487
2013 (to date)	1,471	€1,915,650

\* The NCTS commenced VRT service from 1 Sept 2010.

### Fuel Prices

90. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which he continues to engage with the road haulage representatives in the context of the extent to which high fuel prices here place the industry at a disadvantage in comparison with other European countries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31398/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The Deputy will be aware that I engaged on a number of occasions last year with the Irish Road Haulage Association and, out of that engagement, a working group was set up between Department officials, Revenue, the IRHA and public representatives to examine the issue of fuel prices. In Budget 2013, I announced that I would be introducing a commercial diesel relief, thus allowing qualifying hauliers to reclaim a proportion of the mineral oil tax paid on auto-diesel purchased for qualifying vehicles. Provision was made in this year's Finance Act to allow for this relief which will apply to purchases made on or after 1st July this year and the amount to be repaid will vary by reference to the price at which auto-diesel is purchased, subject to a maximum repayment of 7.5 cent per litre.

The Revenue Commissioner, who are charged with implementing the repayment scheme, met with representatives of the Irish Road Haulage Association (IRHA) on 10th April 2013 to outline the operation of the scheme and to answer queries. A further such meeting was held just last week on 20th June for a further briefing. The Revenue Commissioners expect to hold further meetings with the IRHA and other transport operator representatives in preparation for the commencement of the scheme.

### Disabled Drivers Grant Eligibility

91. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Finance the reason the condition of phocomelia is not covered for a primary medical certificate; the options available to a person (details supplied) in County Louth for grant aid or funding that would enable them to adapt their vehicle; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31444/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** Section 134(3) of the Finance Act 1992 (as amended) and Statutory Instrument No. 353 of 1994 (Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations, 1994) (as amended) provide for permanent relief from the payment of specified maximum amounts of VAT and VRT for persons registered under the scheme.

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:

- a) be wholly or almost wholly without the use of both legs;
- b) 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;
- c) be without both hands or without both arms;
- d) be without one or both legs;
- e) be wholly or almost wholly without the use of both hands or arms and wholly or almost wholly without the use of one leg;
- f) have the medical condition of dwarfism and have serious difficulties of movement of the lower limbs.

The Senior Medical Officer (SMO) for the relevant local Health Service Executive administrative area makes a professional clinical determination as to whether an individual applicant satisfies the medical criteria. An unsuccessful applicant can appeal the decision of the SMO to the Disabled Drivers Medical Board of Appeal, which makes a new clinical determination in respect of the individual.

I understand the person appealed the decision of the Senior Medical Officer not to grant a Primary Medical Certificate and the appeal was subsequently refused by the Medical Board of Appeal. If the person wishes to apply again for a Primary Medical Certificate, the application to the Senior Medical Officer must be accompanied by a medical certificate from a registered medical practitioner indicating that the practitioner has formed the opinion that the medical condition of the person concerned has materially deteriorated since the previous application.

I would point out that the Medical Board of Appeal is independent in the exercise of its functions.

I am not aware of any scheme which would provide grant aid or funding to enable a person outside of the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions scheme) to adapt or modify their vehicle.

### **Departmental Staff Numbers**

92. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff in his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31206/13]

93. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31222/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 92 and 93 together.

In my Department, 12 staff members availed of the shorter working year scheme (SWYS) during 2012. The duration of the leave ranged from 2 weeks to 13 weeks, as provided for in

Circular 14/2009 – Shorter Working Year Scheme which superseded the term time circular. This circular is available on [www.per.gov.ie](http://www.per.gov.ie).

22 staff members have applied for the shorter working year scheme (SWYS) during 2013. The duration of leave ranges from 2 weeks to 13 weeks.

The National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) has advised that it does not offer term time to employees.

### **Departmental Staff Training**

94. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff in his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31238/13]

95. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31254/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 94 and 95 together.

In my Department, 13 staff availed of paid study leave in 2012. The average number of days taken was 4.92 days.

At present it is envisaged that 22 people may take paid study leave in 2013. This figure is subject to change. Employees continue to receive their salary while on study leave.

The National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) advised that in 2012, 44 employees availed of study leave with the average duration of such leave being 4 days. Employees continue to receive their salary while on study leave. In 2013, 22 employees have enrolled to date in educational programmes that carry a study leave entitlement.

### **VAT Rates Reductions**

96. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance the cost to the Exchequer of reducing the rate of value added tax from 23% by 1.5%; and his plans to reduce the higher rate of VAT in Budget 2014. [31298/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the full year cost of reducing the standard rate of VAT from 23% by 1.5% to 21.5% is estimated at €380 million. Any changes to the VAT rates in 2014 will be considered in the context of the forthcoming Budget.

### **VAT Rebates**

97. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance if he will expedite a VAT refund payment on a specially adapted car in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry;

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31323/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that Section 92 of the Finance Act 1989 and the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations, 1994 (S.I.353 of 1994) provide for permanent relief from the payment of specified maximum amounts of VAT and VRT for persons registered under the scheme. The person (details supplied) submitted an invoice in respect of the purchase of an adapted imported vehicle on 26th April 2013. Vehicle Registration Tax was remitted in the amount of €718 on 16th January 2012 when the vehicle was registered. It has been established that this vehicle was sold by the garage under the 'Margin Scheme'. This means that no VAT was paid when the vehicle was purchased and accordingly no VAT is refundable. The person (details supplied) has been advised accordingly.

### **Pensions Levy Issues**

98. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance if he is honouring the commitment that the pension levy would not be extended beyond 2014. [31324/13]

99. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance the reason lower-paid workers were not excluded from the pension levy, in line with the method used for the PRD in the public service. [31326/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 98 and 99 together.

In my Budget 2013 speech, I made a point of confirming that the pension fund levy introduced as part of the *Jobs Initiative* will not be renewed after 2014.

The pension fund levy introduced in 2011 and the public service Pension-Related Deduction (PRD) introduced in 2009 are two entirely different charges which apply in different ways.

The PRD is an income-graduated imposition on the pay of pensionable public servants. It is imposed in such a way that increasing rates of deduction are applied to increasing bands or slices of an affected public servant's pay each year. The PRD originally became operative on 1 March 2009 as provided for in section 2 of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2009. Soon afterwards, the PRD rates and bands were changed by section 13 of the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2009, which, in particular, put in place a zero per cent rate of PRD, effectively an exemption, on the first €15,000 of pay in each year. A further change in PRD will take place on 1 January 2014, when the PRD rate on the €15,000 to €20,000 band will fall from 5% to 2.5%, as provided for in section 11 of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2013.

Members of pension schemes affected by the 2011 pension fund levy, on the other hand, are not charged with paying the 0.6% stamp duty levy on pension fund assets. The levy is a charge on the trustees of pension schemes and on the insurers and administrators who manage the assets of pension schemes and it is they who are liable to pay the levy. It is up to those trustees and administrators to decide in each case whether and how the levy should be passed on and who should be impacted and to what extent, given the particular circumstances of the pension funds or pension plans for which they are responsible. I have no general information on the decisions taken by trustees and administrators in this regard.

100. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of mortgage holders that are on tracker mortgages and the number by institution in both absolute and as a percentage of their total mortgages. [31346/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** Firstly, I must confirm to the Deputy that lending institutions in Ireland, including those in which the State has a significant shareholding, are independent commercial entities. It is not appropriate for me, as Minister for Finance, to comment on or become involved in the detailed mortgage position of mortgage holders. I have been advised by the Central Bank that there are no statistics available regarding the number of tracker mortgage customers or a breakdown by institution. However, the total outstanding balance of tracker mortgages on the balance sheet of Irish resident credit institutions is €42,168 million. There is a further €25,212 million in securitised tracker mortgages.

I would refer the Deputy to the Central Bank's website which contains detailed information and statistics on residential mortgage arrears and other relevant information.

### **Tax Code**

101. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance if Revenue will confirm that a person (details supplied) in County Kerry will qualify for retirement relief in respect of their share of the land which they and their spouse wish to transfer to their son; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31349/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that, in broad terms, retirement relief is a relief given to an individual on the disposal of all or part of the qualifying assets of his business. Section 599 Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provides that where an individual who is at least 55 years of age makes a disposal to his or her child of all or part of the individual's qualifying business assets, the capital gains tax chargeable on any gains arising on the disposal is fully relieved. In the case of a person and their spouse (details supplied) who wish to transfer their share of land to their son, Revenue are not in a position to confirm whether they will qualify for retirement relief on the transfer as the details provided are insufficient to enable them to determine if all of the relevant conditions for the relief have been met.

In order to establish if they would qualify for retirement relief the person should contact their local Revenue District Office with details of their PPSN and the full facts and information concerning the land being transferred.

### **VAT Rates Application**

102. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 86 of 20 June 2013, and his contention that he is unable to amend VAT rules to deal with the loss of VAT associated with the below-cost selling of alcohol, the discussions, if any, he has had with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, to seek to maximise VAT revenues from this source by the reintroduction of the groceries order in respect of alcohol products. [31367/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** With regard to the reintroduction of the groceries order on alcohol, I am informed by the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation that prices in Ireland are generally not subject to control. Pricing strategies are therefore a matter for individual retailers and licensees and are the normal outcome of the competitive process.

In this respect, I understand that the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation has no plans to reintroduce a groceries order in respect of alcohol or any other product.

### **Property Taxation Data**

103. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of properties valued for the local property tax at greater than €1 million, the total amount that will be raised from properties valued at in excess of €1 million, based on current level of registration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31416/13]

104. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will set out, in tabular form, the total number of deferrals from the local property tax in each valuation band; the total tax foregone in 2013 in respect of deferrals and exemptions based on current level of registration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31417/13]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 103 and 104 together.

As I indicated to the House this week in my response to Parliamentary Question No. 191 of 25 June (30191/13) the Revenue Commissioners have confirmed that LPT Returns are still being filed and payments are still being made, and these are currently being processed. It will not be possible to deal with requests for information on returns and payments, including the numbers who have sought payment deferral and exemption from the charge, until work in relation to the LPT Register, which includes the processing of LPT Returns and correspondence from property owners, is completed. They have confirmed that this work is likely to continue for some time. I am further advised by the Commissioners that detailed analysis of the Returns filed and payments is currently underway and they will make the relevant data publicly available as soon as possible.

I am also informed that during her appearance before the Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure & Reform on 29 May 2013, the Chairman of the Revenue Commissioners advised that, based on LPT Returns filed at that time, there were 3,599 residential properties valued by their owners at over €1m.

### **Special Educational Needs Services Provision**

105. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will not cut resource hours services to children with special needs in September. [31182/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the level of resources devoted to supporting children with Special Educational Needs has been maintained at €1.3 billion this year. This includes provision for 10,575 Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) and nearly 10,000 Learning Support and Resource Teachers. These resources have been protected despite the ongoing severe financial position. Whereas the allocations of SNA support for individual schools may change each year in line with a school's enrolment of children with care needs, there has been no reduction to the overall number of SNA posts being provided for schools for the coming school year. This provision remains at 10,575 posts, which will ensure that all children who qualify for access to SNA support for the coming school year will receive access to such support.

The total number of SNA posts allocated to schools for the 2012/13 school year was 10,487

posts. For the 2011/12 school year it was 10,320 posts. It is therefore estimated that there will be sufficient SNA posts to provide access to SNA support for all children who require such support in the coming school year. In relation to the allocation of resource teaching support for schools from September 2013, demand for support has risen again this year, due to a combination of demographic growth and increased assessments.

Despite the fact that the overall number of posts available to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) for allocation to schools had been maintained at existing levels, the allocations announced by the NCSE last week were reduced to take into account of the growth in demand, within the maintained number of posts, in order to ensure that equivalent allocations could be made for all qualifying children. The Deputy will be aware that I announced recently that I have now authorised the NCSE to retain the level of resource teaching allocations which can be provided for students with special educational needs to the 2012/13 levels. This will mean that there will not now be any reduction to resource teaching time for children over the level which applied last year.

I also committed to ensuring that the resources which will be required to ensure that the allocations can be made to schools at existing levels will be provided, including resources required to meet any late demand expected to arise between now and the start of the school year. The NCSE will publish revised details of the Resource Teaching allocations for all schools, based on existing allocation levels, and will also advise schools of their revised allocations in the coming days.

In the longer term, it is proposed to develop new allocations system to improve how resources for children with special Educational needs are allocated to schools. I am concerned that the scale of increased demand for resource teachers this year, if it were to continue, would make the current system unsustainable. I am asking the NCSE to consider the reasons for the unprecedented 12 per cent rise in applications for resource teacher support this year, which compares with an annual 1.3 per cent increase in the number of students attending school in the current year.

The Deputy will be aware that the NCSE recently published comprehensive policy advice on Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Schools. I have, as suggested by the Report, requested the NCSE to establish a Working Group to develop a proposal, for consideration, for a new allocation model for teaching supports for children with Special Educational Needs based on the profiled educational needs of children in schools.

In the interim, I wish to ensure that children will not be disadvantaged while we move towards a new model which will ensure greater fairness and quality of education for children with special educational needs. That is why I have made the decision to maintain the existing allocation levels this year.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

106. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide an update on plans for a second level school (details supplied) in Dublin 24, detailing the schedule being followed; if he will confirm his plans for the management of the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31195/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The school building project referred to by the Deputy was included in the 5 year building programme announced in March 2012 and is listed to progress to construction in 2015/16. The Design Team appointment has

been completed and the project is now at an early stage of architectural planning.

The application process for patronage is currently underway. The closing date for receipt of applications is 12 July 2013. The successful patron will be announced later this year.

### **Schools Administration**

107. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide clarity on voluntary fees sought by schools from parents and students in school and registration fees and re-registration fees; if such fees in public schools are compulsory; his views on these fees and recommended levels for such fees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31187/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** Apart from the recognised fee-charging second level schools, recognised schools are not permitted to charge school fees. All other recognised schools are precluded from charging school fees. Voluntary contributions by parents of pupils in such recognised schools are permissible provided it is made absolutely clear to parents that there is no question of compulsion to pay and that, in making a contribution, they are doing so of their own volition. The manner in which such voluntary contributions are sought and collected is a matter for school management; however their collection should be such as not to create a situation where either parents or pupils could reasonably infer that the contributions take on a compulsory character.

I have no plans to prohibit such voluntary contributions.

A school may seek payment to cover the cost of photocopied or other such learning materials where the amount sought by the school is consistent with the costs involved and the level of materials provided. It is also permissible for a school to seek payments in respect of extra-curricular activities provided such activities are not obligatory and individual pupils can choose whether or not to participate. No charge may be made, however, in respect of instruction in any subject of the school curriculum or for recreation or other activities where all pupils are expected to take part.

### **School Enrolments**

108. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will enable a school (details supplied) to recruit an additional teacher next year, which is absolutely vital in view of the fact that 31 new students are being enrolled, and that failure to do so will result in the classes above junior and senior infants doubling and trebling up beyond what should be tolerated for educating children of different years together. [31192/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The criteria used for the allocation of teachers to schools are published annually on the Department's website. The key factors for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level are the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and the pupil enrolments on the previous 30 September. However, the staffing schedule also includes provision for schools that have significant increases in their enrolment in rapidly developing areas to be allocated classroom teachers based on their projected enrolments for September 2013. The criteria for this are set out in the staffing schedule which is available on the Department's website.

I understand the school referred to by the Deputy applied for a post under developing school

status. The post was provisionally approved pending confirmation of the enrolment at 30 September 2013. The school subsequently decided not to proceed with the post on the basis of uncertainty of achieving the required enrolment. The Deputy will be aware that the Government protected front-line services in schools to the greatest extent possible in the recent budget. 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.

### Third Level Fees

109. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the options available for Irish students to reasonably fund postgraduate courses in the UK in view of the fact that many Irish banks will not fund courses outside here and UK banks will only deal with UK residents; if there is any method of funding through his Department; if there are any agreements in place between the Irish and UK universities and Governments; if there is any further funding available for a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31193/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The student grant scheme does not extend to postgraduate courses pursued outside the island of Ireland. Tax relief at the standard rate of tax may be claimed in respect of tuition fees paid for approved courses at approved colleges of higher education including approved undergraduate and postgraduate courses in EU Member States and in non-EU countries. Further information on this tax relief is available from the Revenue Commissioners at [www.revenue.ie](http://www.revenue.ie).

### Departmental Staff Numbers

110. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of staff in his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31204/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The Shorter Working Year Scheme, which was introduced in 2009 (Ref: Department of Finance Circular 14/09) supersedes the previous Term Time Scheme (Ref: Department of Finance Circular 32/06). Under the Shorter Working Year Scheme, staff can apply for special unpaid leave for one or more continuous periods of not less than two and not more than 13 weeks at any time during the year, subject to management approval, rather than only during the summer holiday period which was a feature of the old Term Time Scheme. In 2012, some 103 whole-time equivalent staff availed of the Shorter Working Year Scheme. The average duration was 17.18 days. To date in 2013, some 96 whole-time equivalent staff have availed of or applied for the Shorter Working Year Scheme. The average duration of this leave amounts to 19.83 days.

### Student Grant Scheme Payments

111. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a Student Universal Support Ireland grant will be paid to a person (details supplied). [31214/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** Officials in my Department

have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) that the student referred to by the Deputy was issued an award letter on 19 June 2013. SUSI has advised that the applicant will need to upload her bank details on line in order for payments to commence.

### Departmental Agencies Staff

112. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31220/13]

115. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31252/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 112 and 115 together.

Department of Finance circular 14/2009 governs the conditions that apply to the shorter working year scheme for officials within the Civil Service. Circular 44/2009 governs the Shorter Working Year Scheme in a number of agencies in the wider education sector. In addition, Department of Finance circulars 33/1964 and 23/2007 govern the conditions that apply to study and examination leave. The conditions contained in these circulars apply to those agencies under the aegis of my Department which are staffed by civil servants. The day-to-day human resources administration of agencies is a matter for each agency. My Department does not collate information on leave arrangements. Details of all bodies under the aegis of the Department of Education and Skills are available on my Department's website, [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

### Departmental Staff Training

113. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of staff in his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31236/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The granting of study leave in my Department is governed by Department of Finance Circular 23/07. Details of study leave taken in my Department in 2012 and 2013 are outlined in the following table:

Year	Number of staff that availed of study leave	Average number of days taken
2012	54	4.6
2013*	39	4.0

\*The total for 2013 includes 2.5 days of unpaid leave availed of by one staff member.

### Special Educational Needs Staffing

114. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason the National Council for Special Education took three months from the March closing date for applications in respect of special needs assistants to announce its decisions; if he appreciates the widespread concern being expressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31246/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports, including the allocation of resource teachers and Special Needs Assistants to schools. The NCSE operates within my Department's established criteria for the allocation of Special Education supports and the staffing resources available to my Department. All schools were advised to apply to the NCSE for resource teaching and SNA support for the 2013/14 school year by 15th March 2013. The NCSE then proceeded to process these applications in order to ensure that schools would be notified by SENOs of their resource teaching and SNA allocation for 2013/14 in advance of the coming school year, based on the number of valid applications received. As the NCSE allocates resources to schools to support over 30,000 pupils annually, some time is required to process all of the applications which are received each year, in advance of notifying schools of their allocations. The NCSE was also required to consider an unprecedented surge in demand for resource teaching support this year.

I can assure the Deputy that this process has been done as expeditiously as possible by the NCSE to allow schools and principals sufficient time to plan for the coming school year. The NCSE initially published details of the allocations for SNAs and resource teaching hours for the 2013/2014 school year on Wednesday 19th June. The Deputy will be aware that on 25th June, I advised that I have now authorised the NCSE to retain the level of resource teaching allocations which can be provided for students with special educational needs to the 2012/13 levels. This will mean that there will not now be any reduction to resource teaching time for children over the level which applied last year. The NCSE will publish revised details of the Resource Teaching allocations for all schools, based on existing allocation levels, on the NCSE website [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie) and will also advise schools of their revised allocations. In the longer term, it is proposed to develop new allocations system to improve how we provide our allocations to schools. I have requested the NCSE to establish a Working Group to develop a proposal, for consideration, for a tailored allocation model, which will underpin a new allocation system for teaching supports for children with Special Educational Needs based on the profiled educational needs of children in schools.

*Question No. 115 answered with Question No. 112.*

### **Student Grant Scheme Appeals**

116. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding an appeal of an application for higher education grant in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare whose examination results are currently being withheld due to the pending appeal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31265/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland that in the case of the student referred to by the Deputy, his student grant application was appealed to the appeals officer in SUSI on the 18th of June 2013. On that basis, the application is currently being reviewed and the student will be notified directly by SUSI of the outcome. Where an appeal is turned down in writing by SUSI and the applicant remains of the view that the scheme has not been interpreted correctly in his or her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to

the independent Student Grants Appeals Board.

