

Written Answers.

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

Questions Nos. 1 to 8, inclusive, answered orally.

Job Creation

9. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the impact on job creation and entrepreneurship of the mandatory PRSI increase on the self-employed recently advocated by the advisory group on tax and social welfare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42718/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Terms of Reference of the Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare provide for the group to “examine and report on issues involved in providing social insurance cover for self-employed persons in order to establish whether or not such cover is technically feasible and financially sustainable”.

The Group did not undertake an analysis of the wider social costs and benefits such as impact on job creation and entrepreneurship. The Report is a valuable contribution to the consideration of social protection for persons who are self-employed. It estimates that cover for Jobseekers Benefit would require a 1% increase in the self-employed contribution to be cost neutral, and cover for Invalidity Pension would require a 1.5% increase in contribution. It also showed that among those self-employed who do apply for the means-tested Jobseekers Assistance, the approval rate is high at 85% though it recognised that it is difficult to quantify the extent to which needs are being addressed. It pointed to a number of features of the system that may make it more difficult for self-employed persons to access entitlements in this area, ranging from lack of awareness to individual features of the means test. The Group also recommended compulsory cover for Invalidity Pension but was not persuaded of the extension of Jobseekers Benefit.

In the present climate, Government must be careful of any measures that increase the costs of establishing and operating a business.

On the positive side, entrepreneurs would be provided with an additional ‘safety net’. However, it is relevant that the responses received to the public consultation undertaken by the Advisory Group did not identify a lack of entitlement to the Invalidity Pension as a concern. The Group’s proposals for simplification of the methodology for assessing means for the self-employed are welcome.

However, in accordance with the Groups Terms of Reference, the group did not undertake a cost-benefit analysis regarding the economic merits of extending social insurance cover to the self-employed, and these require further consideration.

Joint Labour Committees Agreements

10. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will confirm that orders signed by him regarding joint labour committees will fully reflect and give force to the recommendations of the Labour Court. [42600/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): On 1st October last, I published the Report of the Labour Court's Review of the Joint Labour Committee (JLC) system. The Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2012 provides that reviews of each JLC be carried out by the Labour Court, as soon as practicable after the commencement of the Act, and at least once every 5 years thereafter. The review assisted the Labour Court's deliberations as to whether any JLC should be abolished, maintained in its current form, amalgamated with another JLC or its establishment order amended and the Labour Court is required to make recommendations to me to this effect.

I have accepted the recommendations contained in the Report. When I published the Report I indicated my intention to abolish the Dublin Hotels, and the Law Clerks' JLCs, to narrow the scope of the Agricultural, Hairdressing, Retail Grocery, Hotels (outside Dublin), Contract Cleaning and Security JLCs, while amending the administration of the two Catering JLCs pending their amalgamation following amended legislation. In the latter context, I also stated my intention to look at applying the Hairdressing JLC country-wide once the necessary legislation is passed.

In publishing the Report and outlining the legal steps necessary for implementation of the Labour Court's recommendations, I have been particularly mindful of issues arising as a result of the recent Supreme Court ruling in relation to Registered Employment Agreements (the *McGowan* case).

With the exception of the Agriculture JLC, implementation of the recommendations regarding the scope of the other nine JLCs will be given effect by way of Ministerial Order. As the Agricultural Workers JLC was established under primary legislation (the Industrial Relations Act 1976), an amendment to the Establishment Order requires amending primary legislation. I anticipate that the Establishment Orders necessary to give effect to the recommendations regarding the other nine JLCs will be made over the coming weeks.

At the conclusion of this process there will be eight JLCs remaining - and this will drop to seven when the legislation required to implement the recommendation relating to the Catering JLCs is enacted - leaving slightly over half the number that operated at the beginning of the reform process which I pursued on coming to Office. This latest development sits squarely within the context of the change required to improve Ireland's competitiveness by enhancing wage flexibility while also ensuring protection for vulnerable workers.

IDA Job Numbers

11. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of posts that were expected to be created in 2012 for which €2.8 million of employment grants were returned to the Industrial Development Agency. [42587/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): When approving financial assistance for a company, IDA Ireland enters into a legal and binding contract with the company involved. The contract, which is confidential between IDA Ireland and the company, includes conditions and milestones with which the company is required to comply

before any financial assistance is paid. All IDA clients enter into formal Grant Agreements in full knowledge that the penalty for non-performance is a pro-rata repayment of grants.

Employment Grants for approved job creation projects are only paid following investment incurred by IDA approved clients and the creation of actual jobs. Where a shortfall in job numbers arises, IDA will review the case and seek recovery of grant where appropriate.

IDA monitors job creation in individual client companies on an on-going basis. In addition the Annual Employment Survey, which is carried out by Forfás, is utilised by IDA as a further tool of verification of job numbers in IDA sponsored companies. In addition, at the time of a grant claim, IDA also seeks formal verification of job numbers, prior to payment of the grant.

I am informed by IDA that during 2012 the Agency received employment grant refunds totalling €2.8m from 8 client companies. Approximately 30% of the amount refunded related to company closures with the loss of approximately 220 jobs in total. The balance of funds recouped related to existing IDA Ireland client companies who are still operating in Ireland, but who did not fully comply with all the terms of the grant agreements. This could be, for example, because a particular product or service that formed part of the business case for the grant has ceased production/provision for market reasons.

IDA Ireland continues to work closely with these companies in order to win new forms of business and to encourage them to transform their operations in Ireland to ensure that they remain viable, competitive and embedded in the economy.

Economic Growth Initiatives

12. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the actions he will take following the recent report on employment in the south east region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42709/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The report of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation on the South East Economic Development Strategy (SEEDS), launched on 16th September, is a helpful contribution to identifying possible interventions to assist the South East region economically.

It represents a comprehensive detailed assessment of a wide range of factors that can contribute to the overall economic development of the South East region. Currently my Department is considering the contents of this report, and assessing the merits and practicality of its recommendations. Some of the suggested actions relate to matters which come within the remit of other Government Departments or bodies and some of the recommendations could have significant financial implications, which would be a challenge in the current financial climate.

This report builds on the comprehensive Forfás South East Action Plan which I commissioned at the time of the *Talk Talk* closure. Work is on-going on the implementation of those Action Plan recommendations, with agencies and stakeholders working together to maximise benefits for the region. I have also established a South East Forum of the key stakeholders within the region. Hopefully this new report will complement and reinforce the objectives of the current Action Plan.

All the key State players have been actively pursuing initiatives to facilitate development and job creation in the region, and I look forward to continued co-operation and collaboration with real benefits for the South East.

I will be asking the South East forum to let me have their considered views on the Joint Committee report. I will, in due course, also be happy to discuss its findings with the committee, in the context of our ongoing constructive dialogue.

Credit Guarantee Scheme Operations

13. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on the operation to date of the credit guarantee scheme; the number of jobs it has supported; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42711/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Credit Guarantee Scheme (CGS) began operations on 24th October 2012. By its nature the Scheme is demand driven. As at 4th October there were 69 live CGS facilities resulting in €9.7m being sanctioned through the Scheme by the participating lenders resulting in 433 new jobs being created and 139 jobs maintained. There are 3 banks participating: Bank of Ireland, AIB and Ulster Bank. Such an initiative has never been implemented in Ireland before, despite many calls for such a scheme to be introduced.

The key challenge in relation to this Scheme is to ensure that in the first instance the banks, and in particular, the relevant local level bank officials are aware that there is support for SMEs, who because of a lack of collateral (Pillar 1) and/or because of an inadequacy of understanding of the novelty of a business model, market, sector or technology, face difficulties in accessing traditional bank credit (Pillar 2). It is crucial that these bank officials see the Credit Guarantee Scheme as a key tool they have access to in order to facilitate lending to SMEs. Therefore, the banks need to integrate the Scheme into their credit function and to up-skill credit underwriters in relation to the Scheme. Any application for credit that is declined because of Pillar 1 and/or 2 should then be considered by the bank for inclusion under the Scheme. I have been assured by the banks of their support for the operation of the Scheme and that it is being promoted appropriately within the bank structures.