### Special Educational Needs Staffing

117. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide in tabular form a breakdown by county of the number of learning support teachers posts; the number of resource teacher posts, the number of special needs assistants, the number of pupils requiring special needs support at primary level, the number of pupils requiring special needs support at second level, the number of special classes in mainstream schools and the number of pupils in each; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31269/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from primary and post primary schools for special educational needs supports including resource teaching and Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support as well as the establishment of special classes in various geographical areas as required. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support. Details of the resource teaching and SNA allocations which have been made to schools by the NCSE for the 2012/2013 and 2013/14 school years are available on the NCSE website [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie) and can be viewed on a per county basis. Details of special classes attached to mainstream schools at primary and post primary level on a county by county basis are also available on the NCSE website. Details of any new special classes which will be opened for the coming school year will also be detailed on the NCSE website once this has been finalised. I wish to explain to the Deputy that pupil numbers vary in Special Classes on the basis of the disability categorisation of the special class, which ranges from a 6:1 to 11:1 pupil teacher ratio. It is not possible to provide an actual figure for enrolment levels in special classes, as class numbers can fluctuate throughout the school year as pupils enrol and leave special classes, while in some cases some pupils are partially integrated between special and mainstream classes. I wish to advise the Deputy also that, since September 2012, the combined resources available for learning support (General Allocation Model at Primary) and language support at both primary and second level have been merged into a single simplified allocation process. Details of these allocations have been published by my Department on a county basis, available at [http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0013\\_2013\\_appendix\\_C.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0013_2013_appendix_C.pdf). Regarding the number of pupils requiring additional support at Primary and Post Primary levels, I wish to advise the Deputy that mainstream primary schools have been allocated additional teaching resources under the General Allocation Model (GAM) to cater for children with high incidence special educational needs, including mild and borderline mild general learning difficulties. It is a matter for school authorities to determine how these hours are utilised to support eligible pupils. Similar autonomy applies in Post Primary schools in relation to additional teaching allocations in respect of pupils with high incidence special educational needs. My Department therefore does not hold details of the number of pupils being supported through these mechanisms.

I can advise the Deputy, however, that the NCSE has recently published comprehensive policy advice on Supporting Students Special Educational Needs in Schools, which contains detailed information regarding the number of pupils with special educational needs being supported in schools, and the number of pupils in receipt of additional supports by disability category. This report is available at [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

### Special Educational Needs Services Provision

118. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the maximum 40 hours of home-based July provision will be provided to persons (details supplied) in a family in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31280/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The Deputy will be aware that the July Education Programme is available to all special schools and mainstream primary schools with special classes catering for children with autism that choose to extend their education services through the month of July. My Department also provides for a July Programme for pupils with a severe/profound general learning disability. Where school based provision is not feasible, home based provision may be grant aided. The allocation of home-based provision to siblings for July Provision is reflective of the school grouping principle. This is where one teacher is allocated to a class of six pupils at the appropriate educational level, primary or post primary. Accordingly it is considered appropriate, as in a school situation, that a tutor can provide tuition at the appropriate educational level to more than one sibling at that level simultaneously in the home. The school grouping principle does not purport to replicate or mirror all aspects of school based provision. The age or ability of siblings is reflected in their education level as determined by education and health professionals. In general, where a child is receiving their education in a class setting with other children of mixed age and ability, this should carry through to their July Provision. However, in recognition of the differing needs of some siblings, separate allocations will be considered on a case by case basis. Applications in this regard will require supporting documentation including professional reports from a psychologist or a letter from the principal of the school detailing the existing arrangements currently in place for the respective children and providing reasons why they cannot be tutored together in the home. The combined allocation for the siblings referred to by the Deputy can be reviewed if the aforementioned documentation is submitted to support the need for separate allocations.

### **FÁS Local Training Initiatives Places**

119. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if more Solas places for Java training in County Kerry will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31287/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** This is an operational matter for FÁS. I am informed that FÁS began running the full Java Programmer Course in the Tralee Training Centre in 2012. The first Course started on 14th May 2012 with a capacity of 20 places and finished in February 2013. A second Java Programmer Course with a capacity of 20 places started in January 2013 and is due to finish in October 2013. In addition a new course is scheduled to start in October 2013 with a capacity of 20 places.

I also understand from FÁS that, at present, these 40 places per annum on the Java Programmer Course are meeting the demands in Kerry of both clients and employers. The matter will be kept under review and when the course is further established in Kerry, FÁS will look at increasing the number of training places if the demand is there.

### **Student Grant Scheme Representations**

120. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding student grants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31292/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The aim of the student main-

tenance grant scheme has always been to make a contribution to the cost of going to college; covering the full cost has never been a feasible option. As the Deputy will be aware, the reality of our economic situation presents significant challenges that have to be reconciled with limitations on public resources. This is a very stark reality, which, unfortunately, means that changes to any public service, including the student grant scheme, cannot be ruled out.

I empathise with students and I am very conscious of the fundamental role played by the student grant scheme in supporting families who are putting their children through further and higher education. However, the state of the public finances is such that tough decisions had to be made to control public expenditure and to ensure sustainability in the long run.

For this reason it is the responsibility of Government to take into consideration all areas of public services when formulating Budget 2014. Ultimately, our budgetary decisions now will play a major part in creating a sustainable economy and in regaining our economic independence. As the Deputy will be aware, all proposals made in relation to education expenditure, including changes to student grants, will be considered in the context of the Budget 2014.

### **Student Assistance Fund**

121. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the student assistance fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31293/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The Student Assistance Fund is a component of the Third Level Access Measure which is managed on behalf of my Department by the Higher Education Authority. The Fund is administered on a local basis by participating higher education institutions and targets those students most in-need. The Fund has increased substantially in recent years, from €5m in 2010-11 to a core allocation of €8m in the most recent academic year (2012-13). During the year, the Higher Education Authority closely monitored local demand for the Fund around the country. Data collected from participating institutions showed a very substantial increase in demand for the Fund compared with the previous year, the outcome of which was a decision by my Department to allocate an additional €3m for 2012-13 as an exceptional measure, bringing the total allocation for the year to €11m. The Third Level Access Measure also provides for the Fund for Students with Disabilities. A decision will be taken by the HEA in due course in relation to the overall amounts to be allocated under each of the Funds for the forthcoming academic year. Notification to higher education institutions administering the Student Assistance Fund will take place as soon as possible thereafter to support forward planning by those institutions. The HEA will continue to consult with participating institutions on demand for the SAF at local level. The Deputy will appreciate that as the preparation of the Estimates for any Budget, including Budget 2014, is carried out on a strictly confidential basis, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on specific issues or proposals, including those relating to the Student Assistance Fund, in advance of the Budget announcement.

### **Back to Education Allowance Eligibility**

122. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the funding options available to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare who wishes to pursue a level 7 course and who is in receipt of jobseeker's allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31307/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The student referred to by the Deputy is in receipt of jobseeker's allowance. If he pursues a course in the 2013/2014 academic year he may be entitled to the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA). Eligibility for the BTEA and associated payments is determined and administered by the Department for Social Protection. Students who qualify for the BTEA may be considered for support for the student contribution under the student grant scheme provided they satisfy the conditions of the relevant Student Grant Scheme and Student Support Regulations including those relating to residence, nationality, approved course, previous academic attainment and means.

To determine eligibility for the 2013/14 academic year the student referred to by the Deputy should submit a fully completed online grant application to Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) via [www.susi.ie](http://www.susi.ie) in respect of the cost of the student contribution and, where applicable, tuition fees. Students in third-level institutions experiencing exceptional financial need can apply for support under the Student Assistance Fund. This Fund assists students, in a sensitive and compassionate manner, who might otherwise, due to their financial circumstances, be unable to continue their third level studies. Information on the fund is available through the Access Officer in the third level institution attended. The fund is administered on a confidential, discretionary basis. In addition to the student grant, tax relief at the standard rate of tax may be claimed in respect of tuition fees paid for approved courses at approved colleges of higher education. Further information on this tax relief is available from the Revenue Commissioners on [www.revenue.ie](http://www.revenue.ie).

### Special Educational Needs Services Provision

123. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the guidelines that exist in relation to the time it takes for the preparation and implementation of individual education plans at the beginning of the academic year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31328/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the provision of individual plans for children with special needs is recognised as an important feature of good educational practice. Schools are encouraged to use IEPs through policy guidance, support, training and inspection. The advice of my Department's Inspectorate is that the majority of schools are now using some form of individual education planning for children with special needs. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has published guidelines on the IEP process and a copy issued to all primary and post primary schools at the commencement of the 2006/2007 school year. These guidelines provide advice and assistance to schools, teachers and parents on devising and implementing individual education plans and are available on the NCSE's website [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie). In addition, schools have been provided with guidance on the IEP process in a number of National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS) publications regarding the continuum model including 'A Continuum of Support for Primary Schools - Guidelines for Teachers', which has been circulated to all schools. The Department's Learning Support Guidelines recommend that an Individual profile and Learning Programme should be devised for all children who are receiving supplementary teaching from the learning-support teacher. Training has been provided to primary and post primary schools by the Special Education Support Services (SESS) in relation to individual education plans. My Department's Inspectorate produced 'Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs: Post-Primary Guidelines' in 2007 which provides advice and guidance to schools on the organisation and co-ordination of resources to maximise the support to each individual student, including guidance on the IEP process. All primary and post primary schools also have access to support and guidance from the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) which can provide

additional guidance for schools on the preparation of IEP plans.

### **Third Level Partnerships**

124. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide details of the recent signing of a memorandum of understanding on a research and student exchange agreement in Dublin between the University of Maryland and University College Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31332/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The position is that higher education institutions, including universities such as UCD, are autonomous bodies and their day to day operational affairs including issues such as the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the University of Maryland are the responsibility of the management authority and governing body of the University. However I have been advised that UCD and the University of Maryland are at an advanced stage of finalising an MOU stating the intention of the institutions to collaborate across a range of potential areas including student exchange and collaborative research.

I also understand that the universities are in the process of finalising a specific Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) covering the terms under which the two institutions will exchange students. An initial signing ceremony for both documents took place in Dublin on 20th June 2013.

### **Special Educational Needs Services Provision**

125. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he or any of his officials attended a recent cross-party briefing on the subject of his Department's policy with regard to applied behaviour analysis and autism by internationally recognised experts; if he will respond to the criticisms outlined at that briefing; if he will state if and when he plans to accept the invitation provided by the Psychology Society of Ireland's division of behaviour analysis to meet with him to provide him and his officials with a more accurate understanding of ABA. [31334/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The Deputy will be aware that my Department's policy is to promote a child-centred approach to education of all children with special educational needs including those with autism. As each child with autism is unique they should have access to a range of different approaches to meet their individual needs. This facilitates access to individualised education programmes, fully qualified professional teachers who may draw from a range of autism-specific interventions, including Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), Treatment and Education of Autistic Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH) and Picture Exchange Communications System (PECS). The Deputy will also be aware that each child's identified needs should determine the teaching approach and methodology that is to be used. As children differ significantly from one another and as children's needs vary and change over time, it is not possible to impose a method or approach that will work for all children with autism. The research evidence is clear that no matter what exclusive approach is followed, its success is limited. Different approaches have been applied successfully with different children, and each approach has been shown to have limitations. This is why my Department does not establish schools to follow an exclusive approach including ABA. My Department's child-centred policy is based on advice received from NEPS; the Inspectorate and the report of the Irish Task Force on Autism and takes full account of advice from a range of experts on autism, including persons with expertise and qualifications in ABA. Advice was

sought from international experts on research provided by the IAA and other research on educational interventions for children with autistic spectrum disorders and the advice concluded that research does not support the exclusive usage of ABA or indeed the exclusive use of any other approach, as a basis for national educational provision for children with autism. It is for this reason that my Department's preferred policy is for a child-centred approach where the approach to be taken is based on the individual child's needs. My Department remains willing to review and consider any further research as and when it becomes available and my officials are conscious of the need to adapt existing policies and to develop new policies as new research or learning becomes available. The Department officials who attended the recent briefing referred to by the Deputy have also obtained copies of each of the presentations made by the 3 speakers. I understand the presentations were most informative of the merits and advantages of the ABA model. I am also aware that the presentation was attended by representatives of the National Council for Special Education. The National Council for Special Education has a formal role under Section 20.1(j) of EPSEN to advise the Minister 'in relation to any matter relating to the education of children and others with disabilities'. I have now requested the NCSE to prepare Policy Advice on the Educational Provision for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. A feature of the preparation of this impartial advice will involve the NCSE consulting widely with parents, professionals and other stakeholders and interested parties. As the NCSE were present at the presentations, I would expect that the information presented upon will be of interest in the context of the preparation of the policy advice. The NCSE has commissioned research which will not be finalised until mid to late 2014 and I expect that this research will inform much of the work in preparing the policy advice. Accordingly, it is not expected that the report will be finalised until early 2015. My officials are not aware of a recent invitation from the Psychology Society of Ireland's Division of Behaviour Analysis to meet with them to provide a more accurate understanding of ABA.

### **School Accommodation**

126. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if officials from his Department have met representatives of a board of management of a school (details supplied) in County Wicklow regarding its concerns about the proposed location for its new school building; when this meeting took place; the outcome of the meeting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31350/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** As the Deputy will be aware, for some time my Department has been working with the local authority to identify and acquire land for the delivery of school accommodation for a Gaelscoil and Gaelcholáiste in the area referred to by him. I can confirm that agreement in principle has been reached with a landowner in relation to a suitable site.

My officials met with a delegation from the school to which the Deputy refers on 6 June. At this meeting, there was a mutual exchange of views and information on the matter. Both sides agreed to consider the matter further and there has been contact between my officials and the school since the meeting.

### **Teaching Qualifications**

127. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if schools have the discretion to allocate resource hours to teachers who have no specialised training for teaching children with special educational needs; and if he will clarify the regulations that relate to

the supports provided to children with special needs in a mainstream school setting. [31359/13]

128. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills in a case where a school is over quota, if the principal and board of management of that school have the discretion to decide the way in which resource hours are allocated; if it is his view that teachers who have not received specialised training can provide the type of tuition and duty of care that is necessary for children with special needs in a mainstream school setting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31360/13]

129. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason schools are expected to go through the process of applying for an allocation of resource hours which can then be allocated to non-qualified resource teaching staff. [31361/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 127 to 129, inclusive, together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that class teachers in schools are required to be fully-qualified with a qualification relevant to the sector in which they are teaching. All primary teachers are qualified to teach in any primary or special school/classroom. It has been the policy of my Department for some time that only qualified and registered teachers should be employed by schools. This is set out most recently in Circular Letters 31/2011 and 0025/2013. Current recruitment procedures direct schools to ensure that teachers proposed for appointment to publicly paid posts must be registered with the Teaching Council and have qualifications appropriate to the sector and suitable to the post for which they are proposed.

In respect of Learning Support (LS) and Resource Teaching (RT) vacancies, Boards of Management are obliged to recruit and employ fully registered primary teachers. Any posts that comprise an element of General Allocation hours and Low Incidence hours are regarded as LS/RT posts and must be filled by fully registered primary school teachers.

Further guidance for schools on the organisation of Learning Support/Resource Teachers posts is provided in my Departments Circular SP ED 02/05: Organisation of Teaching Resources for Pupils who need Additional Support in Mainstream Primary Schools.

It is a matter for school authorities to employ teachers in accordance with the Department's policy in this regard and the deployment of teaching staff in the school is, in the first instance, a matter for the school management authorities.

### **Emergency Works Scheme Appeals**

130. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will facilitate an application from a school (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31363/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** My Department received an application under the emergency works scheme from the school referred to by the Deputy for works relating to the provision of boundary fencing to control access to the school grounds.

As the scope of the works requested is outside the terms of the emergency works scheme it cannot be considered for funding. The school authority has been informed of this decision.

The school authority has recently appealed this decision. The appeal is currently being assessed. As soon as a decision is reached the school will be advised of the outcome.

### **School Transport Eligibility**

131. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will prioritise the rerouting of a bus that brings children to a school (details supplied) in County Kerry and that services the Kilsarcon area; if he will take into consideration the circumstances of this case and the fact that the proposed route is the more natural circuit and that there will be little or no extra cost involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31369/13]

135. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school bus route issue (details supplied) in County Kerry will be addressed. [31425/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 131 and 135 together.

Under the terms of my Department's Primary School Transport Scheme children are eligible for transport where they reside not less than 3.2 kms from and are attending their nearest national school as determined by my Department/Bus Éireann, having regard to ethos and language.

Bus Éireann, which operates the School Transport Scheme on behalf of my Department, has advised that the child referred to by the Deputy, in the details supplied, is not attending his nearest national school and is therefore not eligible for school transport. Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis subject to a number of conditions, including the following:- routes will not be extended or altered, additional vehicles will not be introduced, nor will larger vehicles or extra trips using existing vehicles be provided to cater for children travelling on a concessionary basis; no additional State cost will be incurred. The family in question should liaise with their local Bus Éireann office regarding the availability of transport on a concessionary basis for the 2013/14 school year.

### **University Libraries**

132. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 144 of 18 June 2013, if he will acknowledge the conceivability of a publicly-funded university determining arrangements and regulations concerning public access to its library; if it is his understanding that the public is excluded as a rule from the library of University College Dublin and the libraries of other publicly-funded universities; if he will confirm that Parliamentary Question No. 144 did not ask him if he has a role in the management and operation of universities and concerned only his role under section 20(1) of the Universities Act 1997; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31392/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** As I have indicated to the Deputy in reply to previous questions on this matter the management of the university's library is entirely a matter for the university in accordance with its statutory autonomy. I refer the Deputy to Question No. 95 of 24 April, Questions Nos. 87 and 92 of 2 May, 250 of 14 May, 355 of 21 May and 144 of 8 June which set out the position.

### **Higher Education Courses Applications**

133. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will review the case of a special needs assistant (details supplied in County Kildare) who needs to take time off from their contract for study purposes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31418/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** A career break scheme for Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) was agreed with school management bodies and trade unions representing SNAs in 2012. A circular setting out the regulations and procedures of that scheme issued in June 2012. The scheme was generally in line with the teacher's scheme and one of the items it catered for was for those who wished to pursue further educational opportunities. An example of this is the online Higher Diploma in Arts in Primary Education course with Hibernia College. This intensive course requires students to engage in periods of classroom observation and teaching practice amounting to a total of 18 weeks over two school years. As a result, an SNA is required to be away from duty on many occasions (between unpaid and paid leave types), possibly impacting on the care, educational and welfare needs of special needs pupils, which as you will understand, must take precedence over all other considerations.

The above-mentioned circular, therefore, requires SNAs who are undertaking this course to take a career break for the school years in which they are required to spend periods away from their SNA post on school observation/teaching practice for the purposes of completing the course. It should also be noted that in addition to the Circular which issued in June 2012, a letter issued to the Deputy Programme Director of the Higher Diploma in Arts at Hibernia College on 19 July 2012 enclosing a copy of the circular and explaining its impact for SNAs.

### **Student Grant Scheme Eligibility**

134. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a student who was classed as a dependent mature student for the academic year 2012-13 and did not qualify for a grant under the student grant scheme and who has been living independently since September-October 2012 and wishes to continue their studies, be now treated as an independent mature student; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31419/13]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** For student grants purposes, a student is defined at their first point of entry to an approved post leaving certificate course or an approved higher education course or at their point of re-entry to such an approved course. This status will continue to apply for the duration of their studies either as students dependent on parents or a legal guardian, or as independent mature students.

A student may be assessed as an independent mature student if he/she has attained the age of 23 on the 1st of January of the year of first entry to an approved post leaving certificate course or an approved higher education course or of re-entry to an approved course following a break in studies of at least three years and is not ordinarily resident with his/her parents from the previous 1 October. Otherwise he/she would continue to be assessed on the basis of his/her parents' income.

*Question No. 135 answered with Question No. 131.*

### **Departmental Staff Numbers**

136. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of staff in his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31211/13]

137. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of

term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31227/13]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 136 and 137 together.

The Term Time scheme was replaced by the Shorter Working Year scheme in 2009 which allows civil servants to balance their working arrangements with outside commitments, including the school holiday periods for children. Under the terms of the scheme, special unpaid leave periods, not exceeding 13 weeks, may be available. The following table outlines the number of staff within my Department and those under my aegis who availed of the Shorter Working Year scheme in 2012 and the estimated number in 2013:

**Number of staff availing of the Shorter Working Year scheme**

Department/Office	2012 Number of Staff	2012 Average Duration (weeks)	2013 Number of staff (Estimate)
Department of Public Expenditure and Reform	27	5	20
Ombudsman	5	7.4	4
Public Appointments Service	4	4.5	4
State Laboratory	11	4.5	10
Office of Public Works	63	5	50
Total	110	5	88

**Departmental Staff Training**

138. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of staff in his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31243/13]

139. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31259/13]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 138 and 139 together.

In response to the Deputy's questions, the following table outlines the number of staff within my Department and those under my aegis who availed of study or training leave in 2012 and the estimated number in 2013:

Number of staff availing of Study/Training Leave	-	-	-
Department/Office	2012 Number of Staff	2012 Average Duration (days)	2013 Number of staff (Estimate)
Department of Public Expenditure and Reform*	10	4	20

Number of staff availing of Study/Training Leave	-	-	-
Department/Office	2012 Number of Staff	2012 Average Duration (days)	2013 Number of staff (Estimate)
Ombudsman **	13	13	6
Public Appointments Service	9	3	4
State Laboratory	5	2.8	5
Valuation Office	4	4	5
Office of Public Works	17	6	14
Total	58	6.3	54

\* In addition to the study leave mentioned, 59 members of staff pursued formal training courses in 2012 and the respective figure to date for 2013 is 163. Depending on scope and content, formal training courses can vary in length from a set number of hours to a specified number of days.

\*\* One staff member took 35 unpaid study leave days in 2012.

All staff received full pay and benefits and, at this time, I am not aware of any further applications for study, exam or training days for the remainder of 2013.

### Pension Provisions

140. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if it is his intention to abolish the pension-related deduction from 2014. [31325/13]

141. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reason a front-line worker on €20,000 pays a pension-related deduction of 10% but a person on more than €60,000 pays only 10.5%, with the deduction being on gross salary, the higher the pay, significantly more relief from tax, pay-related social insurance and universal social charge, meaning effectively the lower paid worker paying more. [31327/13]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 140 and 141 together.

Within the next few days, and in compliance with the duty placed on me by section 13 of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2009, I will lodge with both Houses of the Oireachtas my annual review and report on the public service Pension-related Deduction (PRD), which is the subject of the Deputy's questions.