The second main challenge is around raising awareness amongst SMEs and their advisers. Awareness amongst these groups should increase the number of enquiries to banks for the Scheme, and this increase in demand should feed into the number of Credit Guarantee Facilities provided.

Given these challenges and because take-up continued to be slow, the Scheme was recently independently reviewed with a view to identifying the reasons for this and recommending changes to the Scheme design. The Review included detailed consultations with all key stakeholders. A Steering Group, chaired by my Department, is currently assessing the expert Review and will shortly report back to me outlining what action needs to be taken to amend the Scheme. I intend to publish the Review once this assessment is complete.

I will then take whatever action is necessary to maximise the take-up of the Scheme. This may include amending the Credit Guarantee Act 2012, making a new Credit Guarantee Scheme and re-launching the Scheme with a marketing campaign and communications strategy supported by all interested parties.

I recognise that there is a greater challenge around SMEs' awareness of and understanding of the full suite of Government financial supports. The Government is working through the SME State Bodies Group, chaired by the Department of Finance, to develop a Communications Strategy in relation to all supports, financial and advisory, to business through the use of on-line and other resources and a Credit and Lending Newsletter for SMEs. This work is ongoing.

Enterprise Support Schemes

14. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the actions he will take to deal with the emigration of highly skilled persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42733/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The focus of our Action Plan for Jobs is to promote job growth in the enterprise sectors. This is the most effective way to deal with the emigration and in particular the emigration of those with high skills. As the Deputy knows, data from the CSO has confirmed that the Enterprise sector has created 39,000 additional jobs in the past twelve months. The break down by nationality estimates that over 90% of these jobs went to Irish nationals.

One of the policy issues which we are focussing upon is the skills mismatch between job opportunities arising and the skills of persons entering the labour market.

The level of net emigration in the past few years has been 33/34,000. Within this number there has been a significant rise in the number of Irish nationals leaving. There are currently no statistics available on the skills profile of recent Irish emigrants. The impact of migration on the labour market and available skills depends on a range of factors including, for example, the age at which people migrate, whether they are of working age and their occupational skillset.

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, which reports to both myself and the Minister for Education and Skills, plays a key role in advising on future enterprise skills needs and emerging gaps. The work of the expert group informs the selection of new targeted programmes designed to provide interventions to tackle the skills shortages in particular sectors of the economy, e.g. Springboard, Momentum and the ICT skills conversion initiative, which was introduced as part of the ICT Action Plan. In 2013, there will be continued targeted investment in over 430,000 part-time and full-time places across the further and higher education and training sectors, all of which are open to unemployed people including young people and the long-term unemployed. This investment includes the provision of the Skillnets Training Networks Programme, which is enterprise-led by nature, where the development of training is led by representatives of industry to ensure that training provision meets the identified needs of the network stakeholders and companies.

The aim of the *Action Plan for Jobs* is to support the creation of 100,000 net new jobs by 2016, while the objective of *Pathways to Work* is to provide those who are unemployed with the appropriate training and skills to avail of the job opportunities which will arise as the economy recovers.

Even with continued job losses in more traditional sectors such as Construction, and Financial, Insurance and Administrative activities, we have seen an increase in employment in sectors targeted by the Action Plan for Jobs, for example Tourism Agri-food, ICT and Digital Gaming. These developments demonstrate the transformation which is taking place in the economy which had become too dependent on the Construction sector and domestic demand to support economic growth.

By continuing the process of transforming our economy step by step through the *Action Plan for Jobs*, we aim to provide opportunities for those who wish to continue to live and work in Ireland.

Job Creation Data

15. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of jobs created as a result of the increase in exports since the Government came to office. [42594/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Driving export growth is central to our economic recovery and is a key focus of the Government's Action Plan for Jobs. Enterprise Agency supported companies account for more than 80% of Ireland's total exports.

CSO figures show that our strong export performance is continuing. Total exports in 2012 by companies based in Ireland amounted to €182.155bn – an increase of 5.48% over the figure of €172.696bn for 2011.

In 2012, Enterprise Ireland had a record year for exports by their client companies of €16.2bn, which were up by €1bn, or 6%.

IDA supported companies also saw an increase in exports to €122bn in 2011, (the latest figures available) which were up by 8%, from €110bn in 2010.

2012, was also a particularly good year for job creation in companies supported by these Agencies, with IDA client companies creating a total of 12,722 gross new jobs. Clients of Enterprise Ireland created 12,861 gross new jobs. In total, agency assisted companies accounted for direct employment of 285,000 in 2011 and 294,000 in 2012, and are indirectly responsible for a similar number of jobs in ancillary and support services.

The latest Central Statistics Office release shows that employment increased by 33,800 in the year to Quarter 2 2013, net of a reduction of 5,400 in public sector numbers. This was the third consecutive Quarter where an increase in employment was recorded.

We have now moved from a situation where the private sector was losing over 7,000 jobs per month before this Government came to office, to the present situation where it is creating close to 3,000 jobs per month.

I am determined, through the implementation of the Government's annual Action Plan for Jobs process, to continue the transition to a sustainable economy, through growing our exports, and creating the jobs we need.

Central to the Action Plan is ensuring greater access for Irish companies to real opportunities to break into new markets, grow their exports and create much needed jobs for this economy.

I am currently preparing the 2014 Action Plan on behalf of the Government and we will continue, through that process, to build on the success of the actions we have taken over the last two years.

Underemployment Data

16. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the steps he has taken to tackle the issue of underemployment including supporting and promoting full time employment. [42588/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) provides estimates of the number of people who are working on a part-time basis involuntarily, which is also known as part-time underemployment.

Under the Eurostat definition applied in the Quarterly National Household Survey an underemployed part-time worker is a person aged 15-74 working part-time who would like to work additional hours and is available to do so. Part-time work is recorded as self-reported by individuals.

The estimated number of part-time underemployed persons in the second quarter of 2013 was 149,400. This represents a decrease over the past year, and is down 7,300 or -4.6% on the position in the second quarter of 2012. This is the first annual decline in part-time underemployment recorded since the third quarter of 2010. Part-time underemployment represented 33.0% of total part-time employment in Q2 2013, down from 34.3% in Q2 of 2012.

Opportunities to access full-time jobs and up-skilling and further career development are essential to overcome involuntary part-time work and to provide individuals with the necessary means to maintain their employability and make transitions work.

Employment is now increasing across many sectors and occupations, both in full-time and in part-time employments. The latest information from the Quarterly National Household Survey shows an annual increase in employment of 1.8% or 33,800 in the year to the second quarter of 2013, bringing total employment to 1,869,900. The QNHS data shows that the increase in total employment of 33,800 in the year to Q2 2013 was represented by an increase in full-time employment of 21,600 (+1.5%) and an increase in part-time employment of 12,100 (+2.8%).

It will be through transitioning the economy onto a competitive and sustainable path that greater employment opportunities will be created for those that are currently underemployed. The policies to address underemployment align with wider employment strategy. Assisting companies to win new markets, to innovate and grow are essential to overcome underemployment. The Action Plan for Jobs concentrates on implementing changes to help promote entrepreneurship, improve access to finance, the capacity of our companies and educational institutions to innovate and build new sectors of opportunity.

Job Initiatives

17. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on whether the PRSI measures introduced as part of the 2011 jobs initiative have assisted in job creation; the impact he expects from the planned ending of these measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42721/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Government's Jobs Initiative of May 2011 was aimed at restoring confidence in the economy, providing opportunities for re-skilling those who had lost their jobs, and assisting people in getting back to work.

Key measures in the Jobs Initiative included halving the rate of Employer's PRSI on earnings up to €356 per week, a reduction in the lower rate of VAT on certain goods and services, targeted Capital spending on labour-intensive projects, and the introduction of the national Internship scheme, JobBridge.

The reduction in the Employer's PRSI rate was introduced on a temporary basis, to the end of 2013. Any decisions concerning PRSI measures for 2014 will be a matter for the Minister for Finance in the context of next week's Budget.

The Government's primary strategy to support job creation since the Jobs Initiative has been the Action Plan for Jobs. The Action Plan has introduced a wide range of additional measures

to support job creation in 2012 and 2013. For example, arising from a commitment in the 2013 Action Plan for Jobs, the Government launched JobsPlus last July. This is a new incentive that offers employers a grant of €7,500 for recruiting a jobseeker between 12 and 24 months unemployed, and €10,000 for recruiting a jobseeker over two years unemployed.

The latest CSO employment figures show that there were 33,800 more people in employment in Quarter 2 of this year than there were in the same period last year. Unemployment fell by 22,200 in the same period. We have now moved from a situation where the private sector was losing over 7,000 jobs per month before this Government came to office, to the present situation where it is creating close to 3,000 jobs per month.

The Government will continue to build on this progress through the Action Plan for Jobs in 2014, as we transform the economy from one based on unsustainable debt to one based on enterprise, innovation and exports.

IDA Job Numbers

18. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of new posts supported by the Industrial Development Agency that were to be realised in 2013; and the number of such posts that are in place to date. [42586/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Forfás Annual Employment Survey reports on job gains and losses in companies that are supported by the enterprise development agencies and figures for the number of jobs created in IDA Ireland client companies in 2013 will not be available until the end of the year. There is usually a time lag of between three to five years between an announcement of an investment and the jobs coming on stream, though this is not always the case. During 2012 there were 88 investments announcements by IDA Ireland client companies, with the potential to create in the region of 8,000 jobs. It should be noted that not all jobs announced in a given year actually materialise in that calendar year for a variety of reasons, including delays with projects. Even so, the number of new jobs created in IDA Ireland client companies in any one year usually exceeds the number of jobs announced because existing IDA client companies often add to their workforce. The Forfás Annual Employment survey shows that a total of 12,722 new jobs were created in IDA client companies during 2012. In the first 6 months of 2013, 70 investment projects, with the potential to create in the region of 7,000 jobs have been announced by IDA Ireland client companies.

Among the companies who announced job creation plans in the first half of 2013 were Ebay, EMC, McAfee, Pfizer, Sanofi, Symantec, Zurich, Huawei, Yahoo, Facebook, Vistakon, GuideWire, Squarespace, Groupon, Qualcomm, Novartis, Nypro, AOL and FireEye.

Non-Resident Companies

19. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of persons employed in the Industrial Development Agency supported Irish registered non-resident companies and the value of those companies to the economy. [42591/13]

32. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of the Industrial Development Agency supported companies that are Irish registered non-resident companies. [42590/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 19 and 32 together.

I understand from my colleague the Minister for Finance that he has been advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the number of companies that are incorporated here but non-resident for tax purposes is not available as they are not separately compiled.

Job Creation Targets

20. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if the target for the Action Plan for Jobs of 100,000 additional net posts is a figure for full time equivalent posts or includes an increase in part time employment. [42580/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): In the Action Plan for Jobs, the Government has set a target of having 100,000 more people at work by 2016. Obviously, the more of these jobs that can be filled on a full-time basis, the better it is for those in the labour force. It is important to remember, however, that part-time work is an important choice for some people due to their personal circumstances, and many people benefit from this type of flexible working arrangement.

The latest employment figures published by the CSO show that employment in the economy increased by 33,800 year-on-year to the end of Quarter 2 2013, net of a reduction of 5,400 in public sector employment. The figures also indicate that the number of people in full-time employment increased by 21,600 over the year. Part-time employment increased by 12,100. This was in sharp contrast to the previous Quarter, when full-time employment fell by 3,700 year-on-year and part-time employment increased by 24,200.

While it is too early to draw definitive conclusions from these figures, they suggest that, as signs of economic recovery take hold, businesses are showing a greater willingness to offer full-time jobs.

One of the key initiatives under the Action Plan this year has been the introduction of the JobsPlus scheme, which provides financial support to employers who provide full-time employment to people who have been on the Live Register for 12 months or longer. Details of this initiative, which is administered by the Department of Social Protection, are available at www.welfare.ie.

Action Plan for Jobs

21. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the impact of the loss of graduates to emigration on the Action Plan For Jobs. [42578/13]

44. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on whether the lack of employment and career development is a key determinate of emigration; and the steps he will take to tackle the issues. [42579/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 21 and 44 together.

I recognise that there has been an increase in emigration, particularly amongst young people, since the start of the recession. However, CSO data also indicates that significant numbers of Irish migrants have been returning to the country since 2008. For example, 20,600 Irish people

returned to Ireland in the year up to April 2012, and a further 15,700 returned up to April 2013. Many of them are coming home having gained skills and expertise abroad that we can now capture to strengthen the operation and management of companies based here. Some have also set up their own businesses and therefore help to support the objectives of the Action Plan for Jobs.

Lack of employment opportunities during the recession has, no doubt, contributed to emigration in recent years. However, even during the so-called “Celtic Tiger” years, Irish people chose to emigrate for career or personal reasons.

A recent survey by UCC showed that 47% of Irish emigrants had full time jobs when they emigrated, while just under 40% wanted to travel and experience other cultures. Others will have moved within their company to postings in other countries as part of a career development or global mobility plan. Many of these emigrants will gain important skills and insights from working overseas, but may well return to Ireland in the future.

We are also more engaged with those who have emigrated, through the Global Irish Network. The Government has put in place a mechanism, through the Global Irish Network, to take advantage of the knowledge and expertise of the diaspora, as well as using their personal networks to communicate to others the recovery that is happening in our economy.

The diaspora are also active in attracting new companies to Ireland. Last week, along with the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste, I announced that four companies are establishing new operations in Cork and Dublin under the “Succeed in Ireland” scheme which harnesses the power of the Irish Diaspora to attract foreign companies that are expanding internationally. The companies involved in last week’s announcement will create a total of 83 new jobs in the economy. “Succeed in Ireland”, which is an Action Plan for Jobs initiative, is a practical example of how Irish emigrants are supporting our objective of generating more employment for all who wish to live and work in Ireland.

Job Creation Data

22. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the total number of net new jobs created in each of the past 12 months to date in both the manufacturing and services sectors; the extent to which it is expected to capitalise further in this regard in the coming year, sector by sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42703/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The most up to date figures available for job creation in the manufacturing and services sector are included in the Forfás Employment Survey 2012. There is no data available on a month to month basis for each of these sectors.

In relation to the Manufacturing sector, the total number of jobs lost in 2012 was 7,987; the number of jobs gained in 2012 was 10,704. Therefore the total net new full-time jobs created in manufacturing for 2012 is 2,717.

The *Action Plan for Jobs 2012* included a series of actions to address the Manufacturing Sector, in order to exploit the advances in manufacturing technology, and to build and maintain a strong base of manufacturing activity. This developed as a result of the challenges facing the sector and of the imperative of supporting the employment levels in that sector. It is our ambition to create an additional 20,000 jobs by 2016.

It is important to retain focus on sustaining what we have, currently there are now 205,700 people directly employed in manufacturing (both full-time and part-time), and a similar num-

ber of people employed indirectly: the total supported within the sector is therefore just over 400,000.

The Services sector accounts for two thirds of total employment within Ireland. While the majority of service firms are not supported by the State, in respect of agency supported companies, the total number of jobs lost in 2012 was 6,950; the number of jobs gained in 2012 was 13,229. Therefore the total net new full-time jobs created in the agency supported service industry for 2012 is 6,279.

The *2013 Action Plan for Jobs* outlines a range of sectoral initiatives to facilitate new and established companies grow in the Services sector with particular focus on International Financial Services, Business Process Outsourcing/Shared Services, Education Services, Retail and Wholesale, Tourism, Construction Services and ICT Services.