Without unduly anticipating the findings of that review and report, I can state that I do not plan to abolish the PRD from 2014. PRD remains a critical financial emergency measure, supporting the fiscal position to the extent of some €1 billion annually.

I would however note that, as lately legislated in the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2013, and as provided for in the Haddington Road Agreement, the rate of PRD on the €15,000 to €20,000 band of pay received in a year will fall from 5% to 2.5% on 1 January 2014. This rate cut will be worth €125 annually in gross terms to most public servants, with those taxed at the standard rate enjoying the greater gain in terms of take-home pay boost.

This progressive aspect of the January 2014 PRD adjustment with respect to take-home pay is mirrored by the progressive design of the PRD itself. As an income-graduated measure applying to pensionable public servants, PRD is structured in such a way that increasing rates

of deduction are applied to increasing bands or slices of an affected person's pay each year. In this matrix of band and rates a zero per cent rate applies to the first €15,000 of earnings, which is especially important for lower-paid public service workers, in that it markedly dampens the proportion of pay deducted. In terms of its detailed composition, PRD is currently applied by reference to the following set of income bands and associated reduction rates:

First €15,000 of earnings: exempt

Earnings between €15,000 and €20,000: 5%

Earnings between €20,000 and €60,000: 10%

Earnings above €60,000: 10.5%

Based on this set of deduction rates, the PRD imposition on a public servant paid €20,000 in a year is €250, or 1.25% of pay, not 10% of pay as stated in the Deputy's second question. Likewise, the PRD taken from a public servant paid €60,000 in a year is €4,250, or 7.08% of pay, not 10.5% as stated by the Deputy.

In terms of the actual outturns in the example cases raised by the Deputy, the large difference in PRD impact between 1.25% of pay at €20,000 and 7.08 % of pay at €60,000 shows how, across this pay gap, PRD acts in a manifestly progressive way. While this large difference would lessen in a post-tax relief analysis, the lower paid person would undoubtedly retain a clear edge.

For the record, PRD, though tax-relieved, does not qualify for relief from PRSI or USC. All such reliefs are a matter for the Minister for Finance.

### **Proposed Legislation**

142. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 142 of the 16 May 2013 and 67 of 23 May 2013, if he will clarify that the Houses of the Oireachtas (Inquiries, Privileges and Procedures) Bill 2013 that will provide for a statutory qualified privilege for private papers of Members and official documents of the Houses will include that of political staff working in their parliamentary and constituency offices in terms of their documents, emails and other communications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31442/13]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** The Houses of the Oireachtas (Inquiries Privileges and Procedures) Bill 2013 provides for a statutory qualified privilege for the private papers of Members and official documents of the Houses. Section 104 of the Bill (as amended in the Select sub-Committee on Public Expenditure and Reform) provides a definition of what constitutes a "private paper" within the meaning of the Bill.

In the first instance, it is a matter for the Houses to regulate which documents will be designated as private papers. Section 107 of the Bill provides that a Member may at any time apply to the committee designated for this purpose (the "Part 10 committee") for a determination as to whether a document is a private paper. Additionally, Section 108 of the Bill empowers a House to prepare and issue guidelines to provide practical guidance for Members including protocols to be followed relating to maintaining a document as a private paper.

In addition, Section 104(2) of the Bill provides that nothing in Part 10 shall be construed to prejudice the power of each House to make rules and standing orders pursuant to Article 15.10

of the Constitution to create a protection for private papers referred to in that Article and irrespective of whether the definition of “private paper” provided for in such rules and standing orders overlaps, whether in whole or in part, with the definition of “private paper” in Part 10 of the Bill.

### Commercial Rates Issues

143. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his attention has been drawn to the massive increases in commercial rates due to be levied on businesses in County Waterford on foot of a statutory revaluation of commercial rates in Waterford city and county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31447/13]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** As the Deputy will be aware, the national revaluation programme aims to provide up-to-date valuations for individual properties across all economic sectors that are subject to local authority rates. The revaluation process is the mechanism whereby economic changes that take place in the property market are reflected in the valuation lists for rates purposes and in individual ratepayers’ rates liabilities. The national revaluation programme is a priority for Government and is a feature of the Action Plan for Jobs 2012. The programme is particularly important given the significant changes that have occurred in rental values following the economic downturn of recent years. The purpose of a revaluation is to distribute commercial rates liabilities more equitably among ratepayers based on up-to-date values. Following revaluation, there will be a much closer relationship between rental value and commercial rates liability. Even though property values have fallen generally, given that the purpose is to redistribute the overall rates liability, some ratepayers will obtain a reduction while others will experience an increase from the process of redistribution but, overall, revaluation results in a fairer distribution of the rates burden.

In line with Government priorities, I am very keen that the revaluation programme would be expedited so that the first revaluation in 25 years can be completed as soon as possible across the country. In keeping with Government policy, I have introduced the Valuation (Amendment) (No.2) Bill, 2012, which is currently before the Oireachtas. The primary purpose of this legislation is to accelerate the revaluation process. The Bill also includes new features which provide for the streamlining of the valuation appeals procedures available to ratepayers and as part of the efforts to accelerate the national revaluation programme, it also provides the legislative basis for carrying out a revaluation based on self-assessment by ratepayers and also for the external delivery of elements of the valuation process.

Under Irish law, there is a distinct separation of function between the valuation of rateable property and the setting and collection of commercial rates. The amount of rates payable by a ratepayer in any calendar year is a product of the valuation of that property determined by the Valuation Office and the annual rate on valuation (ARV) set annually by the elected members of the rating authority. Revaluation is the mechanism whereby movements in property valuations as a result of economic factors are reflected in valuation lists. Following the first revaluation in each area, the Valuation Act 2001 provides for subsequent, recurring revaluations to be carried out at intervals of a minimum of 5 years and no later than 10 years. This will ensure that movements in the property market are tracked and reflected in rateable valuations within a reasonable timeline, which has not been the case heretofore. Accordingly, individual valuations would be established and remain fixed for a 5-10 year period. On the other hand the ARV can, as determined by the elected members of the rating authority, vary from year to year and therefore so can the amount of rates payable annually.

Valuations reflect the value of all individual properties in particular rating authority areas at

the statutory valuation date (28th October 2011 for Waterford). Movements in valuations since the last date by which valuations were set (1988/89) reflect the relative changes to rental values within and between sectors such as retail, industrial and hospitality between 1988 and 2011. Accordingly, some businesses will have an increase in their rates liability while others will experience a decrease following revaluation.

The setting of valuation levels during a revaluation exercise such as that underway in Waterford City Council, Waterford County Council and Dungarvan Town Council is based on market evidence available to the Valuation Office, including information solicited from and provided by ratepayers. In establishing the levels for rateable properties, the Commissioner of Valuation is independent in carrying out his function. In relation to particular cases there is, of course, a well established statutory process whereby a ratepayer, if he or she considers that the proposed valuation or any of the details contained in the Proposed Valuation Certificate are incorrect, can make representations to the Valuation Manager. There is also a subsequent statutory right of appeal to the Valuation Tribunal, an independent body set up for such purposes and subsequently, on a point of law, there is an appeal to the High and Supreme Courts.

In keeping with the principle of separation of function between the valuation of rateable property and the setting and collection of commercial rates, the amount of rates that a rating authority can raise is generally a matter for decision by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government and does not come within the competence of the Commissioner of Valuation whose sole responsibility lies in administering the system of rateable valuation as underpinned by the Valuation Act, 2001. However, in so far as valuation legislation is concerned, there is a specific provision in the 2001 Act which allows the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to make an order requiring a rating authority to exercise its powers to make rates in such a manner that it does not exceed the amount of rates liable to be paid to it in the first year following a revaluation except for any increase determined by the consumer price index.

### **Microfinance Loan Fund**

144. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of applications the micro finance loan fund received since it was started; the number of loans that have been awarded; the average size of the loans; the average time from an application being lodged to a loan awarded; the number of loan applications that have been denied and the reason for same; if there is a breakdown available of the industries receiving loans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31191/13]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** A full progress report on the operation of the scheme from 1 October 2012 to 31 March 2013 can be found on my Department's website ([www.enterprise.gov.ie](http://www.enterprise.gov.ie)) and the Microfinance Ireland (MFI) website ([www.microfinanceireland.ie](http://www.microfinanceireland.ie)). I hope to publish the next MFI progress report by mid-July.

The report contains all the information requested by the Deputy apart from the reasons for decline, which are, as the Deputy will appreciate, confidential to individual clients.

### **Departmental Staff Numbers**

145. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of staff in his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[31209/13]

146. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31225/13]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 145 and 146 together.

81 members of staff in my Department availed of the shorter working year scheme (previously known as term time) in 2012. The average duration in 2012 was 5.42 weeks.

82 members of staff in my Department are availing of shorter working year scheme in 2013. The average duration in 2013 will be 5.35 weeks.

The granting of term time in the agencies under the aegis of my Department is a day to day matter for the agencies concerned. I have asked the Agencies to respond directly to the Deputy.

### **Departmental Staff Training**

147. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of staff in his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31241/13]

148. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31257/13]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 147 and 148 together.

The number of staff of my Department who availed of study leave and training days in 2012 and 2013 is set out in the tables following. All staff receive full pay and benefits while availing of training courses or on study leave.

The Deputy should note that figures for training in 2013 are up to and including 31st March, as these are the latest figures available to the Department. The figures in relation to study leave for 2013 are to the current date.

It is not possible in the time available to provide information regarding the average duration of training leave.

The granting of study and training leave in the Agencies under the aegis of my Department is a day to day matter for the Agencies concerned. I have asked the Agencies to respond directly to the Deputy.

2012 - Training

Number of Departmental Staff who attended training	Number of training days	Average duration of training leave
525	918 days	Not available

Study Leave

Number of Staff who availed of Study Leave in 2012	Number of Study Leave days taken	Average duration of Study Leave in 2012
17	95 Days	5.6 days

2013 - Training

Number of Departmental Staff who attended training	Number of training days	Average duration of training leave
122	291	Not available

Study Leave

Number of Staff who availed of Study Leave in 2013	Number of Study Leave days taken	Average duration of Study Leave in 2013
33	121.5	3.7

### Groceries Order

149. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his plans to reintroduce the groceries order to prevent below-cost selling of all alcohol products. [31368/13]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I assume the Deputy is referring to the Restrictive Practices (Groceries) Order 1987 (S.I. No.142 of 1987) which prohibited below invoice price selling of those goods rather than banning below cost selling of certain goods. In effect, the Order allowed wholesalers and suppliers to determine minimum retail prices being charged to consumers, thereby seriously constraining competition in the grocery trade.

Since the repeal of that Order in 2006, no statutory basis exists for me, as Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, to make a minimum pricing order.

The use of aggressive pricing strategies in any business is a legitimate marketing tool and is the normal outcome of the competitive process. Low cost and below cost selling by a retailer is not of itself an offence unless it involves abuse of a dominant position. A determination on whether a retailer is abusing a dominant position in the marketplace would necessitate a comprehensive investigation by the Competition Authority.

The Authority is the independent statutory body responsible for enforcing competition law in the State and complaints of any alleged anti-competitive practice should be referred to it.

The sale of alcohol, essentially regulated by the liquor licensing laws, which are the policy responsibility of the Minister for Justice and Equality, is a matter in which I have no direct function.

## **Job Initiatives**

150. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will consider establishing a north-east forum in order to encourage Industrial Development Agency investment in the Border area in view of recent figures which show that only three jobs were created by IDA companies in County Monaghan in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31420/13]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department and its agencies are working together to address the unemployment problem that is currently experienced throughout the country as a whole by implementing the Government's Action Plan for Jobs which aims to create 100,000 net new jobs over the period 2012 to 2016.

IDA Ireland has statutory responsibility to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to Ireland. At the end of 2012 there were 6 IDA Ireland supported companies in Monaghan employing 350 people. In accordance with its Horizon 2020 Strategy, IDA Ireland continues to engage with these client companies in order to transform the existing FDI base with a view to developing, retaining and growing employment opportunities.

As Ireland competes for high quality investments, the concept of scale is crucial. Leading global corporations require a significant population pool, access to qualified talent, world standard physical and digital infrastructure coupled with the availability of sophisticated professional and business support services. In order to achieve balanced regional economic development, IDA prioritises the marketing of its Gateway locations within each Region as the locations of critical mass and highlights the opportunities provided by other locations on an opportunistic basis, which are within commuting distances of these Gateways.

County Monaghan is part of IDA's North East Region along with Counties Cavan and Louth. Through its network of overseas offices, IDA Ireland markets the North East Region for new inward investment through the Gateway of Dundalk. In addition, the Agency works closely with all of its 34 client companies in the Region which currently employ 3,200 people, to encourage them to further develop their engagement in the region.

With continuing enhancement and improvements in physical and digital infrastructure, an FDI project secured for one county in the Region has a positive impact on other counties in the Region.

I consider that it is neither practicable nor effective to establish jobs task forces or specific jobs plans around the country as a general mechanism to address high unemployment. I believe that to embark on such a course would involve diverting the various State Agencies from their on-going efforts to create jobs. A considerable administrative commitment is involved in servicing any additional committees and groups which may be set up and, given the constrained staff resources facing all public sector bodies at present, I am strongly of the opinion that establishing such additional groups, except in very exceptional circumstances, would not be in the best interests of using the State's resources effectively.

## **Child Benefit Payments**

151. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if, and when, arrears of a child benefit claim will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31382/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** Child Benefit is in payment to the person concerned. The case is currently being reviewed. When the review is completed the person concerned will be notified of the outcome.

### Social Insurance Rates

152. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide, in tabular form, the yield or estimated yield from raising the employers' low rate of PRSI of 4.25% to 8.5% and 10.75%; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31178/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The information requested by the Deputy is not available at present. When the information becomes available, my Department will furnish it to the Deputy directly.

### Community Employment Schemes Review

153. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to the ongoing difficulties being experienced by a project (details supplied) in Dublin 1; if she is aware that changes applied in 2012 in the entitlement rates for community employment participants has had a serious negative impact on recruitment of people for community after-school project schemes; if she is further aware that should these changes continue to be implemented it will mean the closure of the child care services, educational support programmes and adult training; if she will ensure that her Department provides adequate assistance and retention of the above services to the community after-school project scheme, noting that the service provided is vital to a disadvantaged community and ensures that persons are provided with the tools to seek full-time employment. [31183/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** Over the last number of years a number of changes have been made to CE to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme. The overall number of places available under CE has been increased by 2,000 to 25,300 (including supervisors) in 2013 with a budget of circa €353m. The composition of participant numbers has changed in recent years with a decline in One Parent Family Clients and an increase in the take-up by persons on Jobseekers Allowance. The change in participation composition has proved challenging for some sponsors and the Department is working with these sponsors to assist them in filling the places already assigned to them.

The number of approved places on the Community After Schools Project (CASPr) has remained at 39 for the last 3 project years. The Local Intreo Office has also undertaken a special initiative to ensure that eligible persons for CE are made aware of the opportunities on CE and it is anticipated that this initiative will help raise the demand for CE in the area.

The Department continues its commitment to getting people back to work as set out in the Programme for Government and the *Pathways to Work* documents. The additional allocation of CE places provides for priority to be given to applicants who are referred to CE drugs rehabilitation, childcare and social care places. The take-up of CE places will be closely monitored in terms of impact. The Department is committed to reforming CE to ensure value for money, progression of the job seeker and support for community services.

### Departmental Staff Numbers

154. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of staff in her Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31212/13]

155. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of her Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31228/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I proposed to take Questions Nos. 154 and 155 together.

The shorter working year scheme is a centrally agreed scheme where staff can avail of various periods of unpaid leave. The operation of the scheme represents a saving to the Department as those availing of the shorter working year leave are on unpaid leave. In addition, this provides opportunities for the unemployed as the Department recruits temporary clerical officers from the Public Appointments Service temporary clerical officer panel to replace staff availing of shorter working year leave.

The Agencies that operate under the aegis of the Department are the Pensions Board and the Citizens Information Board. The Office of the Pensions Ombudsman also falls under the remit of the Department. The tabular statement outlines the number of staff availing of the shorter working year scheme in the Department and its Agencies for 2012 and 2013.

-	-	Department of Social Protection	-	Pensions Board	-	Citizens Information Board	-	Pensions Ombudsman
No. of weeks	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013
2 weeks	284	401	0	0	4	2	0	0
4 weeks	6	0	0	0	2	2	0	0
6 weeks	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
8 weeks	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
10 weeks	278	282	0	0	0	0	1	1
13 weeks	68	95	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	640	778	0	0	7	5	1	1

### Departmental Staff Training

156. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of staff in her Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31244/13]

157. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of her Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31260/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 156 and 157 together.

The Department is committed, under its Learning and Development Strategy to provide opportunities for the education of its staff. The Department recognises that investing in learning leads to improved performance and productivity, increased employee engagement and better customer service.

In addition to the provision of in-house and externally-sourced training courses, the Department also operates the Refund of Fees scheme to encourage staff to pursue educational achievement outside of normal business hours. The scheme operates within the parameters of Department of Finance Circular 23/07. Staff studying for approved courses under the scheme may apply for study leave (paid and unpaid), subject to the approval of their manager. Paid study leave may be granted up to certain maxima, including:

five days for each year of a third level course;

ten days in respect of the final year only of a third level primary or masters degree;

three days for each year of a second level course, subject to a maximum of ten days overall.

The amount of study leave granted in 2012 and 2013 (to date) in respect of staff in the Department is outlined in the table below. While there may be more applications for study leave later in the year, the vast majority of such leave is taken in the first six months of the year.

<b>Departmental Staff availing of Study Leave</b>	<b>Jan - June 2013</b>	<b>2012</b>
Number of staff who availed of study leave	53	47
Number of study leave days – paid	261	218
Number of study leave days – unpaid	10	7
Average number of days per employee availing of leave	5.1	4.8

The amount of study leave granted in 2012 and 2013 (to date) in respect of staff in the agencies of the Department (i.e. Citizens Information Board, Pensions Board and Office of the Pensions Ombudsman) is outlined in the table below.

<b>Departmental Agency Staff availing of Study Leave</b>	<b>Jan- June 2013</b>	<b>2012</b>
Number of employees	19	9
Number of study leave days – paid	43.5	35
Number of study leave days – unpaid	2	0
Average number per employee availing of leave	2.4	3.9

### **Carer's Allowance Appeals**

158. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a decision has been made on an appeal of a carer's allowance application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31288/13]

**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 16 May 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question 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.

### **Carer's Allowance Applications**

159. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if any third party documentation, other than the documentation submitted by the applicant or by my office on their behalf, was received by her Department in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31339/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** There does not appear to be any third party documentation, other than the documentation submitted by the applicant or by the office of the deputy on his behalf, received by the Department in respect of the carer's allowance application from the person concerned. It is open to the person in question to make a request under the FOI Act for all documentation and records held by the Department in relation to this application.

### **Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals**

160. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an application for domiciliary care allowance now under appeal will be expedited and approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny. [31348/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** An application for domiciliary care allowance was received from the person concerned on 13 December 2012. This application was referred to one of the Department's Medical Assessors who found that the child was not medically eligible for the allowance. A letter issued on 22 February 2013 advising of the decision.

The person concerned subsequently lodged an appeal against this decision. As part of the appeal process, the case was reviewed by a second Medical Assessor on 14 June 2013 who confirmed the opinion that the child was not medically eligible for the allowance. The file was forwarded to the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 25 June 2013 to have the appeal processed.

### **Job Creation Issues**

161. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress she has made regarding the pathways to work proposal to outsource additional resources for certain labour activation measures, in view of the European Commission's Winter 2012 Review of Ireland's Economic Adjustment Programme, published in April, which recommended that this process needs to be accelerated; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31366/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Pathways to Work initiative launched last year signalled the potential of contracting with third party providers to complement the existing capacity of the Department to deliver employment services. The potential contribution of contracting and the design of a contracting approach has since been considered by the Department working with an Interdepartmental group, comprising representatives of this Department, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the National Economic and Social Council and the Offices of the Attorney General and the Chief State Solicitor. The Department also availed of expert international advice.

Arising from this evaluation, the Cabinet Committee on Pathways to Work approved in principle a proposal to tender the provision of employment services and agreed to the issue of a Prior Information Notice (PIN). This notice formally notifies the market that the State intends to procure employment services. A PIN is a discretionary and exploratory first step in a procurement process. The publication of a PIN will enable the State to engage with potential vendors and other interested parties to gauge the level of market interest and assist in finalising tender/contract design.

### Youth Guarantee

162. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection if the youth guarantee scheme will be considered in provisions for Budget 2014 (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31390/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** Securing EU Council agreement for an EU Recommendation on a Youth Guarantee was one of the priorities of the Irish Presidency and this was secured during my chairing of the Council of European Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO).

The Recommendation is that Member States should:

*Ensure that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.*

While Member States are encouraged to implement the Recommendation as soon as possible, it is recognised that implementation will need to be more gradual in countries with higher levels of youth unemployment and particularly severe budgetary problems. The government will now review the current range of youth employment and training policies in Ireland to assess what measures will need to be taken to commence the gradual implementation of the guarantee. This will include the identification of what would be the appropriate timescale for implementation in Ireland's current employment and budgetary circumstances. A plan for the implementation of the Recommendation will be developed before the end of 2013.

The scale and nature of any additional measures required for the gradual implementation of a guarantee at national level will depend on the trend in youth unemployment, and in particular the number of young people likely to experience periods of unemployment of more than four months under current policies. In this context, it is a welcome development that the official labour market figures published by the CSO recently indicated that the number of young unemployed in the first quarter of 2013, at 53,800, decreased by over 10,000 on the same time a year earlier. It is to be hoped that this is the beginning of a sustained downward movement in youth unemployment as the economy recovers. Even so, the implementation of a guarantee will, almost certainly, require an expansion in the range of opportunities currently on offer to young

people in the form of further education and training, internships, subsidised private-sector recruitment, and supports for self-employment.