By concentrating on where our competitive advantages lie, in both manufacturing and services, and building on last year's *Action Plan for Jobs* and the new Jobs plan to be announced in the near future, I am confident that further growth in employment will be achieved.

Economic Competitiveness

23. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the implications for competitiveness of Irish business of continually rising energy costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42730/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Energy costs in Ireland are influenced by various drivers, including global gas and oil prices, exchange rate fluctuations, the small size of the Irish market, geographical location and low population density.

The most important factor affecting energy prices in Ireland is the continuing upward trend in international gas prices. In Europe, wholesale gas prices have been on an upward curve since 2009. This is driven by events in the Middle East, North Africa, Japan and by the significant growth in demand from China and India. This feeds directly through to retail electricity prices, as most of Ireland's electricity is produced at gas-fired stations.

The trend of increasing gas prices in European wholesale markets underlines the need to maintain the focus on continuing to address controllable costs factors, to increase the penetration of indigenous renewables into the Irish energy system and to take action on improving energy efficiency in businesses. There are supports available to companies from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, Environmental Protection Agency and Enterprise Ireland to help enterprises improve their resource efficiency, including energy efficiency.

As part of the Action Plan for Jobs 2012, Forfás undertook a study to identify changes in the operation of sectoral regulators that would enhance cost competitiveness. The sectors examined in the report are energy, telecommunications, transport, waste and water. The report, which was published in April, also assesses Ireland's cost performance in these sectors relative to our key competitor countries and the drivers of costs, in particular those that are within and outside our control in each of the sectors studied.

The study finds that in many cases, policy actions have a more significant impact on cost competitiveness than regulatory changes. The report suggests that there are a number of areas where changes to the operation of sectoral regulators could have a real and positive impact on cost competitiveness. These changes relate to the focus of regulatory mandates, the level and

adequacy of resources, enforcement powers and sanctions available to the regulators, and the efficiency of the appeal process.

On foot of the Forfás report, the Government published a new Policy Statement on Sectoral Economic Regulation on 22 July last. Included in this Policy Statement is a commitment that the forthcoming White Paper on Energy will include a regulatory mandate review, with a view to introducing legislation in 2015 for mandate reviews and hierarchy of objectives. The introduction of a hierarchy of objectives across all regulators will allow for the inclusion of competitiveness objectives, as well as taking account of both business and household consumer issues and competition objectives.

Retail Sector Issues

24. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the progress that has been made by the interdepartmental group on the retail sector since the second quarter of the year; the initiatives it has recommended based on the submissions received; the initiatives he is taking; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42719/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The 2013 Action Plan for Jobs contains a number of measures aimed at supporting the retail sector. These include an initiative to increase the number of small businesses trading on-line and a project to streamline business licence application procedures for the retail sector. In addition, the Action Plan includes a commitment to establish an Interdepartmental Group to consider further possible measures which can be taken in 2013 or 2014 to support job creation/retention in the sector.

The Interdepartmental Group held its first meeting on 21 May and subsequently held a number of meetings with the main bodies representing the retail sector and other stakeholders, including practitioners, business representative bodies, workers representatives and the INOU. Suggestions received from this consultation process cover the following broad areas:

- Business Costs/Administration
- Planning Issues
- Skills/Training for the sector
- Social Welfare System
- Access to Finance
- Government Administration
- Hidden Economy
- Taxation

The Interdepartmental Group is currently finalising its assessment of the various proposals received and will submit a report to me shortly, outlining its conclusions. Specific actions arising from this process will be included in the 2014 Action Plan for Jobs, which I am currently preparing on behalf of the Government.

Joint Labour Committees Agreements

25. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his plans to deal with the court ruling on joint labour committees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42732/13]

41. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the way he will ensure that the employers will fully engage with the JLC process and the reaching of agreements that deliver a living wage for low-paid workers. [42601/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 25 and 41 together.

On 2 October last, I published the Report of the Labour Court's Review of the Joint Labour Committee (JLC) system. The Report owes its genesis to Section 41A of Industrial Relations Act 1946 (inserted by Section 11 of the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2012) which provides that reviews of each JLC be carried out by the Labour Court, as soon as practicable after the commencement of the Act, and at least once every 5 years thereafter. The review assisted the Labour Court's deliberations as to whether any JLC should be abolished, maintained in its current form, amalgamated with another JLC or its establishment order amended and the Labour Court is required to make recommendations to me to this effect.

I have accepted the recommendations contained in the Report.

In publishing the Report and outlining the legal steps necessary for implementation of the Labour Court's recommendations, I have been particularly mindful of issues arising as a result of the recent Supreme Court ruling in relation to Registered Employment Agreements (the *McGowan* case).

With the exception of the Agriculture JLC, implementation of the recommendations regarding the scope of the other nine JLCs will be given effect by way of Ministerial Order. As the Agricultural Workers JLC was established under primary legislation (the Industrial Relations Act 1976), an amendment to the Establishment Order requires amending primary legislation. I anticipate that the Establishment Orders necessary to give effect to the recommendations regarding the other nine JLCs will be made over the coming weeks.

At the conclusion of this process there will be eight JLCs remaining - and this will drop to seven when the legislation required to implement the recommendation relating to the Catering JLCs is enacted - leaving slightly over half the number that operated at the beginning of the reform process which I pursued on coming to Office. This latest development sits squarely within the context of the change required to improve Ireland's competitiveness by enhancing wage flexibility while also ensuring protection for vulnerable workers.

The Industrial Relations Acts provide the legislative framework within which JLCs are established and function, including provisions in relation to the formulation and confirmation of Employment Regulation Orders. While I would urge all parties to engage constructively in the reformed JLC system, in accordance with the voluntarist nature of our industrial relations system in Ireland, I have no powers to compel employers or trade union representatives to participate on any committee or to compel either side to reach agreement.

Employment Appeals Tribunal

26. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 118 of 26 September 2013, the number of EAT awards which have been enforced through the civil courts by the enforcement services unit of the Na-

tional Employment Rights Authority on behalf of employees; the nature and timeframe of the root and branch reform he has initiated to establish a workplace relations service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42573/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The statistics below relate to the enforcement of the decisions of both Employment Appeals Tribunal (EAT) determinations and Labour Court rulings. The enforcement statistics are recorded by the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) as one complete group rather than being allocated individually between the two bodies.

Table 1 summarises the number of cases in respect of which requests to institute civil enforcement proceedings were made to the Minister in the course of 2011, 2012 and for the period to 30 September 2013.

Table 1

Cases	2011	2012	End-Sept 2013
Cases on hand:start of year	54	89	105
New Cases Received	79	75	51
Cases Closed	44	59	55
Cases on hand:end of year	89	105	101

Table 2 summarises the amounts involved in civil enforcement requests which were made to the Minister for the years 2011 to 30 September 2013.

Year	Arrears Paid to employees as a result of Civil Enforcement by NERA
2011	€88,361
2012	€105,212
End-Sept 2013	€34,146

A “fit for purpose” workplace relations system must be supported by proportionate, effective and efficient compliance and enforcement measures. It is my view that the current system of enforcement of employment rights awards is cumbersome, expensive and, accordingly, not “fit for purpose”. For this reason, I am proposing to make provision in the Workplace Relations Bill for a range of enhanced compliance measures, including the use of Compliance Notices, Fixed Charge Notices and a new mechanism for enforcing awards of the WRC Adjudicators and Labour Court Determinations. I am confident that the introduction of these measures will provide for more proportionate, efficient and effective enforcement of employment law.

The Government is committed to reform of the State’s Workplace Relations Services. The system that developed over the last sixty years had become unwieldy and complex; it lacked consistency, involved long delays and in some cases proved expensive for users. I propose to establish a two-tier Workplace Relations structure. That will involve two statutorily independent bodies replacing the current five. We will have a new single body of first instance to be called the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) and a separate appeals body, which will effectively be an expanded Labour Court.

The WRC will replace the Labour Relations Commission, the National Employment Rights Authority, the Equality Tribunal and undertake the first instance functions of the EAT and the Labour Court. The Labour Court will take on the appellate functions of the EAT. These four bodies, including the EAT, will then be dis-established following the transfer of their functions

to the WRC.

Significant progress has been made to date and I am happy to report that a number of priority actions have been successfully delivered within the target timescale. These include;

- a new single contact portal called “Workplace Relations Customer Services” has replaced the five separate entry points resulting in complaints being acknowledged and employers notified of complaints in a much speedier fashion,

- a Single Complaint Form that deals with over 100 first instance complaints has replaced the 30 forms previously in use,

- an Early Resolution Service is now seeking to resolve disputes at an early stage without the need for adjudication,

- responsibility for the Equality Tribunal (but not including the policy functions of the Minister for Justice and Equality concerning equality) was transferred from the Minister for Justice and Equality to me with effect from 1 January, 2013, and

- the final workplace relations website, which replaces the interim website and the websites of the existing five workplace relation bodies, was launched on 30 September, 2013. A new determinations database and e-complaint facility were also launched on 30 September, 2013.

While considerable progress has been achieved to date on an administrative basis, completing the proposed reform requires the enactment of detailed legislation. In this regard, significant amount of work has been completed on the preparation of the Workplace Relations Bill to provide the statutory basis for the new structures and processes envisaged.

Enactment of the Bill will necessitate amendments to 22 primary Acts, 12 specified parts or sections of Acts and 71 statutory instruments. The Scheme of the Workplace Relations Bill has been approved for priority drafting by the Cabinet and was included on the ‘A’ list for the Government’s Autumn Legislative Programme 2013. Engagement is on-going with the Attorney General’s Office and I am committed to the publications and enactment of the legislation at an early stage with a view to having the proposed new structures in place during 2014.

In the meantime, I intend to continue to progress the reform and bring about further enhancements of the services offered, on an administrative basis in the coming months.

Crafts Council of Ireland

27. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the funding provided from his Department to the Crafts Council of Ireland; the reason the Crafts Council of Ireland is under the aegis of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation; his views on whether his Department should have more engagement with the Crafts Council of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38465/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Crafts Council of Ireland is the national design and economic development organisation for the crafts industry in Ireland with the objective of fostering the sector’s growth and commercial strength, communicating its unique identity and stimulating quality design, innovation and competitiveness.

Since 1976, the State, through my Department, has provided funding to the Crafts Council. The Council’s annual Exchequer allocation is approved by my Department and disbursed

through Enterprise Ireland. Funding for 2013 amounts to €2.9 million.

The Crafts Council engages directly with my Department and also through Enterprise Ireland in regard to funding, strategy, business plans and its other corporate governance matters. I appoint four Members to the Council's Board of Directors including the Chair and a representative from Enterprise Ireland. This ensures an appropriate level of engagement with the Crafts Council.

In order to meet its objectives to grow the sector and develop its commercial strength, I believe that it is appropriate that the Council works closely with my Department and Enterprise Ireland whose remit includes indigenous company development, export growth and job creation.

Employment Rights Issues

28. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on so-called zero hours contracts where employees are not guaranteed any regular minimum number of hours of employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42725/13]

30. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will ban the imposition of zero hour contracts on workers. [42593/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 28 and 30 together.

Section 18 of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 contains a protection for employees who are employed on zero hour contracts. The zero hour protection applies to all employees whose contract operates to require them to be available whether they work on a casual basis or not.

This feature of the legislation covers situations where, for example, an employee is sent home if things are quiet or is requested to be available for work and is not, on the day, asked to work. Where an employee suffers a loss by not working hours he/she was requested to work or be available to work, the zero hours provisions of the Act ensure that he/she is compensated for 25% of the time which he/she is required to be available or 15 hours whichever is the lesser. The level of compensation may be impacted if the employee got some work. An expectation of work does not, however, entitle an employee to compensation.

The zero hours provision does not apply to lay-offs, short-time, emergency or exceptional circumstances, employee illness, employee on-call or where the employee is paid wages for making him/herself available for work.

Section 17 of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 sets out the requirements regarding notification to the employee of the times at which he/she will be required to work during the week. Generally, an employee is entitled to 24 hours' notice of his/her roster for the week, although section 17(4) allows for changes as a result of unforeseen circumstances.

Section 19 of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 sets out an employee's entitlement to paid annual leave equal to 4 working weeks in a leave year in which he or she works at least 1,365 hours (unless it is a leave year in which he or she changes employment) or one-third of a working week for each month in the leave year in which he or she works at least 117 hours or 8 per cent of the hours he or she works in a leave year (but subject to a maximum of 4 working weeks).

Zero hour contracts are covered by contract law. A zero hour contract must be entered into freely between the employer and the employee - it cannot be forced upon an employee. Zero hour contracts are, normally found in sectors such as retail, healthcare and hospitality. I am very conscious that in certain circumstances, they may be of great benefit to both employers and employees. They allow greater flexibility for both, reducing the employer's pay costs, while workers can decide when and if they want to work. Such contracts may be preferred by employees who require flexibility to facilitate educational or other personal requirements and banning such contracts could do a disservice to these workers. However this is an area I will keep under review.

The Deputy may have noted that recent recommendation of the Labour Court concerning home helps employed by the Health Service Executive (HSE). This recommendation has been accepted by both sides as a binding recommendation of the Court. The HSE is proceeding to give effect to the recommendation, which will result in the region of 10,000 home helps receiving annualised hours contracts from the HSE.

Part-Time Job Incentive Scheme

29. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on the fact that part-time employment is accounting for a very significant proportion of new jobs being created in the economy; the way firms can be encouraged to take on more full time employees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42723/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Employment is now increasing across many sectors and occupations, both in full-time and in part-time employments. The latest information from the Quarterly National Household Survey shows an annual increase in employment of 1.8% or 33,800 in the year to the second quarter of 2013, bringing total employment to 1,869,900. This compares with a decrease of 1.3% in the year to Q2 2012. The QNHS data shows that the increase in total employment of 33,800 in the year to Q2 2013 was represented by an increase in full-time employment of 21,600 (+1.5%) and an increase in part-time employment of 12,100 (+2.8%).

The signs of recovery in employment - and especially in the creation of more full-time jobs - are supported by the job creation figures of IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland for their client companies in 2012. Ireland's enterprise development agency client companies cumulatively created nearly 9,000 net jobs in 2012. Total permanent full-time employment in agency-assisted companies operating in all sectors amounted to 294,785 in 2012, a net increase of 8,975 jobs (+3.1 per cent) on employment levels in 2011 and continues the trend of positive growth in employment following three consecutive years of employment losses between 2007 and 2010.

Total full-time employment among Irish-owned companies amounted to 144,964 in 2012, an increase of 3,228 jobs (+2.3 per cent) on the previous year. Among foreign-owned companies, total full-time employment amounted to 149,821 in 2012, an increase of 5,747 (+4 per cent) on the previous year. Foreign-owned part-time employment also increased, by almost 600 jobs (+3.4 per cent) in 2012, whilst Irish-owned part-time employment levels increased marginally.

The data from the enterprise agencies confirm that the vast majority of the additional jobs in grant-assisted companies were full-time jobs. We are seeing a pattern as we come out of the recession where initially the first signs of recovery were reflected in an increase exclusively in part time employment. Although job losses continue to be experienced in declining sectors such as construction, the positive results from the enterprise development agencies in 2012 underscores the merits of the Government's focus on innovation and export-driven sectors under

the Action Plan for Jobs to create employment.

In 2012, the total net full time jobs created in CEB assisted companies was 256 while the total net part time jobs created in CEB assisted companies was 769.