The additional costs involved in delivering the Youth Guarantee in Ireland are likely to be substantial. Issues will therefore arise as to how a guarantee is to be financed and over what period, given the fiscal constraints currently facing the country. In this context the additional funding available from the EU, to be allocated across qualifying member states is actually €3bn. The balance of €3bn is a reallocation of monies from within the European Social Fund. Although it is now proposed to frontload the provision of these funds the actual process by which they will be allocated to member states is as yet unclear.

As part of the process of developing our own national implementation plan the costs of any measures involved arising in 2014 will be dealt with in the normal way through the 2014 Budget.

### **Social Welfare Appeals Delays**

163. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a social welfare appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath in relation to the disallowance of a claim for disability allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31413/13]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence, disallowed the appeal of the person concerned by way of a summary decision. Under Social Welfare legislation, the decision of the Appeals Officer is final and conclusive and may only be reviewed by the Appeals Officer in the light of new evidence or new facts.

As additional evidence has been submitted, the Department has been requested to return the file to the Social Welfare Appeals Office. On receipt of this file, the Appeals Officer will review the case. The person concerned will be contacted when the review of his appeal has been finalised.

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.

### **Social Welfare Appeals Delays**

164. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a social welfare appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath in relation to the disallowance of a claim for domiciliary care allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31414/13]

**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 30th May 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. 165 withdrawn.*

### **Social Welfare Appeals Delays**

166. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite an appeal for a jobseeker's allowance payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare in view of the fact that they are in urgent need of the payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31421/13]

**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 24th June 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 these are received in the Appeals Office 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.

### **Social Welfare Appeals Delays**

167. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a domiciliary allowance appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31446/13]

**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 11th June 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 these are received in the Appeals Office 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.

### **Social Welfare Appeals Delays**

168. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on a carer's allowance review will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31448/13]

**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 27th May 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.

### **Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Payments**

169. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon will receive a payment for the designation of their bog; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31188/13]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** The individual referred to in the Deputy's Question has applied for compensation under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme, administered by my Department.

I am advised that issues in relation to legal title over the land in question have been investigated and payments have been made to the applicant in respect of 2011, 2012 and 2013.

### **Departmental Staff Numbers**

170. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of staff in his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31200/13]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** In 2012, a total of 29 members of staff in my Department availed of unpaid leave under the terms of the Shorter Working Year, formerly referred to as Term Time. The average duration of leave taken was 5.34 weeks, and a total of 155 weeks were taken. 35 members of staff have applied to take leave under this scheme in 2013 for a sum total of 192 weeks' leave, with an average duration of 5.48 weeks per applicant.

### **Departmental Agencies Staff Numbers**

171. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31216/13]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** The Deputy will appreciate that the matters referred to are a day-to-day matter for the management of the organisations concerned in which neither I nor my Department have any role or function. The Deputy may wish to contact the bodies concerned directly.

### **Departmental Staff Training**

172. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of staff in his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during

the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31232/13]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the granting of study leave in my Department in accordance with Civil Service guidelines as set out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is set out in the following table.

Year	Number of paid leave days	Number of staff	Average Duration
2012	117	17	7 days
2013 (to date)	70	11	6.5 days

Additional unpaid study leave of 5 days was permitted in one instance in 2012. In relation to the Deputy's query regarding training leave, I would advise the Deputy that attendance at work related training is an integral part of the work of staff and that the issue of leave does not arise in relation to such activities.

### Departmental Staff Training

173. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31248/13]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** The Deputy will appreciate that the matters referred to are a day-to-day matter for the management of the organisations concerned in which neither I nor my Department have any role or function. The Deputy may wish to contact the bodies concerned directly.

### Architectural Heritage

174. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if a building (details supplied) in County Cork is on his Department's list of recorded monuments; and the role his Department has in conjunction with the local authority in terms of any application for planning permission that has or will be lodged with Cork County Council to renovate the building. [31305/13]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** The building referred in the question is not included on the statutory record or register maintained under the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004. However, I understand that it is on the Record of Protected Structures for County Cork. Part IV of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2012 provides for the protection of architectural heritage. The Act gives primary responsibility to planning authorities to identify and protect the architectural heritage by including them on the Record of Protected Structures. Inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures places a duty of care on the owners and occupiers of protected structures and also gives planning authorities powers to deal with development proposals affecting them and to seek to safeguard their future.

Under the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2010, the local authority is the decision-

making body in the first instance in relation to planning applications. An Bord Pleanála is the appeals authority for planning applications. My role in relation to planning applications is limited to that of statutory consultee in cases where a proposed development may have an effect on natural, archaeological or architectural heritage. I understand that Cork County Council have received an application for planning permission in relation to the this building and, as the building is on the Record of Protected Structures, officials in my Department have asked the Council to refer this application to me for consultation under the Planning and Development Act.

I refer the Deputy to Cork County Council as the appropriate body to consult with reference to this planning application.

### National Cultural Institutions

175. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the steps he will take to have Irish cultural institutions such as the National Museum of Ireland, Kilmainham Gaol, the National Gallery of Art and the National Museum of Modern Art, open longer hours for tourists during the summer months in particular, and the reason the museum is closed on Mondays, the last tour at the gaol is 5 p.m. and the gallery doesn't open before 12.30 on Sundays. [31450/13]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** Whilst my Department provides funding to the National Cultural Institutions, the Board of each institution is responsible for all operational matters, including opening hours, and I do not have a statutory function in respect of such day-to-day matters. However, opening hours is a matter which is kept routinely under review by all of the institutions and alternative means of access and the question of public opening times in general are amongst the matters being discussed with the institutions as part of the implementation of the Government's Public Sector Reform Plan.

The management and operation of Kilmainham Gaol is under the aegis of the Office of Public Works and my Department has no responsibility for it.

### Departmental Staff Numbers

176. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of staff in his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31202/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following tables. This information relates to the Shorter Working Year Scheme which replaced term time in 2009.

Year	Number of Staff who Availed of Shorter Working Year	Average
2012	31	6 weeks

Year	Number of Staff who Applied for Shorter Working Year (to date)	Average
2013 (to date)	30	6 weeks

### Departmental Agencies Staff Numbers

177. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31218/13]

179. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31250/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):**  
I propose to take Questions Nos. 177 and 179 together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that the information sought regarding staff in the agencies under the aegis of my Department is an operational matter for each Agency. I have notified the agencies under the aegis of the Department of the questions and have requested them to respond directly to the Deputy with their replies.

### Departmental Staff Numbers

178. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of staff in his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31234/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):**  
The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

Year	Study Leave Applications	Average	Full pay & benefits
2012	7	5 days	Yes
2013 (to date)	5	3.5 days	Yes

*Question No. 179 answered with Question No. 177.*

### Departmental Staff Secondments

180. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of officials that have been seconded from his Department, to other Government Departments, EU institutions and bodies, international organisations, NGOs, other nation states and any other body; the level, grade and rank of each official that is on secondment; the name of each body an official is currently with; the length of each secondment, detailing time seconded to date and expected secondment remaining; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31336/13]

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

The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

Grade	No. of Grade Seconded	Seconded To	Date Seconded from	Secondment Period	Date Seconded to
Principal Officer	1	ComReg	1/11/11	4 years	31/10/15
Assistant Principal	3	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	24/08/09 4/10/10 22/07/11	5 years 4 years 4 years	31/7/14 31/10/14 31/7/15
HEO	1	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	1/9/12	11 months	31/7/13
AO	2	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	1/11/10 1/09/12	4 years 11 months	31/11/14 31/7/13
AO	1	IDA	1/11/10	3 years	1/11/13
EO	1	Department of Environment, Community and Local Government	27/6/11	For the tenure of the Minister	n/a
EO	1	Department of Education and Skills	11/12/02	3 year initial period extended annually on request by the Department of Education and Skills	Reviewed annually

### Postcode Implementation

181. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans regarding the introduction of post codes here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31384/13]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The Government is strongly committed to introducing postcodes here in Ireland. The procurement process to select a postcode management licence holder to implement a National Postcode System began in 2011 with the publication of a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire on [www.etenders.gov.ie](http://www.etenders.gov.ie). Since then, intensive work has taken place on what is an extremely complex national project with many different inter-dependent aspects to it. The procurement process is expected to come to a conclusion very shortly.

The final decision to proceed with implementation of a national postcode will be one for Government and will be based on appropriate financial, technical and operational considerations. I cannot give a precise date on when this decision will be made but I intend that it will be no later than the third quarter of this year.

### Motor Tax Exemptions

182. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if there are any motor tax exemptions available to very large families, for example over six children, similar to the disabled drivers and disabled passengers exemption, who require larger vehicles; if there are any plans to introduce any exemption; and if he

will make a statement on the matter. [31290/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** Motor tax for private cars is calculated on the basis of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions or engine capacity, depending on the date of first registration of the car. Any reduction in motor tax rates for this category would require a compensatory increase elsewhere in the motor tax rates or elsewhere in the tax code. I have no plans to revise the basis of taxation for vehicles at this time.

### **Local Authority Housing Issues**

183. **Deputy Dara Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if there is a provision of moneys available to local authorities for the reintroduction of the down sizing scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31185/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan):** There are no funds specifically designated under the Social Housing Investment Programme for the purpose of facilitating local authority tenants wishing to downsize and I do not plan to introduce such a scheme. A number of housing authorities, however, have traditionally operated such schemes within their overall housing programmes.

### **Departmental Staff Numbers**

184. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of staff in his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31205/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** In 2012, 57 staff members availed of special unpaid leave under the Shorter Working Year scheme (formerly term-time); the average duration of leave was 6 weeks. To date in 2013, my Department has approved 56 applications under the scheme.

### **Departmental Agencies Staff Numbers**

185. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31221/13]

187. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31253/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 185 and 187 together.

Day to day operations in agencies under the aegis of my Department are a matter for management in each agency. Accordingly, the information requested is not available in my Depart-

ment.

### Departmental Staff Training

186. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of staff in his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31237/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** My Department places considerable emphasis on relevant skills development by staff at all levels. It offers on-going training programmes for staff, based on business requirements identified through the business planning mechanism and the performance management development system. Under the Refund of Educational Fees Scheme, which operates on an annual basis, staff members can develop specific critical skills through a number of formal education programmes offered by 3rd level institutions.

In accordance with the provisions of Department of Finance Circular 23/2007, staff pursuing appropriate courses may avail of paid study leave. In 2012, 45 staff availed of such leave with an average duration of 1.94 days. To date in 2013, 22 staff have availed of study leave with an average duration of 1.75 days. In addition to the formal courses outlined above there are a number of short-term external and in-house training sessions provided for staff, which are held during business hours.

*Question No. 187 answered with Question No. 185.*

### Local Authority Charges Collection

188. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will indicate the level that commercial rates are charged at in each local authority; and the amounts raised in 2010, 2011 and 2012 through commercial rates by each local authority. [31270/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The levying and collection of rates are matters for each individual local authority. The annual rate on valuation (ARV), which is applied to the valuation for each property, determined by the Valuation Office, to obtain the amount payable in rates, is decided by the elected members of each local authority in the annual budget and its determination is a reserved function.

Rates income data is published by local authorities in their Annual Financial Statements. 2010 is the latest year for which audited local authority Annual Financial Statement data is available. The Annual Rate on Valuation in 2013 and the amount of commercial rates collected by each rating authority in 2010 are set out in the following table.

Local Authority	2013 Annual Rate on Valuation	2010 Rates Income (Accrued)
<b>County Councils</b>	-	€
Carlow	65.80	4,713,637
Cavan	56.85	9,215,051

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Local Authority	2013 Annual Rate on Valuation	2010 Rates Income (Accrued)
<b>County Councils</b>	-	€
Clare	72.99	31,371,523
Cork	74.75	90,916,445
Donegal	69.70	16,168,187
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown*	0.166	108,969,034
Fingal*	0.144	81,556,189
Galway	66.59	18,200,480
Kerry	80.35	17,554,303
Kildare	68.95	35,017,488
Kilkenny	52.05	9,425,334
Laois	64.63	8,187,869
Leitrim	62.15	3,660,377
Limerick	59.92	23,150,780
Longford	65.35	3,631,607
Louth	55.08	5,746,530
Mayo	68.76	10,349,404
Meath	69.62	19,689,702
Monaghan	56.20	4,965,581
North Tipperary	57.74	6,182,328
Offaly	56.77	7,267,813
Roscommon	72.89	7,733,539
Sligo	64.43	4,016,899
South Dublin*	0.162	112,063,348
South Tipperary	56.77	7,323,848
Waterford	69.22	5,676,246
Westmeath	52.27	8,064,443
Wexford	71.52	15,041,928
Wicklow	76.78	13,425,755
<b>City Councils</b>	-	-
Cork	74.05	56,548,108
Dublin	60.88	296,510,814
Galway	65.46	25,497,007
Limerick	71.19	24,080,407
Waterford	66.22	16,942,553
<b>Borough Councils</b>	-	-
Clonmel	58.84	4,457,738
Drogheda	65.49	8,748,669
Kilkenny	59.55	4,803,670
Sligo	68.76	5,615,268
Wexford	67.66	5,754,319
<b>Rating Town Councils</b>	-	-
Arklow	63.95	2,272,143
Athlone	60.72	3,519,698

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>2013 Annual Rate on Valuation</b>	<b>2010 Rates Income (Accrued)</b>
<b>County Councils</b>	-	€
Athy	56.29	1,485,262
Ballina	64.52	2,752,980
Ballinasloe	52.00	1,143,753
Birr	68.28	906,386
Bray	67.66	5,180,802
Buncrana	44.29	480,392
Bundoran	59.64	741,670
Carlow	73.75	4,757,249
Carrickmacross	65.55	665,187
Carrick on Suir	50.99	1,258,862
Cashel	57.56	635,593
Castlebar	70.23	2,920,489
Castleblayney	56.00	454,129
Cavan	73.02	1,518,295
Clonakilty	66.96	1,085,295
Clones	59.90	290,196
Cobh	71.53	616,001
Dundalk	65.83	11,490,630
Dungarvan	60.37	2,113,441
Ennis	65.45	4,142,290
Enniscorthy	65.13	1,410,443
Fermoy	61.00	786,684
Kells	65.35	520,308
Killarney	70.37	5,765,076
Kilrush	61.93	591,100
Kinsale	65.11	1,036,555
Letterkenny	65.21	4,413,525
Listowel	77.07	1,510,379
Longford	69.01	2,312,838
Macroom	65.37	661,989
Mallow	57.88	2,129,908
Midleton	60.35	1,559,084
Monaghan	72.00	2,454,932
Naas	67.41	5,590,137
Navan	65.90	3,687,510
Nenagh	55.68	2,750,039
New Ross	55.47	943,233
Skibbereen	69.84	851,206
Templemore	53.90	431,456
Thurles	57.13	1,634,640
Tipperary	52.20	1,103,302
Tralee	81.18	6,374,133

Local Authority	2013 Annual Rate on Valuation	2010 Rates Income (Accrued)
<b>County Councils</b>	-	€
Trim	64.10	633,889
Tullamore	67.65	3,077,564
Westport	63.55	2,514,155
Wicklow	63.24	1,445,653
Youghal	65.31	1,021,557

\*county councils revalued under the Valuation Act 2001

### Local Authority Funding

189. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the amount of funding given by his Department under the aegis of Wicklow Town Council and Wicklow County Council for a housing development (details supplied) in County Wicklow and under which schemes these moneys have been provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31277/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** I refer to the reply to Question No. 579 of 11 June 2013, which sets out the position on this matter.

### Anti-Social Behaviour

190. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if local authorities are experiencing difficulties in evicting tenants that constantly engage in serious anti-social behaviour; if the existing procedures are efficient and effective enough in his view or if new legislation is required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31279/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** The Supreme Court issued a judgment in February 2012 in two cases relating to section 62 of the Housing Act 1966. In one case, the court ruled that there was a dispute as to the facts and made a declaration that section 62(3) of the 1966 Act is incompatible with the State’s obligations under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. In the other case the court ruled that there was no dispute as to the facts and did not make a declaration of incompatibility. Section 5(2) of the European Convention on Human Rights Act 2003 provides that a declaration of incompatibility in respect of an enactment does not affect its validity, continuing operation or enforcement. My Department, in conjunction with the Office of the Attorney General, has examined the court judgment. In consultation with key local authorities, a course of action is being prepared which will involve changes in the way in which eviction procedures are carried out but which will require changes to legislation.

Proposals for a Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill currently being developed in my Department include a new procedure that will enable housing authorities to recover possession of their dwellings from households in serious breach of their tenancy agreements, including engagement in anti-social behaviour. I am also examining the scope for making the excluding order powers of housing authorities more effective in tackling anti-social behaviour without having to evict entire families from their homes.

## **Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems**

191. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when he plans to introduce a grant scheme to provide financial assistance to households whose septic tanks and other domestic wastewater treatment systems are deemed to require remediation following an inspection; when he expects to be in a position to announce such a scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31315/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** In December 2012 I announced that a grant scheme would be established to provide financial assistance to households whose treatment systems are deemed, following inspection under the 2012 legislation, to require remediation or upgrading and that full details would be set down in Regulations which I would make in advance of inspections commencing. This week I signed the Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems (Financial Assistance) Regulations 2013 to give effect to the grant scheme and, in accordance with Section 18 of the Water Services Act 2007, the regulations have been laid before each House of the Oireachtas.

## **Housing Adaptation Grants Funding**

192. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will account for the 50% reduction in the local authority adaptation grant from the 2012 allocation to Meath County Council; his assessment of the impact of this cut on the disabled and will he consider revisiting the allocation. [31316/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan):** The requirement to reduce public expenditure to sustainable levels is impacting on capital programmes all across the public service, including my Department's housing capital programme. The level of capital funding available has declined significantly in recent years along the lines highlighted in the Medium Term Exchequer Framework for Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2012-2016. As a result capital spending on housing programmes is subject to constraint over the short-term.

On 22 February 2013 I announced capital allocations to local authorities under the suite of Grants for Older People and People with a Disability amounting to €42.750 million. In allocating the available funding across all 34 city and county councils I did so in as transparent and as fair a way as possible. In framing the 2013 allocations, my Department wrote to each local authority requesting details of the numbers and value of grants where work had been approved to commence. Between them local authorities reported contractual commitments in respect of approved grants totalling €18 million. This year I allocated local authorities the full amount of their contractual commitments. The balance of the available funding was allocated on the basis of each authority's share of the new applications on hand in January 2013. Meath County Council was allocated € 487,123.

In order to deal with any acute or particular strain which might arise in the operation of the schemes over the course of the year I have set aside a small capital reserve. To date, I have approved additional allocations totalling €1.2 million for 13 local authorities. My Department is closely monitoring expenditure across all the measures under the housing programme. I will consider requests from local authorities for further funds to be allocated to the grants measure in the event of any saving arising elsewhere.

## **Professional Registration**

193. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the title of architect in Part 3 of the Building Control Act 2007; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31393/13]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** Part 3 of the Building Control Act 2007 provides for the registration of persons entitled to use the title of Architect in order to protect consumers against individuals passing themselves off as Architects. Since the commencement of the Act any person not being so registered who uses the title architect (either alone or in combination with any other words or letters, or name, title or description) may be guilty of an offence which, on summary conviction, may result in a fine not exceeding €5,000 or a term of imprisonment not exceeding 12 months or both.

To date it is understood that some 54 practically-trained architects have successfully applied for admission onto the register having passed the prescribed register admissions examination in line with Section 14(f) of the Act or undergone technical assessment in line with section 22. I recently asked Mr. Garrett 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. The terms of reference for the review specifically address the matter of how the registration of practically trained architects can be further encouraged and I look forward to any recommendations and views the review report may offer in this regard in the coming months.

### **Local Authority Housing Issues**

194. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the level of funding that has been provided to local authorities to carry out upgrading of the local authority housing stock to include OPD's and other houses in the possession of the local authority and in particular if he will indicate under the job stimulus programme the amount that has been allocated to each local authority, to enable them to carry out such improvement and upgrading; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31411/13]

**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. This year's programme includes a retrofitting measure aimed specifically at improving the energy efficiency of older apartments and houses by reducing heat loss through the fabric of the building. On 1 March 2013, I announced capital allocations of €10m to local authorities in respect of energy efficiency retrofitting works for this year. Earlier this month, I announced a new €50 million three-year energy efficiency investment programme for local authority homes. This is a key part of the Government's additional €150 million capital investment in the economy over 2013-2014 aimed at stimulating growth.

This programme will target the 25,000 least energy efficient local authority homes. This will result in warmer homes and lower energy bills for thousands of families and will also create around 1,000 jobs in the sector. I intend to announce capital allocations to local authorities very shortly in order that contracts can be commenced as soon as possible. This programme will operate nationwide and homes in all local authority areas will benefit under this measure. My Department met recently with housing practitioners from all local authorities with the objective of getting work started as quickly as possible. Some €10 million of the €50 million programme

is available for spending in 2013.