The Government incentives which we are putting in place are very much geared towards creating full-time employment rather than part-time employment. JobsPlus is a new employer incentive which encourages and rewards employers who recruit jobseekers on the Live Register to fill full-time positions. The Action Plan for Jobs identifies a number of key targeted sectors in the Manufacturing and Services areas with the potential to create significant sustainable employment. The Action Plan identifies the challenges facing each sector and sets out the measures required to ensure these sectors achieve their potential. Ensuring that all of the measures in the 2013 Action Plan - and in the Action Plans for subsequent years - are implemented will provide the best means of ensuring that employment opportunities are maximised in each sector.

Question No. 30 answered with Question No. 28.

Job Creation

31. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will indicate based on the experience of the past two and a half years, the extent to which he expects innovation and technology to play a significant part in the maintenance of existing jobs and the creation of new job opportunities in future years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42704/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Sean Sherlock): Innovation and technology are key aspects of employment across most sectors. My Department and its agencies are focused on the development and support of internationally trading manufacturing and services firms in Ireland, and have a clear and steady focus on the potential and opportunities that exist and can be created by prioritising innovation and technology as a key driver of success. Enterprise development agencies, Enterprise Ireland (EI), IDA Ireland and Science Foundation Ireland, provide a spectrum of innovation and science/technology development programmes that deliver financial, technical and experiential support to help companies become more innovative, encourage and support competitiveness, and help them grow their sales and exports in order to create a climate in which sustainable employment will grow and expand.

The importance of innovation to Ireland has been well recognised by the Government as being crucial to growth in both our indigenous and FDI sectors. It was most encouraging to see that the European Commission's Innovation Union Scoreboard, published in spring 2013, shows Ireland retaining its position among those EU Member States with above average performance in their research and innovation systems. Moreover, the European Commission 'Indicator of Innovation Output', announced in September 2013, shows Ireland, along with Sweden, Germany and Luxembourg as EU Member States getting the most out of innovation.

IBM's Global Location Trends Report of 2012 places Ireland:

- 1st in the world for inward investment by quality and value.
- 1st in Europe for jobs created in Research and Development.
- 1st in Europe for investment in the pharmaceutical sector.

- 2nd in Europe and 4th globally for the number of investment jobs per capita.

In addition, improvements have taken place in Ireland's cost competitiveness, reflected in the fact that, in 2013, Ireland's international competitiveness ranking improved 3 places from 20th in 2011, to 17th in the IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook for 2013, published past May. Ireland is 6th out of the 25 EU countries featured.

These indicators correspond well with the stated ambition of our Taoiseach to make Ireland the best small country in the world in which to do business by 2016.

The Government's strategy has been to put in place a range of initiatives with the overarching aim of accelerating both the economic and societal return on our public investment in Science, Technology and Innovation. In this way, implementation of Research Prioritisation, underway since March 2012, will see the majority of public research funding aligned with 14 priority areas where we are most likely to get economic and societal returns, particularly in the form of jobs. Another key initiative is the adoption of an Intellectual Property Protocol, which outlines a clear, robust and industry friendly policy for the commercialisation of IP arising from state funded research. As result of this, the central Technology Transfer Office ('cTTO') is currently being established. The aim of the cTTO is to encourage the commercialisation of IP arising from State funded research, with a view to achieving more job creation from our investment in this area. Furthermore, the remit of Science Foundation Ireland has been expanded to cover applied research, aligned with the 14 priority areas to further support the development of research findings into commercial opportunities, further enhancing our job creation potential.

Question No. 32 answered with Question No. 19.

Job Creation Data

33. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of jobs that were promoted by the Industrial Development Agency that require foreign language skills to a fluent or native speaker level. [42583/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Forfás Annual Employment survey, which reports on job gains and losses in the enterprise development agencies does not track the language skills requirements of employees in individual companies nor their level of fluency in a foreign language.

Research undertaken by the Expert Group on Future Skills has identified foreign language skills as a key skill requirement for enterprise, trade and export performance, which includes the foreign owned multinational sector.

In some cases the requirement is for native language speakers, due to the nature of the job/function. In other cases, employees with high, but non-native, language proficiency are what is needed, particularly where other highly sought after skills are also required, such as engineering, ICT etc.

IDA Ireland client companies primarily use Ireland as a base to service the European and Asian markets. Ireland's availability of a skilled labour force is one of the primary reasons cited by IDA Ireland client companies for establishing their operations in Ireland.

Job Creation Data

34. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of jobs that were promoted by the Industrial Development Agency which have been recruited from outside the State. [42582/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Forfás Annual Employment Survey reports on job gains and losses in companies that are supported by the industrial development agencies. The Survey does not track the data sought by the Deputy. However, it should be noted that there is free movement of labour within the European Economic Area (EEA) and persons recruited from outside the EEA must comply with Employment Permit Legislation.

Labour Market Issues

35. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the steps he has taken to tackle the increased casualisation of the labour market. [42589/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Labour market flexibility needs to be complemented by support to workers enabling them to make smooth transitions between different types of labour market status (e.g. activation measures for the unemployed, training for employment, work experience options, transitions towards self-employment, etc.). The quality of transitions will determine the quality of a worker's career and the smooth functioning of the labour market.

Ireland has a comprehensive body of employment rights legislation which has among its objectives the protection of employees and the quality of transitions between different contractual arrangements. Specific areas covered by employment protection legislation include:

- Protection of part-time work
- Protection of fixed-term work
- Protection of temporary work
- Protection of persons engaged by temporary work agencies.
- Working time;
- Payment of Wages;
- Holidays;
- National Minimum Wage;
- Unfair Dismissal;
- Redundancy Payments;
- Protection of Young Persons;
- Transfer of Undertakings.

In general, Irish legislation mirrors the broader EU social protection framework in this area.

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) Live Register Data indicates that in the year to September 2013 the number of casual and part-time workers decreased by 2,795 (3.28%). There was an estimated 82,985 casual and part-time workers on the Live Register in September 2013. This

compares with 85,090 casual and part-time workers on the Live Register one year earlier.

Opportunities for up-skilling and further career development are essential to advance the inclusive growth objective and can provide individuals who are in part-time work with poor career prospects with the necessary means to maintain their employability and make progress in their career options.

Job Creation Targets

36. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the progress in implementing the Forfás report *Making it in Ireland: Manufacturing 2020*; the number of objectives to be delivered by quarter 3 of 2013; the progress on delivering on these goals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42577/13]

46. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the target number of additional jobs to be created in the manufacturing sector over the life time of this Oireachtas; and the number of additional manufacturing jobs created since the Government came to office. [42595/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 36 and 46 together.

The *Action Plan for Jobs 2012* included a series of actions to address the Manufacturing Sector, in order to exploit the advances in manufacturing technology, and to build and maintain a strong base of manufacturing activity. This developed as a result of the challenges facing the sector and of the imperative of supporting the employment levels in that sector.

These actions derive from the Forfás Strategy for the Manufacturing sector in Ireland, entitled; *Making it in Ireland: Manufacturing 2020*. While employment levels have fallen, in common with every other industrialised country in Europe, we still have 205,000 directly employed in manufacturing here and, when account is taken of indirect employment, that means about 400,000 depend on manufacturing for a livelihood. This impressive statistic highlighted the need for action. A comprehensive set of actions to develop the sector was therefore set out in this Strategy, with the key items incorporated into the *Action Plan for Jobs 2013*.

Hence the initiation by me of two research projects - Forfás "*Making it happen Manufacturing 2020*" and "*The Future Skills Needs of the Manufacturing Sector to 2020*" published by the Expert Group on Future Skills. Both of these reports complement each other and will assist Government in reaching the target of creating an additional 20,000 jobs in manufacturing by 2016.

Forfás produce an Annual Employment Survey which includes yearly figures for jobs created in the manufacturing sector in Agency supported companies. These are not available on a monthly basis. According to the survey, in 2011 there was a total net increase of jobs of 4,439 and in 2012 the increase of new jobs was 2,717.