### **Personal Insolvency Practitioners**

195. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he expects the first personal insolvency practitioners to be formally operating as envisaged under the personal insolvency legislation. [31451/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** Section 161 of the Personal Insolvency Act 2012 provides that the Insolvency Service of Ireland (ISI) may make Regulations for the purposes of the authorisation, control and supervision of Personal Insolvency Practitioners (PIPs). Section 47 of the Act provides that ISI may make Regulations for the authorisation of Approved Intermediaries. The ISI published the Personal Insolvency Act 2012 (Authorisation and Supervision of Personal Insolvency Practitioners) Regulations 2013 (S.I. No. 209 of 2013) and the Personal Insolvency Act 2012 (Authorisation of Approved Intermediaries) Regulations (S.I. No. 216 of 2013) on its website, *www.isi.gov.ie*, on 25 June 2013 and is now accepting applications from qualified applicants who wish to become authorised as PIPs and Approved Intermediaries. Once applications for authorisation are made, the ISI anticipates that it will be in a position to issue authorisations within 10 working days. As soon as an individual or corporate body is authorised, their details will be available on the ISI website, *www.isi.gov.ie*.

It is expected that insolvent debtors can contact Approved Intermediaries and Personal Insolvency Practitioners and begin to receive initial advice from them in the second half of July. The ISI expects to begin receiving applications for Debt Relief Notices or Protective Certificates in the case of a Debt Settlement Arrangement or Personal Insolvency Arrangement shortly thereafter. It is likely that the number of authorised Approved Intermediaries and Personal Insolvency Practitioners will increase steadily throughout the summer and autumn.

### **Departmental Staff Numbers**

196. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff in his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31210/13]

197. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31226/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 196 and 197 together.

I assume that the Deputy is referring to the Shorter Working Year Scheme which replaced the Term Time Scheme in 2009. In this respect, staff in my Department, and in organisations and agencies under the aegis of my Department, can apply for unpaid leave in accordance with the relevant Department of Finance circular. As far as possible staff are facilitated to avail of the Shorter Working Year scheme, however, the granting of such leave is subject to the business needs of the staff member's business unit.

The information sought by the Deputy in relation to the scheme is set out in the following

table:

-	Number of staff who availed of the SWY scheme in 2012	Average duration of such leave (in weeks)	Number of staff who have applied to date for leave under the SWY scheme for 2013
Department and agencies staffed by it	154	5.00	163
Courts Service	62	4.40	58
Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission	3	4.66	2
Human Rights Commission	0	n/a	0
Irish Prisons Service (non-admin staff)	0	n/a	0
Legal Aid Board	38	4.30	37
National Disability Authority	0	n/a	0
Property Registration Authority	112	5.68	92

Information in relation to An Garda Síochána is not to hand and will be forwarded to the Deputy separately.

### Departmental Staff Training

198. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff in his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31242/13]

199. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31258/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 198 and 199 together.

I take it that the Deputy is referring to leave taken by staff who are pursuing education and development courses outside of work. In this respect, staff in my Department, and in organisations and agencies under the aegis of my Department, can apply for study leave in accordance with the relevant Department of Finance circular. As far as possible staff are facilitated to avail of study leave; however, the granting of study leave is subject to the business needs of the staff member's business unit. In all cases staff availing of study leave received full pay and benefits.

-	Number of staff who availed of study leave in 2012	Average duration of such leave (in days)	Number of staff who have applied for study leave to date in 2013
Department and agencies staffed by it	47	6.08	36
Courts Service	16	4.00	9
Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission	8	6.00	5
Human Rights Commission	1	5.00	0
Irish Prisons Service	115	5.00	40
Legal Aid Board	25	3.19	24
National Disability Authority	2	7.50	1
Property Registration Authority	20	4.98	27

Information for An Garda Síochána is not to hand and will be forwarded to the Deputy separately.

### Immigration Policy

200. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality how soon a person may return here after being ordered to voluntarily return to their native country, non-EU, due to the expiry of or non-existence of a visa; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31271/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service that one of the options open to persons faced with the prospect of having a Deportation Order issued in respect of them is that they can seek to return voluntarily to their country of origin. If they return voluntarily before a Deportation Order is made and have no outstanding criminal court proceedings in Ireland, they may apply to re-enter Ireland for the purpose of work, study, etc. with the relevant visa any time in the future. A person who is the subject of a Deportation Order is legally obliged to leave the State and thereafter remain outside the State.

Persons who agree to return voluntarily to their countries of origin can obtain financial assistance towards doing so through the International Organisation for Migration, who normally pay the return air fare of such persons and can also assist the persons concerned re-integrate in their countries of origin by advising on training and employment opportunities etc. The Department of Justice and Equality also directly assists persons who wish to return voluntarily to their countries of origin by providing administrative and other supports to persons requesting such assistance.

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.

### **Student Visas Eligibility**

201. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a non-EU person may avail of a student visa to complete second level education here; if so, the costs and criteria; if that person's parents may accompany them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31272/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** Under current immigration rules unaccompanied non-EEA children may be permitted to come to Ireland to complete second level studies provided they fulfil certain criteria. Non-EEA students seeking to complete second level education in Ireland are only permitted to enrol in a fee paying school. The placement of unaccompanied children in non fee paying schools continues to be prohibited. These rules apply equally to visa required and non visa required non-EEA nationals. Visa applications from visa required students will also be subject to the normal visa rules.

In addition to the requirement to enrol in a fee paying school there are a number of documents required in support of a visa application for visa required nationals and also at the port of entry for all students. These include: A letter from the fee paying school stating that the student fees have been paid (the amount should be stated) and that the student is enrolled as a pupil of the school; the address where the student will be staying (i.e. in the case of a boarding student that the school is providing all necessary accommodation and where the child is a day pupil living with a family, the name and address of the responsible adults with whom they are staying); notarised documentation from the parents/legal guardians of the unaccompanied child student confirming their agreement to the child coming to Ireland for study purposes and also confirming that the school/host family/education agency are the legal guardians of the unaccompanied child student during the child's stay in Ireland; copies of the parents/legal guardians passports; where the child is residing with a host family other than relatives, Garda clearance in respect of that family will be required. Documentary proof of this will be required. The granting of a visa to a person under the age of 18 years for the purpose of study does not give any entitlement to any other family member to accompany or join the student in the State.

### **Naturalisation Applications**

202. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will expedite an application for naturalisation in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry. [31273/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that a valid application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in June, 2013. The application is being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation, such as good character and lawful residence, and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

As well as being a significant event in the life of its recipient, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation as provided for in law is also a major step for the State which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by e-mail using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up to date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Residency Permits**

203. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 6; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31276/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that the person concerned is currently registered in the State under Stamp 2 student conditions valid until 30/09/2013 which is renewable directly with their local immigration officer shortly before its expiry date. An application for residency in the State under Stamp 4 conditions on the basis of family dependency of an Irish national arising from their parent's naturalisation was recently considered by INIS. This application was refused on 14 May 2013 because the person concerned failed to fully provide all the documentation requested by INIS despite having been requested on several occasions to supply the required documentation. A new application for residency in the State under Stamp 4 conditions on the basis of family dependency of an Irish national was received on 25/06/2013 and is currently under consideration.

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.

### **Proposed Legislation**

204. **Deputy Paschal Donohoe** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he expects the Gambling Control Bill to be published; the work that is being undertaken by his Department in respect of progressing the Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31295/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** My Department has prepared a General Scheme for the Gambling Control Bill. I hope to secure Government approval for the Scheme in the near future. Once it has been approved, it will then be sent to the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel, in the Office of the Attorney General, for drafting of the Bill. I am not in a position at this time to say when the Bill will be published. However, the Deputy may wish to know that it is my intention to publish the General Scheme on my Department's website once it has been approved by Government and while drafting of the Bill continues.

### **Prison Committals**

205. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will

provide, in tabular form, based on the name of the institution and the time period involved, the total number of prisoners in each of the prisons managed by the Irish Prison Service who are locked up for 23 hours per day; for 22 hours per day; and for between 18 and 22 hours per day. [31296/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I wish to advise the Deputy that it has not been possible to collate the information requested in the time available. I will forward a comprehensive response to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Garda Deployment**

206. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda districts here currently without a Garda superintendent. [31297/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I have requested the information sought by the Deputy from the Garda Commissioner and as soon as it is to hand I will pass it on to the Deputy.

### **Residency Permits**

207. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding an application to remain in the State in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31347/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** There is currently no application pending in my Department for residency in respect of the person whose details were supplied. If an application for asylum has been made by the person concerned, the Deputy will be aware that it is not the practice to comment on applications which have not fully completed this process.

### **Garda Recruitment**

208. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will begin recruiting new gardaí; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31362/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** A resumption of Garda recruitment, at a time when both overall headcount and the size of the pay bill in the public service must be reduced, would have financial implications that must be managed within the overall resources available to Government. In that context, it is important that the LRC proposals, or what is now known as the Haddington Road Agreement, on saving €1 billion from the public service pay bill, including €300 million this year are fully implemented.

Importantly, those proposals contain provisions for a review of the Garda Síochána which would start in September and would include an examination of the structure, organisation and staffing of An Garda Síochána. The outcome of such a review would be an important determining factor in any final decision on Garda staffing levels. However, and whatever the approved staffing complement might be at any time, I do believe that it is important for an organisation such as the Garda Síochána to have some regular intakes of new recruits, even if on a modest scale. In this context, I am currently engaged in discussion with my colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform regarding this issue and I expect to bring a Memorandum to

Government on the matter shortly.

### **Visa Applications**

209. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will expedite an application in respect of a person (details supplied) in view of the fact that an extension on their employment contract will be guaranteed once they receive an extension to their visa; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31365/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service that a favourable decision issued to the person mentioned by the Deputy on 7 June 2013.

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**

210. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31372/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** In February, 2012, the person concerned submitted an application for permission to remain in the State based on the principles of the Zambrano Judgment. This application was considered and refused, a decision notified by letter dated 31st July, 2012.

Given that the person concerned had no other valid basis to remain in the State, 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 June, 2013, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why a Deportation Order should not be made against him.

Given that the 15 working day period referred to in my Department's letter dated 25th June, 2013 does not expire until 17th July, 2013, it is open to the person concerned to avail of one of the options referred to by that date. In any event, no steps will be taken in the context of the case of the person concerned until that date has passed.

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.

*Questions - Written Answers*  
**Citizenship Applications**

211. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of an application for citizenship in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 24; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31373/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that a valid application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in December, 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.

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.

### **Residency Permits**

212. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of an application for residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31374/13]

**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 27th February, 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 initiated judicial review proceedings in the High Court, challenging the decision of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal in her case. Her judicial review leave application was refused by the High Court on 11th April, 2013 meaning that the earlier decisions of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal and the then Minister stood.

The person concerned has 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.

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**

213. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of an application for residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 2; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31375/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The person concerned had a Deportation Order made against her on 23rd November, 2011, following the refusal of her asylum application and the subsequent consideration of her case under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). This Order was served by registered post dated 24th November, 2011.

The person concerned lodged judicial review proceedings in the High Court, challenging the decision to make a Deportation Order against her. These proceedings were 'settled' by agreement, with the consequence that the person concerned was afforded the opportunity to submit, within a specified period, fresh representations pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). Arising from the Terms of Settlement of the judicial review proceedings, the Deportation Order was revoked on 24th January, 2013. The person concerned, through her legal representatives, has submitted fresh representations.

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.

### **Residency Permits**

214. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of application for residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31376/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** There is currently no application pending in my Department for residency in respect of the person whose details were supplied. If an application for asylum has been made by the person concerned, the Deputy will be aware that it is not the practice to comment on applications which have not fully completed this process.

### **Deportation Orders**

215. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will review the deportation order issued against a person (details supplied) in County Meath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31377/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The person concerned is a failed asylum applicant. She is not the subject of a Deportation Order.

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 19th June, 2013, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of her. She was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why 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.

Given that the 15 working day period referred to in my Department's letter dated 19th June, 2013 does not expire until 11th July, 2013, it is open to the person concerned to avail of one of the options referred to by that date. In any event, no steps will be taken in the context of the case of the person concerned until that date has passed.

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**

216. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of application for residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31378/13]

**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 8th May, 2012, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of her. She was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why 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 Pro-

tection) 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 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.

### **Residency Permits**

217. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of application for residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31379/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** There is currently no application pending in my Department for residency in respect of the person whose details were supplied. If an application for asylum has been made by the person concerned, the Deputy will be aware that it is not the practice to comment on applications which have not fully completed this process.

### **Residency Permits**

218. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of application for residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Meath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31380/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The person concerned formally applied for asylum on 15th March, 2007. In accordance with the provisions of Section 9 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended), she was entitled to remain in the State until her application for asylum was decided. Her asylum application was refused following consideration of her case by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and, on appeal, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.

The person concerned initiated judicial review proceedings in the High Court, challenging the decision of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal in her case. These proceedings were 'settled' with the consequence that her appeal was remitted to a different Member of the Tribunal for a fresh determination. This appeal was also refused and again judicial review proceedings were lodged in the High Court, challenging the second decision of the Tribunal. These proceedings were unsuccessful so the latter decision of the Tribunal, and the subsequent decision of the

Minister, stood.

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 28th September, 2011, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of her. She was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why 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 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. Any 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.

### **Residency Permits**

219. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of application for residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31381/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service that the person named by the Deputy has submitted an application for a change to his Immigration status on 21 January 2013. Applications are dealt with in chronological order and this application will be dealt with in due course.

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**

220. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of application for residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31383/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I refer the Deputy to Parliamentary Question No. 190 of Thursday, 20th June 2013. The position remains as stated.

**Reply to Parliamentary Question No. 190 of Thursday, 20th June 2013.**

*I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that a valid application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in May, 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.*

*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.*

### **Closed Circuit Television Systems**

221. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if there is any grant aid available to residents' associations or other local community groups to assist them in the procurement of mobile CCTV units, which would be suitable to aid in the detection of crime, petty or otherwise; if same could be considered as an important tool to assist the Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31412/13]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** A State supported Community CCTV Scheme was first launched in 2005, with a second round being advertised in 2007. Under the Scheme, two types of grant were available: A pre-development grant of up to €5,000 to assist local communities to develop proposals for a CCTV system and a substantive grant of up to €100,000 to assist with the capital cost of establishing a Community CCTV system. In all, 54 community schemes were awarded pre-development grants and a total of 45 schemes were awarded substantive grants.

The current position is that all available funding provided under the previous two rounds has been fully allocated and there are currently no plans to further extend the Scheme. However, the matter will continue to be kept under ongoing review in the context of overall policy considerations and the availability of funding.

### **Departmental Staff Numbers**

222. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Defence the number of staff in his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number who will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31203/13]

223. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Defence the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of term time in 2012;

the average duration of such in 2012; the number who will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31219/13]

**Minister for Defence(Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 222 and 223 together.

The Term Time scheme was superseded by the Shorter Working Year Scheme under the provisions of Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circular 14/2009. Under the terms of the Shorter Working Year Scheme, special leave is available in blocks of 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 or 13 consecutive weeks. The leave may be taken as one continuous block, or as a maximum of 3 separate blocks each consisting of not less than 2 weeks and not exceeding 13 weeks in total.

The information requested by the Deputy in respect of civil servants of my Department and civilian employees attached to military installations is set out in the following tables:

**Civil Service Staff of the Department**

Year	No. of staff applications	Average duration of Special Unpaid Leave
2012	38	5 weeks
2013	36	N/A

The only agency under the aegis of my Department is the Army Pensions Board. No Civil Service staff attached to the Army Pensions Board availed of the Shorter Working Year Scheme in 2012 or 2013.

**Civilian Employees attached to Military Installations**

Year	No. of staff applications	Average duration of Special Unpaid Leave
2012	23	4.6 weeks
2013	15	N/A

**Permanent Defence Force**

Members of the Defence Forces may be granted term time leave under Defence Forces Regulations, and this leave is not restricted to blocks of weeks but may be availed of in days. The following table sets out details of term time leave availed of by the Defence Forces in 2012 & 2013.

Year	No. of staff	Average duration of Special Unpaid Leave
2012	13	49.9 days
2013	8	N/A

**Departmental Staff Training**

224. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Defence the number of staff in his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31235/13]

225. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Defence the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31251/13]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 224 and 225 together.

The rules governing study leave and examination leave for civil servants are set out in Department of Public Expenditure & Reform Circular 23/2007: Post-Entry Education – Refund of Fees, Study Leave and Examination Leave.

The information requested by the Deputy in respect of civil servants of my Department and civilian employees attached to military installations is set out in the following tables:

#### **Civil Service Staff of the Department**

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of staff</b>	<b>Average duration of paid study leave</b>	<b>Average duration of unpaid study leave</b>
2012	12	5	0
2013	10	5.5	1

The only agency under the aegis of my Department is the Army Pensions Board. No Civil Service staff attached to the Army Pensions Board availed of study leave during this period.

#### **Civilian Employees attached to Military Installations**

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of staff</b>	<b>Average duration of paid study leave</b>	<b>Average duration of unpaid study leave</b>
2012	0	0	0
2013	1	5	0

The information relating to the Defence Forces is currently being compiled and will be provided to the Deputy as soon as possible.

#### **Defence Forces Reserve Issues**

226. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Defence the changes that are planned regarding the annual fitness test for the Reserve Defence Forces; if any changes proposed for 2014 have been brought forward; where RDF personnel are in full time employment if it is feasible to arrange the fitness test outside of normal working hours; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31264/13]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am advised by the military authorities that the Defence Forces will undertake a fitness evaluation/survey of Reserve Defence Forces (RDF) personnel in the third quarter of 2013. PE Testing Officers will complete this survey of personnel from 1 Brigade, 2 Brigade, the Defence Forces Training Centre, and the Naval Service, mainly utilising RDF training camps.

Following completion of the evaluation/survey, revised fitness programmes based on the Defence Forces Annual Fitness Test (which comprises a 3.2km Run, Push-Ups, Sit-Ups and a

10 km terrain walk) will be developed for RDF personnel. These revised programmes will be distributed to every Unit in late 2013 and will also be available through other Defence Forces information mediums for planning and preparation purposes.

The military authorities advise that for 2014 RDF personnel will be permitted to achieve a reduced grade in a fitness test. The reduced grade for 2014 testing will be based on the results of the fitness evaluation/survey conducted throughout 2013. RDF personnel will have one (1) year to train for the Defence Forces fitness tests. It is planned that in 2015 all RDF personnel will complete the Annual Fitness test as per Defence Forces Regulations. In previous years only RDF Personnel proceeding on specified military courses had to complete the fitness test. Fitness tests will take place during RDF planned training.

The individual Reservist is responsible for achieving the physical fitness standards appropriate to his/her rank on his/her own time. While time or facilities will not be made available to the Reservist for this purpose during training periods, Defence Forces leisure and sports facilities will be available to RDF Personnel during programmed recreational periods while on annual camp (at the discretion of the Reservist's Command Officer).

### **Green Paper on Defence**

227. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Defence the discussions he has had with officials in his Department and the Irish Defence Forces regarding a policy review and a detailed discussion document of Irish defence policy; if it is proposed to amend the triple lock system that is currently in place where deployment of the Irish Defence Forces requires the approval of the Government, Dáil Éireann and a UN mandate; if he will detail other discussions held with officials regarding new policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31331/13]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The White Paper on Defence, published in 2000, has provided the policy framework for Defence for the last thirteen years. In the period since its publication, there have been significant changes in the defence and security environment and the defence policy framework has continued to evolve. In this context, the Government decided that there is a requirement to prepare a new White Paper on Defence. This will provide the policy framework for Defence, in all its aspects, for the next decade.

Following Government approval, I initiated the preparation of a Green Paper on Defence. The Green Paper is intended to inform and stimulate a mature and informed debate about Ireland's defence policy. When published, it will initiate a broad public consultative process which will provide for members of the public and interest groups to input their views as part of the process of developing the new White Paper on Defence.

An interdepartmental group comprising representatives from the Departments of Defence, Taoiseach, Foreign Affairs and Trade, Justice and Equality as well as the Defence Forces and An Garda Síochána have undertaken a defence and security assessment. This is incorporated within the Green Paper. I have had broad discussions on the Green Paper with officials from my Department and the Defence Forces. In addition, the draft Green Paper was circulated to all Government Departments for their observations. All of these inputs have contributed to the final document.

The Green Paper will set out an overview of the current defence policy framework, the changes that have occurred since the publication of the White Paper on Defence (2000) and an assessment of the challenges in the defence and security environment. These issues inform a number of policy focused questions which will be set out in the Green Paper and are intended

to guide submissions.

I hope to publish the Green Paper and initiate the White Paper public consultative process in the coming weeks. It is anticipated that the new White Paper on Defence will be approved by Government and published before June 2014.

### **Humanitarian Aid**

228. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will outline Ireland's recent interaction with the World Food Programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31184/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The WFP is Ireland's main humanitarian partner. It is the world's largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide and, on average, provides food assistance to more than 90 million people in 70 countries every year. Ireland has consistently been one of the WFP's most generous donors and key partners, being the twenty-fourth highest contributor of 133 donors from 2009 to date.

Ireland's contributions to the WFP are made up of an annual core contribution from my Department which amounted to just under €10 million in 2012, and support from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, through the Irish Aid programme, for the WFP's response to specific humanitarian emergencies. In 2012, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade provided humanitarian funding in support of the WFP's activities in Chad, Syria and the Sahel region in West Africa. In addition, funding was provided to support the operation of the UN's Humanitarian Air Service, which is managed by the WFP. To date in 2013, €3.25 million in humanitarian funding for the WFP has already been approved by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. My Department's contribution of €9.96m will be paid in Q3 of this year.

Ireland was most recently a member of the Executive Board of the WFP for a one-year period in 2011. The Board provides an opportunity for UN Member States such as Ireland to oversee WFP's humanitarian and development food aid activities, with three meetings each year at WFP's headquarters in Rome. When not a Board member, my Department and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade attend in an observer capacity and contribute to the Board's work with our EU partners. Most recently during our Presidency of the EU, we guided this EU position by coordinating the views of the other Member States and the European Commission for presentation at the Board meeting.