The number of objectives to be delivered under the Strategy by Quarter 3 of 2013 is 13 in total. There were eight up to Quarter 2 all of which have been implemented. The outcome for Quarter 3 is currently being collated and I am confident that the 5 Manufacturing Actions for this Quarter, some of which are the responsibility of other bodies, will also be on target. Several other Actions which are on-going in nature, and not time bound to a specific quarter, are also very satisfactorily in hand.

My Department continues to be committed to the delivery of all the Manufacturing Actions in this report.

Enterprise Support Services Provision

37. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide an update on steps taken to enhance the engagement of the local manufacturing sector with island-wide networks. [42584/13]

42. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the steps taken to develop an island-wide employment and growth strategy. [42585/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 37 and 42 together.

The key mechanism for the development of cross-border business and enterprise activity is through the operation of *InterTradeIreland*, the North/South Trade and Business Development Implementation Body, which is co-funded by my Department and D'ETI. *InterTradeIreland* operates a wide range of innovative programmes designed to develop linkages and cooperation between SMEs in various sectors and to build on relevant strengths to the benefit of both jurisdictions.

InterTradeIreland provides all-island programmes on Technology Transfer, Collaborative Research & Development, All Island Innovation and Equity Finance. It operates Business Networks for the Software and Polymer & Plastics sectors and Business Angel Networks. In addition, ITI hold linkage events, for example last month's 'Polymer Connections - A Bridging Borders Event' aimed at organisations in the polymer business or those who use polymers in the manufacture of their end-product, with the aim of finding collaborative business or research partners. This particular event also had a particular focus on the development of clusters in the sector.

In this way, I believe that *InterTradeIreland*, with its all-island trade and business development remit, is well placed to continue to develop networks on the island in key industrial sectors.

The *Action Plan for Jobs* represents the Government's response to methodically reconfigure our economy so that long-term sustainable jobs are created and we can move to a new economic model and build a sustainable future.

The Manufacturing Sector is one of the sectors embraced by the *Action Plan for Jobs* and a series of actions to address Manufacturing in order to build and maintain a strong base of manufacturing activity have been included in the Plan for both 2012 and 2013. This developed as a result of the challenges facing the sector and of the imperative of supporting employment levels.

Following my establishment of the *Manufacturing Development Forum* in June 2012, the Forum was fully engaged and contributed a range of ideas and suggested priorities to research I commissioned from Forfás. This has resulted in a very comprehensive analysis, with a new Manufacturing Strategy finalised by Forfás and published earlier this year.

The *Action Plan for Jobs* process has been shared with relevant parties in Northern Ireland. In addition, I am glad to say that there is positive on-going engagement between my Department's enterprise agencies and their Northern Ireland counterparts. Both sets of agencies are

aware of each other's offerings and they collaborate closely, where appropriate, on schemes and programmes that will result in job creation and growth.

From my own perspective, in relation to North South cooperation, I attend meetings in the Trade and Business development sectoral format of the North South Ministerial Council and, also, of the North South Plenary, which are hosted by either the Taoiseach or the First and Deputy First Ministers. At these meetings there is full engagement with Northern Ministers, and particularly at the sectoral meetings, where I have direct discussions with my NI counterpart, Ms Arlene Foster MLA, Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, on a wide range of business issues of mutual interest including job creation generally and specifically in manufacturing.

Job Creation

38. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on whether the programmes and initiatives run by both the Industrial Development Agency and Enterprise Ireland are now overlapping in a significant manner, thus diminishing their capabilities to conduct their work both here and abroad; if discussions have taken place regarding the pooling of resources to enhance job creation here and a potential merger of the two organisations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42570/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland are both enterprise development agencies operating under the aegis of my Department. Enterprise Ireland (EI) is the agency responsible for the development and promotion of the Irish business sector and its focus is on the growth of world-class Irish companies to achieve strong positions in global markets. On the other hand, IDA Ireland's focus is on attracting foreign direct investment that is value added, requires high skill levels and a sophisticated business environment to maximize their business potential.

Job creation and retention is central to all activities undertaken by Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland. In this context, of course, it is the case that the agencies share similar objectives in the development of the enterprise base and the business-environment in Ireland. This includes joint work on the growth of new and existing business sectors in Ireland, the support of collaborative R&D among and between Irish-owned companies and multinationals based here, the facilitation of networks and clusters which enhance enterprises' ability to innovate, partner and source with each other, and a range of other on-going activities.

It is my belief that an increased level of collaboration between the agencies can assist Irish owned business grow, while developing and deepening the impact of foreign direct investment and under the Action Plan for Jobs 2012, I established an Enterprise Ireland/IDA Ireland Senior Management Team, comprising representatives from both organisations, to drive effective collaboration in these areas.

Among the key initiatives being jointly undertaken by EI and IDA are:

- Undertaking a Global Sourcing Initiative targeted at maximising the procurement opportunities for Irish business with foreign owned companies based in Ireland. This undertaking involved an in-depth strategic assessment of the opportunities presented by Global Sourcing, and the development of a joint agency strategy to outline the core actions required by Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland to advance this agenda. This Strategy has now been agreed and identified opportunities progressed by both agencies.

- Collaborating on the Technology Centres initiative which sees Irish and foreign owned

companies work together on agreed research programmes. Developing of a joint-agency sectoral approach for the support of selected growth sectors in Ireland (including the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) and the MedTech Sectors).

- Driving effective collaboration between respective teams in Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland working on the overseas entrepreneurs and emerging businesses agenda.

- In addition, both agencies co-operate in the running of joint Trade and Investment Missions abroad and a majority of Enterprise Ireland's and IDA Ireland's overseas offices are co-located.

I am satisfied with the level of co-operation between both agencies and there are no plans to merge the two agencies.

Credit Availability

39. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the support he is providing to small and medium-sized enterprises to access credit; and if he will recommend new packages of measures to support indigenous enterprises as part of budget 2014. [42574/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Access to finance remains a major concern for business and is also a major concern for Government in responding to the needs of business. In this respect, the Government is focused on delivering on a practical programme of actions that can achieve positive improvements in the overall operating environment for SMEs and improving access to credit is of course a priority for the Government.

Last year I introduced two targeted schemes to support an additional flow of credit into the economy, namely the Microenterprise Loan Fund and the Credit Guarantee Scheme to positively impact on job creation, retention and sustainability.

The Microenterprise Loan Fund improves access to credit for microenterprises and facilitates the growth and expansion of viable businesses with less than 10 employees from all industry sectors across the country, which have been refused access to credit from the banks. Support is in the form of loans for up to €25,000, available to start-up, newly established, or growing microenterprises, with viable business propositions, that do not meet the conventional risk criteria applied by banks after one full year in operation.

The SME Credit Guarantee Scheme (CGS) supports SMEs who, because of lack of collateral or because of the sector they operate in, face difficulties in accessing traditional bank credit. Commercially viable, well performing micro, small and medium enterprises that have a solid business plan and a defined market for their products or services, and can demonstrate their ability to repay the loan are the target of this scheme. The CGS is currently being independently reviewed to help improve the Scheme for all businesses. I intend taking appropriate action as a result of the review to ensure use of the Scheme is maximised and a report will be published shortly.

In addition to my Department's work in this area, my colleague, the Minister for Finance, has set the pillar banks' lending targets so that they rise incrementally with expected demand, with targets of €4bn in 2013, increased from €3.5bn in 2012. The Department of Finance also continues to conduct bi-annual surveys of SMEs to assess credit demand and loan approval rates.

I will of course, with my Government colleagues, be keeping the requirements of SMEs at the centre of the 2014 Action Plan for Jobs and the 2014 Budget.

Oireachtas Joint Committee Reports

40. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his plans to implement the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation report into employment in the south east. [42603/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The report of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation on the South East Economic Development Strategy (SEEDS), launched on 16 September, is a helpful contribution to identifying possible interventions to assist the South East region economically.