As a sign of our commitment to the WFP, I was pleased in April of this year to co-sign with Minister Joe Costello T.D. a Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) between Ireland and the WFP. This SPA is a bilateral agreement between us as the donor country and the WFP setting out:

- Shared objectives in the area of humanitarian emergencies;
- Multi-annual financial contributions. In this regard my Department has committed to contributing minimum €7m in core funding each year from 2013 to 2015. In addition, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has committed to continue to make available funding on a case by case basis in response to humanitarian crises;
- Management, reporting and evaluation of the contributions.

In addition and unrelated to our contributions, the WFP has identified Ireland and Irish companies as potential suppliers for the products which it procures on an annual basis. My Depart-

ment and Enterprise Ireland are working to pursue these opportunities.

### Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Appeals

229. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will expedite a disadvantaged area scheme appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31186/13]

**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 holding concerned has not satisfied the Scheme minimum stocking density requirements, no payment was made in respect of the 2012 Scheme. While the person named appealed this decision, the appeal was unsuccessful. The person named has been advised accordingly, in writing, and also of the further right of appeal to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office.

### Departmental Staff Numbers

230. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of staff in his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31199/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** In response to the Deputy's question, I have detailed as follows the information requested:

Year	2012	2013 (to date)
Total Number of staff availing of shorter working year	339	304
Total Number of weeks	1688	1618
Average Duration of Shorter Working Year Scheme (Weeks)	5.0	5.322

### Departmental Agencies Staff Numbers

231. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31215/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The matter of term time within the State Bodies under the aegis of my Department is an operational matter for the bodies themselves.

### Departmental Staff Training

232. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of staff in his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31231/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** When staff in my Department attend work-related training courses, they are deemed to be on official business and consequently receive full pay. Staff who participate in the Refund of Academic Fees Scheme are also entitled to paid study leave in respect of academic courses deemed relevant to their Civil Service employment. The following table is a summary of the information the Deputy has requested in this regard. The figures for the remainder of 2013 are estimates only.

Year	No. of Staff who Availed of Study Leave	Average Duration of Study Leave	No. of Staff who Availed of Training	Average Duration of Training Leave
2012	53	5.43	1,881	2.82
2013 to date	42	5.67	1,342	1.61
Estimate for remainder of 2013	20	5.5	500	2

#### Departmental Staff Training

233. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31247/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The issue of study or training leave within the State Bodies under the aegis of my Department is an operational matter for the bodies themselves.

#### Ministerial Meetings

234. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide an update on the conclusions of the final Agriculture and Fisheries Council during the Irish EU Presidency that took place in Luxembourg; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31313/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The last Agriculture Council of the Irish Presidency focused almost entirely on achieving political agreement across the three EU Institutions on the CAP Reform negotiations. I am very pleased to say that on the basis of compromise texts put forward and negotiated by the Irish Presidency team, I succeeded in achieving an adjusted negotiating mandate from my Ministerial colleagues across all the Member States that allowed me to take forward these negotiations to the final phase. The Deputy will be aware that, on the basis of this mandate, we achieved political agreement in the CAP Reform negotiations with the European Parliament and the Commission in Brussels yesterday.

The deal represents a package of measures that will set the framework for the development of the EU agri-food sector up to 2020. In terms of the detail of the agreement, I believe this is a well balanced package and is a very good outcome for Irish farmers. In relation to our key area of concern, the distribution of direct payments, Member States will have the option to apply the partial convergence model put forward by Ireland. As part of this model, farmers will receive a minimum payment of 60% of the national or regional average payment per hectare by 2019. Member States will also have the option to set a maximum payment level and to limit the redistribution effect on individual farmers to 30% of their overall payment. This agreement will limit the level of distribution that would have occurred under the Commission's original proposals to about one third. In addition, the greening payment will be paid as a percentage of each farmer's individual payment.

Now that we know the full outcome of the negotiations, the next step in the process is to determine the best options in terms of implementation from an Irish perspective. I intend to engage in extensive consultation with all stakeholders before I make any decisions as to the shape of future Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 measures.

### **Genetically Modified Organisms**

235. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on trial planting of genetically modified potatoes by Teagasc (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31338/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Teagasc operates as a separate non-commercial semi state body under the aegis of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine with their own management structure and governing Authority. The Act establishing Teagasc confers on it principal functions in relation to the provision of education, advisory and research services to the agriculture sector. It is a matter for Teagasc to prioritise activities in the delivery of these services and to allocate its resources in accordance with these priorities. Ministerial responsibility is confined to matters of policy in accordance with the Act and I have no function with regard to the day-to-day operations of Teagasc.

Accordingly, my Department's sole responsibility with regard to the cultivation of GM crops is in relation to coexistence measures in the event that commercial GM crops are grown alongside conventional crops. With regard to the Teagasc field trials on a genetically modified potato, these trials do not constitute cultivation of a commercial crop. Responsibility for issues relating to the cultivation of genetically modified crops, including GM trials in Ireland, rests with my colleague, Mr. Phil Hogan TD, Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government.

### **Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments**

236. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding an agri-environment scheme payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31387/13]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under the Agri-Environment Options Scheme from the person named was received in my Department on 28th November 2012.

The process of ranking and selecting all AEOS applicants was clearly set out in the scheme

documentation. Acceptance into the scheme was established using the pre-determined selection criteria as follows:

1. farmers in the Boora region of Co. Offaly who chose Wild Bird Cover Option B (Grey Partridge) as one of their selected options,
2. farmers with a minimum of 0.5 hectares of designated land,
3. farm partnerships,
4. farmers who previously participated in REPS commencing with smallest farms. and
5. others based on farm size (again favouring smaller holdings).

The person named was a previous participant in REPS. Based on the funding available farmers in category 4 with 22.06 hectares of utilisable agricultural area and below were successful. As the farm size of the person named is 25.92, the application was unsuccessful. On 27th May 2013, a letter issued to the person named informing him that he was not successful and setting out the reasons. The person was also informed of right of appeal to AEOS Section. An appeal was received from the person named and it is currently being considered. The person named will be notified in writing of the outcome of this appeal once a decision has been made.

### **Youth Work Projects Funding**

237. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding supports that are available for a project (details supplied) in County Kildare, a project traditionally funded to provide two dedicated professional youth workers to support the needs of young persons who are at risk; if the group will be considered in view of forthcoming considerations in respect of the upcoming budget; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31370/13]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** In 2013, my Department will provide some €53.498m to support the provision of youth services and programmes to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities. This funding will support youth work programmes and services serving some 400,000 young people, delivered by over 1,400 youth work personnel, who in turn support a large volunteer base of some 40,000.

The Youth Affairs Unit of my Department funds the project referred to by the Deputy under the Special Projects for Youth Scheme and the allocation provided by my Department in 2013 is €89,625.

Having regard to the savings requirements identified in the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure which amount to €5.393m in 2013, and will amount to €2.976m in 2014, my Department has tried to ensure that in the determination process for the allocations the front line youth services, particularly those for the most vulnerable young people, are protected as far as is possible from the impact of any necessary reductions in funding.

There is no doubt that the current budgetary situation is challenging for many organisations. In considering how best to manage within the allocations available organisations are being asked to consider the scope for reducing administration costs and other overheads and to work closely with their local VEC that administers the funding on behalf of my Department, in order to maintain the front line services for young people particularly for those young people who

may be disadvantaged.

With respect to future funding provision, a Comprehensive Value for Money Review of youth funding has been commenced and this report is expected later this year.

My Department is developing a new youth policy framework for publication later this year. The new youth policy framework will aim to enhance the provision of youth services and activities and it will, *inter alia*, promote co-ordination between government departments and youth sector organisations with a view to maximising the effectiveness of the State funding available to support services for young people in future years.

### Child Care Reports

238. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the progress made to date on ensuring all inspection reports of child care facilities will be uploaded online and available for all parents to examine; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31198/13]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Following on the commitment I made within the last 2 weeks, the HSE Pre-School Inspectorate is working with Pobal to put inspection reports on line. In the first instance the reports will be available from the Pobal website via a direct link on the HSE website. From 1 July current reports will start to be uploaded once completed and at the same time, work is ongoing with the aim of having reports on all services online by the end of the year. My Department is supporting the HSE and Pobal in this work.

### Departmental Staff Numbers

239. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of staff in her Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number who will do so in 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31201/13]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Under the provisions of the Civil Service Circular 14/2009 – Shorter Working Year, sixteen members of staff availed of term time averaging 6 weeks in 2012. Twenty seven members of staff have applied for the shorter working year to date during 2013 averaging at 6.5 weeks.

### Departmental Agencies Staff Numbers

240. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of her Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number who will do so in 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31217/13]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** My Department does not generally hold information relating to individual employees of the various agencies operating under the Department's remit and, accordingly, the information requested by the Deputy is not readily available. Officials of my Department have requested that the specific information requested be supplied directly to you by the agencies involved.

## Departmental Staff Training

241. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of staff in her Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number who will do so in 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31233/13]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The granting of study leave in the Civil Service is governed under Circular 23/2007, which sets out the arrangements to facilitate the development of appropriate skill and expertise levels in Departments' and in supporting officers' efforts in the area of self-development and life-long learning. Consistent with Civil Service strategic management objectives, the approach of the circular is to maximise the discretion available to Departments in addressing post-entry education matters in ways that are most relevant to their own areas of responsibility and this includes provision for paid and unpaid study leave. During 2012, three people availed of paid study leave totalling 7.5 days. Due to timing of the academic year it is difficult to accurately estimate the numbers availing of paid study leave during 2013 at this stage.

My Department is committed to providing staff with training and development opportunities to ensure they have the skills necessary to deliver strategic objectives and this involves the use of a variety of training approaches, both formal and informal (e.g. coaching; on-the-job training) and formal training sessions (e.g. IT skills). This would also include attendance at conferences, information sessions etc. The nature of this training does not lend itself to easy recording of time spent on it and as it is not considered as 'leave' my Department does not centrally record all of it. As a result, the information requested by the Deputy in relation to training leave is not available.

## Departmental Agencies Staff Numbers

242. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of her Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number who will do so in 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31249/13]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** My Department does not generally hold information relating to individual employees of the various agencies operating under the Department's remit and, accordingly, the information requested by the Deputy is not readily available. Officials of my Department have requested that the specific information requested be supplied directly to you by the agencies involved.

## Inter-Country Adoptions

243. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the position in relation to the establishment of a bilateral agreement between Ireland and Russia for the purpose of inter-country adoption; if she intends to seek a date for continuation of further talks with the Russian authorities for this purpose; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [31278/13]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** In March of

this year, I travelled to Moscow, accompanied by Dr Geoffrey Shannon, Chair of the Adoption Authority of Ireland, in order to discuss at a diplomatic level issues in relation to the potential for a bilateral agreement with Russia. During my visit I met with my counter part, Minister Dmitry Livanov, Minister of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. This meeting was productive and allowed for an exchange of views on the possibility of Ireland entering into a bilateral agreement on intercountry adoption with Russia. The Russian authorities acknowledged the satisfactory outcomes for Russian children adopted in Ireland and expressed a willingness to conclude an agreement with Ireland which will be subject to the approval of the Russian parliament. I stated that many Irish families were hopeful of completing future adoptions of Russian children.

During these meetings I reiterated to the Russian authorities that the Irish Constitution protects the integrity of family life and that once adopted in Ireland the child is treated in the same way as other Irish children. This means that the ability of the State to intervene in a family, when a child's welfare and protection is not compromised, is limited. I highlighted the implications of this Constitutional imperative in instances where families, who had given commitments to the Russian authorities in regard to the provision of post placement reports, fail to adhere to those commitments. In these instances the State has no legislative power to enforce compliance with the commitments given by Irish families, legal or otherwise, to provide post placement reports.

However, in saying this, I emphasised the high standards of child protection that exist in Ireland for all children and the legislative basis under which these standards are enforced. I emphasised the commitment of the State to intervene in instances where the safety or welfare of any child, adopted or otherwise, is in anyway compromised. I outlined the total commitment of the Irish Government to the child protection and welfare.

My Department has undertaken an examination of the draft bilateral agreement on intercountry adoption proposed by the Russian Federation. In order to progress the development of a bilateral agreement the Department has focused on this issue of post placement reporting in relation to Russian children adopted in Ireland, which the Russian authorities have indicated is a necessary component of any bilateral agreement. To this end a draft wording of the sections of the bilateral agreement that relate to post placement reporting is being developed. My officials are in active discussions with officials in the Office of the Attorney General and in the Department of Foreign Affairs on advancing a draft agreement for consideration by the Russian authorities.

I have invited the Russian authorities to visit Ireland in September in order to finalise consideration of this aspect of the draft bilateral agreement.

### **Medical Card Applications**

244. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite a medical card application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry [31177/13]

**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.

The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has recently reissued to Oireachtas members.

## Hospital Services

245. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Health if a special surgical bed will be provided in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31179/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** As the Deputy's question relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

## Medical Card Applications

246. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will examine a decision to refuse a medical card following a review in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31189/13]

**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. The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has recently reissued to Oireachtas members.

## Hospital Appointment Delays

247. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking with his Department to reduce the waiting period for patients seeking a neurology appointment here which is reportedly in the region of one year at present; if he will be bringing forward an implementation plan for the National Policy and Strategy for the Provision of Neuro-Rehabilitation Services in Ireland 2011-2015 published in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31190/13]

255. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health the measures he has taken to address the long waiting lists for neurology appointments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31284/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 247 and 255 together.

The Department of Health and the Health Service Executive (HSE) have developed and published the "National Policy and Strategy for the provision of Neuro-Rehabilitation Services in Ireland 2011-2015". In addition, the HSE is developing its Rehabilitation Medicine Programme within the Clinical Strategy and Programmes Directorate. The Report is the overarching policy on neuro-rehabilitation services and includes proposals for a framework for the future of neuro-rehabilitation services in Ireland. The aim of neuro-rehabilitation is to enable the person to achieve the highest possible level of independence. Desired outcomes range from a return to full independence in social and work situations to a person requiring long-term support and care but with a higher level of independence than in the absence of neuro-rehabilitation. Current services available include acute hospital services; the National Rehabilitation Hospital; multi-disciplinary community services; long-term assisted living supports; and rehabilitative

training services. These services are provided directly by the Health Service Executive (HSE) and several non-statutory organisations.

The Rehabilitation Medicine Programme has been working in collaboration with the HSE's National Disability Unit as part of an expert Working Group planning for the implementation of the Report. The Rehabilitation Medicine Programme has incorporated key elements of the Report into its own Model of Care and adopted the Strategy's recommendation of "hub and spoke" model for specialist rehabilitation services and is keen to progress with a comprehensive model for the continuation of such service into the community. This co-operation will continue in 2013.

Improving access to outpatient services, including neurology, is a key priority for the Government. Collaborating with individual hospitals, the SDU together with the NTPF and the HSE have developed the OP waiting list minimum dataset that allows for data to be submitted to the NTPF from hospitals on a weekly basis and, for the first time, outpatient data is available on [www.ntpf.ie](http://www.ntpf.ie). For 2013, a maximum waiting time target has been set of 12 months for a first time consultant led outpatient appointment and this is reflected in the HSE Service Plan. The SDU/NTPF will work closely with hospitals towards achievement of the maximum waiting time.

### **Health Action Plan**

248. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Health if the National Asthma Programme will be included in next year's budget and the 2014 Health Service Executive Service Plan; if the first phase of asthma patients will be given a structured asthma review in 2014; if 17 clinical nurse specialist posts will be recruited to facilitate the roll out of the National Asthma Programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31194/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** The National Clinical Programme for Asthma, which commenced in 2011, is one of a number of chronic disease programmes established in the HSE's Clinical Care Directorate aimed at bringing a systematic approach to changes in how services for patients are delivered. The level of funding available for the health budget for 2014 has not yet been determined. Deliberations by the Government on the expenditure allocations for next year are likely to continue up until Budget time. The HSE is currently engaged in the estimates process. The National Clinical Programme for Asthma is included in the HSE's 2013 Operational Plan. Implementation of the Programme is ongoing and will continue in 2014. To date, different work streams of the National Clinical Programme for Asthma have resulted in the following initiative, the preparation of a Model of Care. This is currently being finalised and will be sent for stakeholder consultation after 30 June 2013. The Model of Care cannot be completed until stakeholder responses have been received and considered. The Model of Care includes a proposal to provide a standardised structured asthma review of each patient by the patient's GP at least annually. This will optimise treatment, ensure institution of inhaled corticosteroid therapy early in asthma management where appropriate, encourage medication adherence and address underlying problems with asthma care and management. This will include:

- Inhaler technique;
- Adherence to and understanding of medications;
- Self-management education including personal asthma plans and self-monitoring;
- Management of co-morbidities and triggers including allergic rhinitis; and

- Smoking cessation and/or avoidance or exposure to second hand smoke.
- The establishment of Asthma Check (Chronic Disease Watch Asthma – structured review)
- this has been submitted to the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) for review.

It is proposed that patients with asthma would be enrolled in Asthma Check on a phased basis with clearly identified target groups.

- The preparation of Acute Emergency Asthma Guidelines for Adults - this has been submitted to the National Clinical Effectiveness Committee (NCEC) for review and feedback.

- The preparation of Acute Emergency Asthma Guidelines for Paediatrics – these have been completed.

- Asthma Control in General Practice – these guidelines have been signed off by ICGP and are being implemented.

- Asthma Educational Programme – this is available online at [www.hseland.ie](http://www.hseland.ie).

- Practical workshops have been delivered locally by Clinical Nurse Specialists to nurses in Primary and Secondary Care.

- Nurses and other health professionals have been enrolled in an asthma education module. This education module is based on the National Asthma guidelines. This supports healthcare staff in the delivery of evidenced based care and education for patients. In partnership with the Asthma Society, patient information documents have been developed to support this initiative.

The HSE has commenced the appointment of 17 Clinical Nurse Specialists (one per HSE Integrated Service Area) to support the phased roll out of the Integrated Care Diabetes Programme. When the National Clinical Programme for Asthma's Model of Care has been published an assessment can be made in relation to how it will be implemented in the acute hospital and primary care system and what resources, including nursing resources, will be required.

### **Home Care Packages**

249. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding home care in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry [31196/13]

**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.

### **Departmental Staff Numbers**

250. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff in his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31208/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The information requested in respect of Term Time or Shorter Working Year leave as it has been known since 2009 is detailed as follows:

-	2012	2013
No. of staff availing of Shorter Working Year	23	21*
Average duration	6.6 weeks	6 weeks

\* Information supplied in respect of 2013 reflects applications on hand. It is still open to staff to apply to take leave under the Shorter Working Year Circular in 2013.

### Departmental Agencies Staff Numbers

251. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31224/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The information regarding the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of my Department availing of term time is being collated and will be forwarded to the Deputy when it becomes available.

### Departmental Staff Training

252. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff in his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31240/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** Officers who are approved to undertake, on their own time, a course of study on a subject related to their work are entitled to a maximum of ten days study leave in respect of the final year only of a third level primary or masters degree or five days for the other years of a third level course. The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the number of staff and duration involved for 2012/13 is detailed as follows:

Study Leave	2012	To date in 2013
The No. of Staff who availed of study leave	9	7
The average duration of study leave	4.89 days	5.79 days

The Department does not award leave for training. However, officials are provided with appropriate training courses which are relatively short-term over one to five days that are generally attended during official time. The total number of staff/duration involved in 2012/13 is as follows:

Training	2012	To date in 2013
The No of Staff who attended training courses	97	12
The average duration of the training courses	1.5 days	2.5 days

## Departmental Agencies Staff Numbers

253. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number that will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31256/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The information regarding the number of staff in organisations or agencies under the aegis of my Department who availed of study or training leave is being collated and will be forwarded to the Deputy when it becomes available.

## National Lottery Funding Applications

254. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the funding available in respect of a project (details supplied) in Dublin 17. [31263/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** My Department administers a National Lottery Discretionary Fund from which once-off grants are paid to community and voluntary organisations, providing a range of health related services. If an organisation wishes to make an application for National Lottery Funding it should send in a formal application. Detailed procedures, along with the application form are set out on the Department's website at [www.doh.ie](http://www.doh.ie). I understand that the closing date for applications for the HSE lottery fund has now passed.

*Question No. 255 answered with Question No. 247.*

## Hospital Consultants Recruitment

256. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health the measure he is taking to address the fact that we have the fewest rehabilitation consultants per capita in Europe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31285/13]

267. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health the reason persons have to wait over a year for a neurology appointment; the reason Ireland has the fewest rehabilitation consultants per capita in Europe; when the implementation plan for the neurorehabilitation strategy will be put in place; the support that is given to initiatives that can improve services for persons with multiple sclerosis and other neurological conditions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31364/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 256 and 267 together.

Neuro-rehabilitation is part of the management of most neurological and neurosurgical conditions, particularly those that cause, or have the potential to cause, ongoing disability. Neuro-rehabilitation services are presently delivered across a range of settings, from acute hospitals and specialised neurorehabilitation centres, to primary and community settings, including home. Service user neuro-rehabilitation needs range from intensive, acute treatment at tertiary level through to long-term neuro-rehabilitation at community level. Improving access to outpatient services, including neurology, is a key priority for the Government. Collaborating with individual hospitals, the Special Delivery Unit (SDU) together with the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) and the Health Service Executive (HSE), have developed the outpatient

waiting list minimum dataset that allows for data to be submitted to the NTPF from hospitals on a weekly basis and, for the first time, outpatient data are available on [www.ntpf.ie](http://www.ntpf.ie). For 2013, a maximum waiting time target has been set of 12 months for a first time, consultant-led outpatient appointment and this is reflected in the HSE Service Plan for 2013. The SDU/NTPF will work closely with hospitals towards achievement of the maximum waiting time. The Department of Health and the HSE have developed and published the “National Policy and Strategy for the provision of Neuro-Rehabilitation Services in Ireland 2011-2015”. In addition, the HSE is developing its Rehabilitation Medicine Programme within the Clinical Strategy and Programmes Directorate. The Report is the overarching policy on neuro-rehabilitation services and includes proposals for a framework for the future of neuro-rehabilitation services in Ireland, 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. The recruitment of additional consultants in rehabilitation medicine can only be considered in this context i.e. reconfiguring current services and available resources. The key priority areas, as identified in the HSE’s National Operational Plan for 2013 are to map and develop Integrated Service Area level rehabilitation networks and implement the model of care for rehabilitation services within the networks with a focus on community rehabilitation. Current provision for people requiring neuro-rehabilitation services, including those with multiple sclerosis, range from acute hospital services; the National Rehabilitation Hospital; multi-disciplinary community services; long-term assisted living supports; and rehabilitation training services. These services are provided directly by the HSE and several non-statutory organisations, including MS Ireland. The HSE provided over €2.6m to MS Ireland in 2012 towards the provision of services and supports. Neuro-rehabilitation services can be accessed through HSE local health offices.

### **Ambulance Service Provision**

257. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 1778 of 18 September 2012, if he will immediately consider reinstating the existing ambulance control centre at Kerry General Hospital even on a temporary basis as a back-up service in view of the fact that the local knowledge by staff in this control centre and the local knowledge at the community hospital bases is invaluable in the introduction of the new ambulance control centre in Dublin; if he will now accept the fact that there is no longer an input from local staff, that this is having very serious repercussions for the health and safety of the general public in County Kerry and throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31286/13]

259. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health if he will restore local ambulance control to Tralee following the recent error in directing an ambulance to the home of a young child who died. [31306/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 257 and 259 together.

A tragic event occurred in Kerry last week which was widely reported. Firstly, I wish to extend my deepest sympathies to the family of the child involved. The loss of a loved one is hard for family and friends at any time, but the sudden and unexpected death of a young child is particularly difficult. In relation to this incident, the facts are that, at 1.16 a.m. on 18 June 2013, an emergency call was received for a baby who was reported as not breathing. The National

Ambulance Service (NAS) was initially unable to obtain sufficient details of where help was needed, which led to a delay in reaching the incident. The first emergency resource arrived at the scene 30 minutes after the initial 999 call. The patient was subsequently pronounced dead. The incident has been the subject of a systems analysis, as is routine in cases where a death occurs, to ascertain whether call-taking protocols were followed. Following an examination of the facts, the HSE is satisfied that systems and processes operated correctly and there are no plans to carry out any further review. However, interrogation has been strengthened to try and mitigate the impact of a call where the incident location cannot be identified. In addition, HSE Communications has been requested to run a publicity campaign to improve public awareness of the need to communicate precisely the locations of incidents. In the interest of respecting the dignity and grief of the family, I wish to make no further comment on the specific incident.

A significant reform programme has been underway to totally reconfigure the way the HSE manages and delivers pre-hospital care services, to ensure a clinically driven, nationally co-ordinated system, supported by improved technology. The National Control Centre Reconfiguration Project, which is endorsed by HIQA and which represents international best practice, will reduce the number of ambulance control centres to a single national control system, with significant investment in new voice, data and mapping technologies. The project is also a key element of Future Health: A Strategic Framework for Health Reform in Ireland 2012-2015. Both HIQA and the NAS have had concerns over control and dispatch structures at some control centres leading up to the development of the national control system. Accordingly, the NAS moved the Cork and Tralee centres to its Townsend Street centre on an interim basis in May, to mitigate such concerns pending completion of the national centre. Detailed preparations took place to ensure the safety of services during the move of the Cork and Kerry operations. The NAS provided additional staff, training, technology and equipment to assist this process. 112/999 calls from those areas are now answered in Dublin using improved technology. The NAS is satisfied that Townsend St, while not appropriate to the needs of the overall reconfiguration project, is nevertheless suitable and infrastructurally sound for the interim accommodation of these centres.

### **Proposed Legislation**

258. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when it is expected the draft legislation in respect of the survivors of symphysiotomy will proceed to the next stage of the legislative process; when it is envisaged that this legislation will be enacted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31304/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The Private Members Bill in question has been referred to the Select Committee on Justice Defence and Equality for consideration at a date that has yet to be scheduled.

*Question No. 259 answered with Question No. 257.*

### **Medical Card Eligibility**

260. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if a medical card will be reinstated in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry. [31317/13]

**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. The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes

medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has recently reissued to Oireachtas members.

### **Health Insurance Cover**

261. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if private health insurance companies are being charged for patients using beds in public hospitals, when those patients come through the normal public access channels for example via emergency department, that is, not getting any additional service by having health insurance, and if so, if he will provide the details for situations in which this arises; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31318/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** At present, private in-patients in public hospitals are subject to maintenance charges that generally range from €586 to €1,046 per day when they are accommodated in a private designated bed. However, in an emergency admission if a private designated bed is not available and a private in-patient is accommodated in a public bed, the maintenance charge is currently not levied, although the private in-patient continues to pay the fees of his/her hospital consultant.

The Comptroller and Auditor General has reported that 45% of in-patients treated privately by their consultants were not charged for their maintenance costs because they were not occupying private-designated beds. This situation represents a significant loss of income to the public hospital system and an indirect subsidy to private insurance companies, who cover most private patients. I believe that this situation cannot continue and that the new charge makes sense. Up to now insurers have enjoyed a significant subsidy, where these private patients have only paid a standard €75 charge per day to the hospital even though they have seen and paid their consultant privately.

The gap between the cost of providing this service to private in-patients and the amount that public hospitals are currently allowed to raise from those private patients is estimated to be about €200m per year. The subsidy is equivalent to the cost of treating over 30,000 public patients every year or operating a medium size public hospital. While everyone is entitled to use a public hospital, some people chose to be treated privately, in which case they have chosen to pay the consultant and the hospital. The Government believes that users of private services should pay for the costs of providing these services even when they are provided by a public hospital.

As part of Budget 2013, the Government announced that it would raise €60m in 2013 under this heading, and €115m in a full year. This represents a modest phasing in of the charge – as called for by the insurers themselves - and is a relatively modest extra cost on an industry that pays out some €2 billion in claims costs every year.

The Health (Amendment) Bill 2013 is presently before the Dáil and provides for charges to be levied on all in-patients who are treated privately by their consultant, irrespective of where the patient is accommodated in the hospital and regardless of whether they are admitted directly or through emergency departments.

### **Data Protection**

262. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if hospitals may access insurance details for patients without the patient's permission; and if so, under what legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31322/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** Issues relating to access to personal data, including insurance details, are a matter for the Data Protection Commissioner.

The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner is established under the 1988 Data Protection Act. The Data Protection Amendment Act, 2003, updated the legislation, implementing the provisions of EU Directive 95/46. The Acts set out the general principle that individuals should be in a position to control how data relating to them are used.

The Data Protection Commissioner is responsible for upholding the rights of individuals as set out in the Acts, and enforcing the obligations upon data controllers.

The Commissioner is appointed by Government and is independent in the exercise of his or her functions. Individuals who feel their rights are being infringed can complain to the Commissioner, who will investigate the matter, and take whatever steps are necessary to resolve it.

The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner is an Independent Office under the aegis of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence.

### Parliamentary Questions Numbers

263. **Deputy Charles Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health the number of parliamentary questions written and oral transferred by his Department to the Health Service Executive for reply to Deputies in each of the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013. [31333/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** My Department receives an average of 6,000 Parliamentary Questions each year. Around 50% of these questions concern operational issues and are referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to Deputies. Many of these questions relate to individual patients and local day to day operational matters.

The number of Parliamentary Questions referred to the HSE for direct reply from 2010 to date are as follows:

2010 - 2,550 (43% of total tabled)

2011 - 2,464 (48% of total tabled)

2012 - 3,049 (53% of total tabled)

2013 (to date) - 1,772 (50% of total tabled)

The Deputy may wish to note that in the current year, while the Executive's National Service Plan includes a commitment that 75% of questions referred to it for direct response will be answered within 15 working days it is currently answering 81% within this time frame.

Since I took Office I decided that Parliamentary Questions relating to operational issues of a national scale or importance should be answered by myself or the relevant Minister of State instead of being referred to the HSE. Whenever possible these questions are answered on the relevant Dáil sitting day. Where this is not possible because the information is not readily available, a reply is issued as soon as possible thereafter. Of the 259 such questions to date in 2013, 255 (98%) have been answered in full.

There is ongoing contact between my Department and the HSE's Parliamentary Affairs Division and we will continue to monitor response times and emphasise the importance of issuing timely and comprehensive replies to Deputies.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

264. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will examine a referral to Cork University Hospital for cataract treatment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31342/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** 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, which has 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.

### **Primary Care Centres Provision**

265. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 688 of 28 May 2013, when a response will issue from the Health Service Executive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31355/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** I understand that the HSE issued a response to the Deputy on the 19th of June.

### **Departmental Appointments**

266. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Health if the post of chief dental advisor to his Department was filled recently by way of an open public competition; and if not, the reasons for same. [31357/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The Department of Health has been unable to fill the post of Chief Dental Officer on a full time basis due to the moratorium on recruitment. Accordingly, it was agreed with the HSE that the HSE National Oral Health Lead would be released to the Department for two days each week to undertake the functions of Chief Dental Officer, with effect from 20 May 2013. The arrangement will be reviewed after 3 years.

*Question No. 267 answered with Question No. 256.*

### **Medical Card Applications**

268. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if he will review the recent decision to refuse a medical card in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31371/13]

**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.

The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has recently reissued to Oireachtas members.

### **Hospital Services**

269. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if there are plans to downgrade the services available to persons using Bantry General Hospital, County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31385/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** In relation to the particular query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service issue, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

### **Health Services Issues**

270. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the State's services for sufferers of vasculitis; if his Department acknowledges potential improvements in pertinent medical research and medical resources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31407/13]

273. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Health if he will consider establishing a registry of vasculitis sufferers in this State or alternatively a North-South registry that would facilitate development of relevant non-statutory support groups and would enable sufferers to work together to establish commonly beneficial resources; if he will raise this matter at an upcoming meeting of the North-South Ministerial Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31410/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 270 and 273 together.

There is no set treatment regime for vasculitis. Treatment depends on the type of vasculitis that a person has, the organs affected and the severity or otherwise of the condition. Treatment may involve taking over the counter medication and/or prescription medication or, in certain cases, surgery. A patient's General Practitioner or Consultant is in the best position to advise on the particular treatment options in each individual case.

There are no plans to establish a national registry of sufferers or to raise this matter at the North South Ministerial Council.

### **Animal Testing**

271. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Health when Regulation 1223/2009 dated 11 March 2013 in relation to the ban on animal-tested cosmetics will be fully implemented and if the submission of the Irish anti-Vivisection Society (details supplied) will be taken into

account; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31408/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** Regulation 9 of S.I. No. 870 of 2004 which prohibits the marketing of cosmetic products and ingredients that have been tested in animals has been in force since 11 March 2009, except for a derogation relating to three toxicity checks. On 11 March 2013, this derogation ended, and no further testing on animals of cosmetics or ingredients can take place.

It has been the policy of the Department of Health not to licence the use of live animals for testing of cosmetics in Ireland and this is confirmed by the statistical information provided by the Department to the European Commission under Article 13 of Directive 86/609/EEC, as amended. Furthermore, there have been no incidences of breaches of this ban detected in ongoing European cosmetic surveillance programmes brought to the attention of the Irish Medicines Board (IMB) or my Department to date.

The relevant Regulations require the manufacturer of the product, the manufacturer's agent, the person to whose order the cosmetic product is manufactured for, or the person who first supplies the cosmetic product in the European Union, to ensure that cosmetics imported, distributed or retailed in Ireland or the EU comply with the legislation. Enforcement of the legislation is provided for in Regulation 12 of S.I. No. 870 of 2004 and the IMB is the Competent Authority responsible for ensuring that the legislation is complied with.

On 11 March 2013 the EU Commission published a Communication on the animal testing ban. This Communication concluded that the marketing ban should enter into force, be coherently implemented throughout the EU and that the research and development of alternative testing methods for toxicity of cosmetics should be prioritised as part of the EU's trade and international cooperation agenda.

All comments received will be taken into account and modifications made to the guidance document as deemed appropriate.

### **Substance Misuse**

272. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if the position of chief executive officer of the Addiction Counsellors of Ireland is funded by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31409/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The position of Chief Executive Officer of the Addiction Counsellors of Ireland is not funded by my Department.

*Question No. 273 answered with Question No. 270.*

### **Departmental Funding**

274. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the reason only €300,000 of €3 million funding that he announced in January 2013 has been spent to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31422/13]

275. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the catchment areas that will benefit from the staff recruited at the Health Service Executive therapeutic unit for children with autism at (details supplied) in Dublin 9 following his allocation of €300,000 for north Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31423/13]

276. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the reason 30% of the €1 million funds spent on autism in 2013 went to north Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31424/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 274 to 276, inclusive, together.

The HSE National Review of Autism Services: Past, Present and Way Forward Report (2012) and the Progressing Disabilities Services for Children and Young People (0-18s) Programme set out the policy context for the provision of autism services to children and young people.

The objective of the Progressing Disabilities Programme is to achieve a national, unified approach to delivering disability health services so that there is a clear pathway to the services for all children, regardless of where they live, what school they go to or the nature of their disability. This Programme aims to remedy the variations in service provision around the country. To assist in addressing some of these variations, I announced the allocation of €1m in funding for autism and early intervention services in 2012.

Beechpark is a regional, community-based HSE service which provides specialised clinical supports for children with a specific diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder up to 18 years of age, who attend designated special schools, outreach preschools and outreach classes in Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow. I approved €300,000 of this funding, which equates to five therapists posts, for Beechpark services in Dublin, north of the Liffey, based on the options contained in a report prepared by the HSE. This was to address the pressing needs of its catchment area, with a particular emphasis on reducing waiting times. The report also proposed an allocation for Beechpark in the Dublin Mid-Leinster region which was to be rolled out in year two.

Following ongoing discussions on the best way forward in relation to Beechpark Autism Services, the HSE has confirmed that the funding approved will be allocated to HSE Dublin North East in 2013 for Beechpark in order to address the waiting list for services in Dublin North East. This will provide, in the first instance, for the recruitment of the necessary five therapy staff. The catchment areas that will benefit are the Local Health Office areas of Dublin North, Dublin North Central and Dublin North West.

I also established an Independent Review Group in 2012, to look at the Beechpark model of services and how resources could be used in the best and most effective way, in light of the HSE Review of Autism Services and the re-organisation of services underway in line with the 0-18s Programme. Further funding in relation to Beechpark and other regions of the country, was put on hold, pending the outcome of this Review. I understand that this Review is expected to be concluded shortly.

The HSE has confirmed that the €300,000 is just a first step in 2013. The balance of funding for autism and early intervention services nationally will be made available. The issue of the allocation of these further resources will be required to be looked at, in light of the findings of the Independent Review.

### **Medicinal Products Expenditure**

277. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide in tabular form the total drugs bill for the State in the years 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013; if he will provide a breakdown of same by on-patent, off-patent branded and generic; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31426/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** The cost to the HSE of drugs and medicines supplied under the GMS, Drug Payment and Long Term Illness schemes was €1.53 billion in 2012 and €1.47 billion in 2011. Figures for 2013 to date are not yet available.

I have asked the HSE to provide a breakdown of this expenditure by on-patent, off-patent branded and generic to the Deputy.

### **Medicinal Products Supply**

278. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will detail the most recent Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association and Association of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers in Ireland agreements in relation to the supply of drugs to the State; the savings expected from these deals in 2013 and subsequent years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31427/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** Following intensive negotiations involving the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association (IPHA), the HSE and the Department of Health, a major new deal on the cost of drugs in the State was concluded in October last. It will deliver a number of important benefits, including:

- significant reductions for patients in the cost of drugs;
- a lowering of the drugs bill to the State;
- timely access for patients to new cutting-edge drugs for certain conditions; and
- reducing the cost base of the health system into the future.

The IPHA agreement provides that prices are referenced to the currency adjusted average price to wholesaler in the nominated EU member states in which the medicine is then available. The prices of a range of medicines were reduced on 1 November and further price reductions were implemented on 1 January 2013 in accordance with the agreement.

The gross savings arising from this deal will be in excess of €400m over 3 years. €210 million from the gross savings will make available new drugs to patients over 3 years. Thus, the deal will result in a net reduction in the HSE expenditure on drugs of about €190m.

The Department of Health and the HSE also 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, since 1 November 2012, the HSE only reimburses 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 requires a generic medicine 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.

It is estimated that the combined gross savings from the IPHA and APMI deals will be in excess of €120 million in 2013.

### **Medicinal Products Supply**

279. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update in the work undertaken by the national task force on prescribing and dispensing; the savings expected to be delivered by this approach; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31428/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** The HSE has been working with GPs over many years to encourage better quality prescribing of drugs in Ireland. In 2012, the HSE's Medicines Management Programme was established and one of its key tasks is to communicate with prescribers regarding best practice.

The Programme has identified 'preferred drugs' for prescribers when prescribing Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs) or statin medication for patients. This is the first time that the State has introduced a preferred drug initiative. PPIs are prescribed for patients with peptic ulcer disease and/or reflux and statin medication is for high cholesterol. The preferred PPI is Lansoprazole and the preferred statin is Simvastatin. The HSE is asking doctors to prescribe these preferred drugs in order to save money, both for patients who pay for their medication and to deliver savings of an estimated €15million for the taxpayer.

A further initiative underway to assist with GP prescribing is the launch of the HSE's Prescribing Guidance System (PGS). This system supports prescribers with integrated 'point of prescribing' information making it easier for GPs to make decisions in line with MMP prescribing guidance. In turn, the system also gives assurance regarding the effectiveness of prescribing guidance interventions.

It is anticipated that this prescribing guidance system will be a critical assistance to the GP community and significantly important to the wider health system.

### **Medicinal Products Prices**

280. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill 2012; if the Bill has been enacted; the impact it has had or is expected to have on prescribing practices; the cost savings expected from same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31429/13]

288. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if there are plans to introduce competitive tendering for high volume off-patent drugs; the savings such a move would deliver; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31437/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 280 and 288 together.

The Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013 was commenced on Monday, 24 June 2013. This Act provides for the introduction of a system of generic substitution and reference pricing. It also sets out statutory procedures governing the supply, reimbursement and pricing of medicines and other items to patients under the GMS and community drug schemes.

The commencement of this Act provides the Irish Medicines Board (IMB) and the HSE with a robust statutory framework for the introduction of generic substitution and reference pricing on a phased basis, with priority given to those medicines which will achieve the greatest savings for patients and the State.

Previously, when a specific brand of medicine was prescribed for a patient, a pharmacist could only supply that particular brand, even when less expensive generic versions of the same

medicine were available. The Act now permits pharmacists to substitute medicines prescribed, provided that they have been designated as safely interchangeable by the IMB.

The IMB will review an initial 20 active substances, which equates to approximately 1,500 individual medicines. It is expected that the first List of Interchangeable Medicines, containing groups of atorvastatin products, will be published in mid-August. The IMB will publish subsequent lists for other groups of medicines on an ongoing basis. From the end of the year onwards, hundreds of thousands of prescriptions will be subject to generic substitution, which will offer choice and reduced prices to patients.

The legislation provides that the HSE may set a reference price for each group of interchangeable products published on the List of Interchangeable Products. Reference pricing involves the setting of a common reimbursement price, or reference price, for a group of interchangeable medicines. It means that one reference price is set for each group or list of interchangeable medicines, and this is the price that the HSE will reimburse to pharmacies for all medicines in the group, regardless of the individual medicine's prices. The first reference price is expected to be implemented by November.

Under the latest agreement negotiated with the Association of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers of Ireland which came into effect on 1st November 2012, the price of generic medicines published on the List of Interchangeable Medicines by the IMB will be immediately reduced from not more than 50% to not more than 40% of the pre-patent expiry prices of the equivalent branded original medicines, i.e. a reduction of 20% on the current price of generic products. This price reduction will take effect in advance of the setting of a reference price.

Eligible patients using State drug schemes like the Medical Card or Drugs Payment Scheme will not face any additional costs for products priced at or below the reference price. If a patient would like to receive a particular brand that costs more than the reference price then the patient will have to pay the additional cost of that product. In cases where substitution is prohibited for clinical reasons, patients will not face any additional costs if the prescribed product costs more than the reference price.

The Act also provides that the HSE may use a competitive process to determine the relevant price of medicines reimbursed under the community drugs schemes. While there are no plans at present to introduce competitive tendering, in the case of high volume, off-patent medicines, it is expected that the HSE will set reference prices where appropriate. Reference prices will be set in accordance with the criteria set out in the legislation, in particular, securing value for money for the taxpayer.

This legislation will promote price competition, a greater use of generics and deliver lower medicine prices for the taxpayer and for patients. It is not possible, at this juncture, to provide accurate figures regarding potential savings resulting from the introduction of generic substitution and reference pricing, as these depend on various factors including prevailing prices, number of competitors, availability of substitute products, and market dynamics.

### **Home Help Service Provision**

281. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the total number of home help hours and home care packages delivered in each of the years 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013 and the cost of same; the expected total for same for the full year of 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31430/13]

**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.

### **Health Services Staff Data**

282. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the total number of general practitioners in this State at 31 May 2011, 2012 and 2013; the total State remuneration of same; if he will provide a breakdown of same by capitation and other; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31431/13]

289. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health in terms of State contribution, the lowest, highest and median pay of general practitioners here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31438/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 282 and 289 together.

The number of medical practitioners registered as trained specialists in the specialty of General Practice on the Specialist Division of the Medical Council's Register of Medical Practitioners is as follows:

- As of 31st May 2011 = 2,279;
- As of 31st May 2012 = 2,583; and
- As of 31st May 2013 = 2,766.

The HSE, principally through the Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS), makes payments to contracted General Practitioners (GPs) for services they provide under a range of agreements including the General Medical Services (GMS) Scheme, the GP Visit Card Scheme, the National Immunisation Schemes, the Health (Amendment) Act 1996, Heartwatch, the Methadone Treatment Scheme and the National Cancer Screening Service.

The PCRS publishes a Statistical Analysis of Claims and Payments for each year in respect of payments which it makes to contracted health professionals, including GPs. These are available on line at: [http://www.pcrs.ie/PCRS Publications](http://www.pcrs.ie/PCRS%20Publications).

The 2011 Report (the most recent report published) states that €469.36 million was paid to GPs in 2011 (approximately €438 million of which related to the GMS Scheme).

The 2010 Report states that €493.83 million was paid to GPs in 2010 (approximately €460 million of which related to the GMS Scheme).

It is also worth noting that the number of GMS patients has increased each year over this period to date.

In relation to the additional information requested by the Deputy, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy in this regard.

### **Nursing Staff Remuneration**

283. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a comparative analysis of the cost of employing a permanent staff nurse versus an agency staff nurse; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31432/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The information regarding the cost of employing staff nurses is a matter for the Health Service Executive (HSE). I have forwarded your query to the HSE for direct response.

### **HSE Agency Staff Data**

284. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the total number of agency staff employed by the Health Service Executive in the years 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013; if he will provide a breakdown of same by grade and cost; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31433/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The detailed information sought by the Deputy in relation to agency staff is a matter for the HSE and, accordingly, the Deputy's enquiry has been referred to the Executive for direct reply.

### **Health Services Provision**

285. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which the diagnosis related group system is employed in the health service here; if there is scope to extend this system; the expected efficiencies and savings which could be expected from same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31434/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** Diagnosis Related Group (DRG) systems classify patients into distinct groupings which are clinically similar and consume similar health resources. Irish hospitals use the AR-DRG grouping system which groups each hospital's inpatient and daycase workload into 698 DRGs. Until this point, the main use of the DRG system has been to adjust the budget allocations of acute public hospitals by up to 3% in line with the complexity of their casemix and their relative performance under the Casemix System. DRGs have also been used as a tool to assist with planning as well as monitoring and assessing performance within the acute hospital sector.

The draft Money Follows the Patient Policy Paper, which I published for consultation on 15 February last, proposes the introduction of a new model of funding for public hospital care. This involves changing from the current inefficient system of block grant budgets to a new approach where hospitals are paid for the actual level of activity they undertake. Introduction of MFTP effectively means that hospitals will be funded on the basis of the quantity and quality of the services they deliver to patients and not the size of last year's budget. The new approach will be facilitated through the introduction of a prospective case-based payment system using the existing DRG grouping system.

Encouraging hospitals to use the resources at their disposal more efficiently is one of the central objectives of the MFTP system. A recent pilot project, which implemented a MFTP model in the orthopaedic speciality, showed the positive impact that MFTP can have through productivity gains. Introduction of MFTP resulted in a two day reduction in average length of stay for relevant DRGs and a 45% increase in day of surgery admission rates, while not raising any quality concerns.

It is proposed that MFTP will be rolled-out in shadow form in 2013 ahead of full phased implementation from 2014.

## Childhood Obesity

286. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the budget allocated to tackle childhood obesity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31435/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** As this is a service matter this has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

## Hospital Consultants Contract Issues

287. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on the consultants agreement made in September 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31436/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** In September 2012, following intensive engagement between health service management and the consultant representative bodies at the Labour Relations Commission, a comprehensive set of measures was agreed. The agreement encompasses a range of flexibilities to enhance productivity and efficiency and to maximise the availability of consultants, as key clinical decision-makers. These arrangements are to be given effect as determined by service needs and resource considerations. Management across the hospital service have been instructed by the HSE to implement the agreement with effect from November 2012. I have asked the HSE to communicate with the Deputy with more detailed information.

Two items were referred to the Labour Court for a binding ruling – current rest day entitlements and the fee payable for second opinions under the Mental Health Acts. A third issue, historic rest days, was referred under the normal IR processes.

The Court recommended a 25% reduction in each consultant's entitlement to historic rest leave and that this must be used by 2020. Management are giving effect to this recommendation though the Unions do not agree with it.

In relation to rest day entitlements the Labour Court recommended that compensatory rest be given in respect of actual call-out time only rather than leave (in the form of rest days) whether there is a call-out or not. Implementation of this recommendation is under discussion between management and the medical representative organisations in order to ensure workable arrangements that will not adversely affect care.

The Court recommended that the fee payable to Consultant Psychiatrists for the provision of a Second Opinion under the Mental Health Act, 2001 be addressed as part of the review of allowances in the public service. This matter will be dealt with in accordance with paragraph 2.27 of the Haddington Road Agreement.

*Question No. 288 answered with Question No. 280.*

*Question No. 289 answered with Question No. 282.*

## HSE Expenditure

290. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if it is the case that due to a range of factors including protracted pay negotiations and increased service demand that there will be a budget overrun in health in 2013; if there will be a supplementary budget

required; the expected cost of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31439/13]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** In 2013 the health sector continues to face the dual challenge of reducing costs while at the same time improving outcomes for patients. The financial challenges to be addressed this year are significant and a total cost reduction requirement of €721m was identified in the National Service Plan approved in January.

Based on a review of financial data to date, the HSE is not flagging any new concerns or risks beyond those which were set out within the National Service Plan 2013 (NSP). These risks remain and principally include:

- Savings of €353m within the Primary Care Reimbursement Service;
- Pay and pay related savings under the Croke Park Agreement and the Haddington Road Agreement;
- Private Health Insurance Income;
- The general scale of the overall challenge within the remainder of the community and in particular hospital services.

The rebalancing of hospital budgets in 2013 has ensured that hospitals have been given budgets which are related more closely to their costs in 2012 - however as indicated in the Service Plan it has not been possible to provide for the full amount of 2012 costs. The HSE will be required to address any slippage in Cost Containment Plans and to ensure that additional measures are identified and safely implemented to bridge any projected deficits which are within HSE direct control, while engaging with my Department on a continuing basis.

### **Hospital Consultants Remuneration**

291. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the total number of hospital consultants in this State at 31 May 2011, 2012 and 2013; the total State remuneration of same; if he will provide a breakdown of same by speciality; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31440/13]

**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. I have asked the Executive to compile the data requested by the Deputy in relation to hospital consultant numbers and remuneration and to reply to him directly. Government policy is to move to a consultant provided service and in recent years consultant numbers have increased accordingly.

### **Sports Funding**

292. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps being taken to prepare an Irish team for the 2016 Olympics for the new sport of BMX cycling and has he considered grant-aiding existing facilities such as Dublin City BMX in Cherry Orchard Industrial Estate in Dublin 10 or the others at planning stage throughout the country, both North and South; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31449/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring):** The Irish Sports Council, which is funded by my Department, is the statutory body

with responsibility for the promotion, development and co-ordination of sport, including the allocation of funding for High Performance sport. I have referred the Deputy's question to the Irish Sports Council for direct reply in relation to any steps that have been taken regarding the 2016 Olympics and BMX cycling. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within 10 days.

In relation to the grant-aiding of facilities for BMX cycling, there is no record of an application to the Sports Capital Programme from Dublin City BMX. It is open to them or any sports organisation to make an application under the next round of the Sports Capital Programme. No decision has been taken on the timing of the next round of the Programme. Any such decision will of course have to be taken in the context of the likely capital provision for the subhead in future years.

### **Departmental Staff Numbers**

293. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of staff members in his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number who will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31213/13]

294. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of staff members in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of term time in 2012; the average duration of such in 2012; the number who will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31229/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 293 and 294 together.

The scheme of 'Term Time' as referred to by the Deputy, was replaced in 2009 by the Shorter Working Year Scheme. (Circular 14 of 2009 - *Shorter Working Year Scheme* superseded Circular 32 of 2006 - *Revised Term Time Scheme 2006*.) The purpose of the shorter working year scheme is to permit civil servants to balance their working arrangements with outside commitments, including the school holiday periods of their children. Staff wishing to avail of the scheme must apply each year. The granting of applications for the shorter working year is subject to the operating requirements of the Department not being adversely affected.

The number of staff in my Department who availed of the Shorter Working Year Scheme in 2012 was 22. The average duration of such leave availed of in 2012 was 5.7 weeks. The number of staff in my Department who have availed of or who applied to avail of the Shorter Working Year Scheme in 2013 to date is 14. The remuneration of the staff concerned is of course reduced pro rata to their reduced working year.

The information requested by the Deputy pertaining to the agencies under the aegis of my Department is a matter for said agencies. I have asked that they provide the Deputy with the information requested. If you do not receive a reply from the agencies or organisations within 10 working days please advise my private office.

### **Departmental Staff Training**

295. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of staff members in his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the

average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number who will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31245/13]

296. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of staff members in organisations or agencies under the aegis of his Department who availed of study or training leave in 2012; the average duration of such leave; if all staff availing of this leave received full pay and benefits during the time; the number who will do so in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31261/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 295 and 296 together.

The number of staff in my Department who availed of study leave in 2012 was 7. The average duration of such leave availed of in 2012 was 4.3 days per staff member. The number of staff in my Department who have availed of or applied to avail of study leave in 2013 to date is 6. Under Circular 23 of 2007 - *Post-Entry Education - Refund of Fees, Study Leave and Examination Leave*, all the above receive full pay and entitlement while on paid study leave.

The Department provides this support as part of its commitment towards the lifelong learning of staff and as a support to employees who wish to participate, in their own time, in relevant courses of study throughout their working careers. Priority is given to courses that management consider directly relevant to the work of the Department or to the professional development of the officer concerned.

The information requested by the Deputy pertaining to the agencies under the aegis of my Department is a matter for said agencies. I have asked that they provide the Deputy with the information requested. If you do not receive a reply from the agencies or organisations within 10 working days please advise my private office.

### **Railway Stations Upgrade**

297. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the date on which both platforms at Ennis train station, County Clare, will be fully wheelchair accessible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31282/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. Matters relating to improvements at individual railway stations are day-to-day operational issues for Iarnród Éireann in the first instance and I have no function in such matters.

Noting this I have referred the Deputy's question to the Chief Executive of Iarnród Éireann for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

### **Tourism Promotion**

298. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to promote Irish walking tourism both within and outside Ireland in 2013 and 2014. [31299/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The matter raised is an operational matter for the tourism agencies and I have referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland for direct reply. Please contact my private office if a response is not received within ten working days.

### **Taxi Regulations**

299. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of persons who have downloaded the taxi driver check app since it was launched earlier this year. [31300/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly):** The National Transport Authority (NTA) has responsibility for the regulation of the taxi industry under the provisions of the Public Transport Regulation Act, 2009 and is also the lead agency for implementation of the recommendations of the Taxi Regulation Review Report 2011, including Action 32 of the Review Report concerning the Smartphone App for driver verification.

I have forwarded your Question to the NTA for direct reply. If you do not receive a response within ten working days please notify my private Office.

### **State Airports**

300. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the most recent safety consultation at Dublin Airport took place and if he will provide a brief report on the matter. [31301/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The issue raised by the Deputy, the regulation of safety standards at airports, is a matter for the Irish Aviation Authority, an Agency under the remit of my Department. I have referred the Deputy's question to it for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

### **Railway Stations Upgrade**

301. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will request the chief executive officer of Iarnród Éireann to re-open the passenger lift at Raheny DART station. [31302/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The issue raised is a matter for Iarnród Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

### **Sport and Recreational Development**

302. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the recent allocation of €1 million in funding for boxing clubs will be an annual fund; the

scheme under which this funding was made available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31308/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring):** There was a special allocation of €1.25m made to the IABA in 2011 to allow local boxing clubs throughout the country to improve their facilities with special emphasis on clubs developing facilities for female boxers. The maximum grant amount per boxing club was €25,000. This initiative was funded by my Department and administered by the IABA.

I recently announced an additional provision of €1m for the extension of the above scheme. This will not be an annual fund.

### **National Car Test**

303. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will consider directing the national car test to allow the changeover of vehicles to take place, in particular in relation to farm vehicles (details supplied) in the test centre in Carndonagh; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31310/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The subject matter of this question is the responsibility of the Road Safety Authority and I have referred the question to them for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my Office if a reply has not been received within ten days.

### **Aviation Issues**

304. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will outline the health and safety procedures and plans that will be put in place during FlightFest on 15 September 2013, taking place in the skies over the city of Dublin that his Department, the Irish Aviation Authority, Dublin City Council and The Gathering are co-hosting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31352/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** My department does not have any role in the issue raised by the Deputy, namely aviation safety procedures. This is a matter for the Irish Aviation Authority, an Agency under the remit of my Department. I have referred the Deputy's question to them for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

### **Road Safety Issues**

305. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if urgent attention will be given to addressing safety concerns at a location (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31353/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for the NRA in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

### **National Cycle Network**

306. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the National Roads Authority will reconsider a matter pertaining to County Kerry in the national cycle network scoping study (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31354/13]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly):** Firstly, I should explain that it is a matter for the relevant local authority to progress any proposals related to the development of cycle infrastructure, whether along disused railway lines or the existing road infrastructure. My Department is fully supportive of the such infrastructure and is currently administering a multi annual funding programme related to the development of the National Cycle Network (NCN) to cover the period 2012 to 2016. Significant investment has already been made in 2012 and 2013 with €7 million allocated to 16 projects across Ireland. As this phase of the programme will expire at the end of 2013, it is intended to initiate a new funding call later this year to provide, through competitive process, a further tranche of funding for the remainder of the years to 2016. As already stated, it is a matter for the relevant local authority to progress and submit proposals to the Department in the first instance, if funding is required.

In addition to the NCN funding programme, a seed financing scheme was also established this year to give start-up financial assistance to local authorities to help with the development of initial proposals for noteworthy cycle projects, that is those projects with potential to yield a high return on investment from an economic, tourism and recreational perspective.

As part of this Scheme, the Department has allocated funding of €50,000 to Kerry County Council to help progress proposals for a 26 km cycle way along the abandoned railway line between Glenbeigh to Renard, Cahersiveen, which is a section of the Ring of Kerry Trail. Proposals to develop any further cycle infrastructure in Co. Kerry is a matter for Kerry County Council in the first instance.

### **Ferry Operations**

307. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he expects to see the development and expansion of sea-ferry transport from this country to various UK or continental destinations in the future with particular reference to meeting increased demand and requirements and market development in the sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31394/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Ireland offers a diverse range of maritime links to and from the State to facilitate trade and tourism providing vital income streams to the Irish economy. Over 90% of Ireland's trade moves by sea and there are currently 22 shipping operators providing a mixture of daily to weekly scheduled shipping services from Ireland. This includes 4 companies providing year round scheduled passenger services between Ireland and the UK and France. Activity in the sector has recently

proved positive. Irish shipping and port activity in terms of trade rose by 2% in the first quarter of 2013 when compared to the corresponding period of 2012 according to the latest figures produced by the Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO). While this is positive it is to an extent the result of the poor weather conditions and the resulting requirement of the agricultural sector to import feedstuffs.

My Department through its agency the IMDO works closely with all existing operators and continues to promote Ireland as a location for new services. Fáilte Ireland is also involved in active promotion and marketing of sea access routes to Ireland in its role of promoting Ireland as a high quality and competitive tourist destination. However, it must be remembered that all shipping companies servicing routes to and from Ireland are commercial companies. Any new initiatives to enhance services must be market driven, as it is not government policy to fund international shipping services as this would be contrary to EU State Aid and Competition Law.

### **Tourism Industry Issues**

308. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which costs for the tourism sector in this country continue to be compared with those applicable in other jurisdictions throughout Europe and worldwide, the extent to which he sees opportunities for development of the Irish tourism sector by addressing such issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31395/13]

309. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he continues to have discussions on a regular basis with the various stakeholders in the tourism sector with particular reference to the need to identify problems or opportunities for the industry in advance with a view to enhanced development in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31396/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 308 and 309 together.

I am in regular contact with the stakeholders in the tourism sector and kept advised of issues of concern to the industry. The Government has introduced several measures under the Jobs Initiative to reduce costs and enhance competitiveness, such as reducing VAT to 9% on a range of tourism services and halving employers' PRSI for those on modest wages. The Finance Act 2013 contains further measures to assist the industry including:

- The diesel fuel rebate for hauliers, bus and coach operators;
- Extending the Employment and Investment Incentive Scheme to encourage investment in tourism accommodation; and
- Smaller tourism businesses will benefit from the higher VAT threshold of €1.25 million.

The Action Plan for Jobs 2013 also sets out the key policy actions to assist the tourism's continued contribution to economic recovery.

The Deputy may also be interested to note that the perception of value for money amongst overseas tourists have improved dramatically since 2009. In 2009 there was an overall negative rating of -11% (i.e. when negative ratings were subtracted from positive) and in 2012 this had improved to +24%.

## Job Creation Issues

310. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he continues to engage with stakeholders in the industries under his aegis with a view to maximisation of job creation opportunities and consequent reduction in unemployment levels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31397/13]

311. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he continues to be in a position to maximise job creation prospects through the medium of road, rail and air transport with particular reference to the need for competitiveness; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31399/13]

316. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he continues to have discussions with his EU colleagues with a view to ensuring that transport costs in this jurisdiction are competitive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31404/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 310, 311 and 316 together.

I refer the Deputy to Dáil Priority Question No. 4 of 15th May 2013 and to Dáil Question Nos. 58, 331, 324 and 332 of 27 March 2013. My position on the issues raised by the Deputy remain unchanged.

## Roads Maintenance

312. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent to which he continues to have discussions with the various local authorities with a view to identifying the priorities in respect of funding for local or minor roads other than those for which the National Roads Authority has responsibilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31400/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of each local authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from local authorities own resources supplemented by State road grants paid by my Department.

My Department is providing over €400 million under the Regional and Local Roads Investment Programme this year. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded from these State grants continues to be a matter for the local authority. My objective is allow as much flexibility to local authorities as possible while ensuring that clear outputs are achieved for the State funding provided.

## State Airports

313. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the various Government supports for each of the airports throughout the country will be reviewed collectively with a view to an endeavour to retain a reasonable quality of service throughout; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31401/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** As I indicated in my response to a similar PQ on 15 May last, my Department's Statement of Strategy sets out the overall policy in relation to aviation, including our airports, in terms of facilitating the optimum structure to ensure a strong network of airports to support Ireland's economic and social goals in a safe, competitive, cost effective and sustainable manner with maximum connectivity for Ireland with the rest of the world. Dublin, Cork and Shannon Airports are managed by the Dublin Airport Authority and the Shannon Airport Authority which operate under clear commercial mandates, are entirely funded from their own internal resources and receive no Government funding supports.

In line with the recommendations of the Value for Money Review on the Regional Airports Programme published in 2011, funding under the Regional Airports Programme 2011-2014 is being consolidated on the four regional airports of Donegal, Knock, Kerry and Waterford since the start of 2012.

I believe that this policy ensures the provision of the necessary transport access, with the appropriate level of quality of service, to underpin Ireland's economic recovery.

A consultation paper on the development of a new civil aviation policy was published on my Department's website on 1 March this year inviting submissions from stakeholders and interested parties by 30 June 2013. In response to requests from a number of stakeholders, the deadline for receipt of submissions has been extended to Friday, 12 July 2013. Following consideration of submissions, a draft National Aviation Policy Statement will be issued in the second half of 2013, with a view to a final policy document being published in 2014. I would encourage all stakeholders, including the airports, to take this opportunity to give their views so that they can form an important input into this process.

### **Air Services Provision**

314. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his preferred options for the future development of Ireland as an international hub for air transport; the extent to which he expects the various airlines to participate in such a project with resultant economic benefit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31402/13]

315. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his preferred options for the future development of the airline passenger industry with particular reference to the role he sees for the major carriers in the coming three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31403/13]

317. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his preferred options in regard to the future development of the air transport passenger sector with particular references to the respective roles of Aer Lingus and Ryanair and any possible merger; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [31405/13]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 314, 315 and 317 together.

These questions relate to the future development of the aviation sector. As an island, air transport connectivity is clearly of vital importance to Ireland for both economic and social reasons. There is a healthy competitive market for air services in and out of the country and we benefit from a wide range of air connections, both short and long haul. New routes are being announced on a regular basis by both Irish and international airlines. Maintaining and developing this connectivity is certainly a key objective of national aviation policy. The airports and

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Tourism Ireland have attractive incentive and marketing programmes available to help support new services.

A public consultation is currently underway on the formulation of a comprehensive aviation policy framework. An issues paper was published on 1 March this year inviting submissions from stakeholders and interested parties. The deadline for submissions has recently been extended to 12 July in response to a number of requests. I anticipate that all the major airlines and airports will have substantial contributions to make to the consultation process. They each have a role to play in maximising options and opportunities for the development of the aviation sector. I look forward to receiving their submissions along with the views of all interested parties. Following receipt of submissions, a draft National Aviation Policy Statement will be issued in the second half of 2013. This will provide further opportunity for stakeholder input before the adoption of the new policy document in early 2014. The new policy will outline the actions to be taken by Government to help sustain and develop the aviation sector, in order to create jobs and support business and tourism.

*Question No. 316 answered with Question No. 310.*

*Question No. 317 answered with Question No. 314.*