It represents a comprehensive detailed assessment of a wide range of factors that can contribute to the overall economic development of the South East region. Currently my Department is considering the contents of this report, and assessing the merits and practicality of its recommendations. Some of the suggested actions relate to matters which come within the remit of other Government Departments or bodies and some of the recommendations could have significant financial implications, which would be a challenge in the current financial climate.

This report builds on the comprehensive Forfás South East Action Plan which I commissioned at the time of the *Talk Talk* closure. Work is on-going on the implementation of those Action Plan recommendations, with agencies and stakeholders working together to maximise benefits for the region. I have also established a South East Forum of the key stakeholders within the region. Hopefully this new report will complement and reinforce the objectives of the current Action Plan.

All the key State players have been actively pursuing initiatives to facilitate development and job creation in the region, and I look forward to continued co-operation and collaboration with real benefits for the South East.

I will be asking the South East Forum to let me have their considered views on the Joint Committee report. I will, in due course, also be happy to discuss its findings with the committee, in the context of our ongoing constructive dialogue.

Question No. 41 answered with Question No. 25.

Question No. 42 answered with Question No. 37.

Job Creation

43. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his plans to create jobs in the construction sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42572/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): One of the actions under the Action Plan for Jobs 2012 was the development of a strategy for the Construction sector to 2015. This work was undertaken by Forfás and the report, entitled *Ireland's Construction Sector: Outlook and Strategic Plan to 2015* was published in July 2013 along with the Government response to the report announcing measures to be undertaken. One such measure was the establishment of a new Construction Sector Consultation and Coordination

Group. This Group will be chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach and will provide a forum for engagement with industry, involving relevant Departments and agencies and focusing on key issues for the sector.

The Government recognises the need for strong and clear responsibility for the Construction Sector across Government and it has been agreed that regular ministerial level oversight is warranted. To this end, once a quarter the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery and Jobs will focus specifically on issues relating to the Construction and Property sectors. Within my own Department Enterprise Ireland plays a role in developing the export potential of the construction sector. While the UK continues to be the key export market for construction sector clients, Enterprise Ireland are also focusing on a number of key target markets & regions for future growth such as near European markets, Central Gulf States in the Middle East, Australia and Western Canada.

Enterprise Ireland has in place a range of direct supports to assist established client companies, including those in the construction sector, to enable them to develop and grow their business outside of Ireland. In addition to working with companies already exporting, Enterprise Ireland is now working with a broader range of companies than heretofore. The objective is to stimulate greater activity amongst pre-international companies including construction companies and to reorient those demonstrating real growth potential from the domestic to the international market place.

Question No. 44 answered with Question No. 21.

Job Creation Data

45. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of jobs promoted by the Industrial Development Agency that have been filled by the relocation of existing employees. [42602/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Forfás Annual Employment Survey reports on job gains and losses in companies that are supported by the industrial development agencies. Data are compiled on an annualized basis and are aggregated at county level. The information is provided by companies on a confidential basis for statistical purposes only. It is, therefore, not possible to provide information sought by Deputy. However, it should be noted that figures for 2012 show there were a total of 6,570 net new jobs created in IDA Ireland client companies, the third consecutive year of growth, while job losses in IDA Ireland client companies were the lowest in a decade.

Question No. 46 answered with Question No. 36.

Overseas Development Aid Issues

47. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will ensure that Ireland's aid budget does not slip below the 0.5% target in budget 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42786/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Joe Costello): The Government is committed to Ireland's overseas aid programme. This commitment was expressed and enhanced by the publication earlier this year of our new Policy on International Development, "One World, One Future" which clearly sets out our vision for a sustainable and

just world, and our goals and areas of focus for the coming years. It also reaffirms the centrality of the aid programme to our foreign policy. The new policy states clearly our commitment to achieving the UN target of providing 0.7% of Gross National Product (GNP) for Official Development Assistance (ODA) when economic circumstances permit.

Over the past two years, the Government has broadly stabilised the budget for development assistance - allocating €629 million on ODA in 2012 and €622 million in 2013. These very significant allocations of public funds clearly demonstrate that we have consolidated the development assistance budget - a major achievement in light of the very difficult fiscal conditions facing the Government. Equally importantly, in terms of quality, our aid programme remains one of the best in the world and our leadership on the hunger and nutrition agendas continues to be acknowledged internationally. The Estimates process for Budget 2014 is now in its final stages and is being framed in the context of the Government's overall fiscal consolidation strategy. The Departmental budget allocations for 2014 are a matter for Government decision and will be announced in the Budget Statement next week.

Passport Service Issues

48. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the main features on the new passports that were introduced on 3 October 2013; if they contain any new security features; if he has notified other EU member states and the rest of international immigration authorities of the changes to the new Irish passports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42861/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Last week I launched a new Irish passport. The passport combines the latest security technology with selected imagery in order to produce a passport which represents Ireland, our culture, our history, and our people. The book includes original artwork and photographs which were commissioned solely for use on the Irish passport. For security design reasons images were selected which could be printed across consecutive pages. These include images such as the Cliffs of Moher, the Rock of Cashel and the Samuel Beckett bridge, poetry in Irish, English and Ulster-Scots and representations of Irish sports - Gaelic games, horse-racing and fishing. The security features also have a uniquely Irish flavour. For instance on the inside cover a highly secure feature used is "spark". Its iteration on the passport book uses the Brú na Boinne stone as inspiration and has a moving image emerging when the view-angle is changed on the Newgrange stone. Another security feature used throughout the book in the form of ogham characters is thermochromic ink, which shifts colour when heat is applied to it. Each ogham letter also represents a tree and on each page the corresponding leaf to the Ogham on that page can be seen under ultra violet light. Immigration authorities worldwide have been notified of the new features on the passport through our Embassy network and an information pack detailing over 50 security features on the book has also been distributed to border agencies.

Consular Services Expenditure

49. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the reason the Government is spending up to €1 million in upgrading our Embassy in Paris at a time when our elderly, disabled and persons trying to get an education are finding it so difficult to survive financially; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42894/13]

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

renovation work taking place at the Embassy of Ireland in Paris is primarily to upgrade the Consular offices located in the basement which have little or no natural light. It is necessary to carry out this work at this time as the offices have not been upgraded since 1992 and, as a result, are in serious need of renovation to meet current health and safety standards for a work-place and for public offices in France. The ventilation, lighting and flooring of the offices and public waiting area are being replaced to ensure that the conditions for our staff working there and for the general public are in conformity with health and safety regulations. The public office will also facilitate disabled access by the installation of toilet facilities and a disabled access public counter. The technical installations of the Embassy, notably electricity, plumbing and heating, are also located in the basement area and are being modernised at the same time to ensure greater efficiency, economy and reliability following numerous problems in recent years. The current estimate for the work is in the order of €700,000.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

50. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of public servants in his Department who are being paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary and in excess of the Government's pay cap; the annual cost of these excess payments over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43396/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): There is no officer in my Department who is paid a salary in excess of that of the Taoiseach.

Property Taxation Collection

51. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the payment of property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42929/13]

61. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding deductions for property tax in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42927/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 51 and 61 together.

In response to Question No. [42929], I am advised by Revenue that the anomaly to which the Deputy refers only arises in a very small number of cases where the PPS numbers are formatted in an old style that is incompatible with the current IT systems. Generally speaking the PPS numbers concerned are those that were historically assigned to a female spouse on marriage by adding the letter 'W' to her husband's PPS number, and were not actively in use for tax purposes. The issue does not affect 'W' numbers that were active for tax purposes.

The deduction at source payment method for Local Property Tax (LPT), which commenced in July 2013, operates by Revenue advising the Department of Social Protection of the individual deductions via electronic file transfer. The individual case data are transferred between the Revenue and DSP computer systems and are downloaded exactly as provided by the taxpayer. Revenue cannot validate the accuracy of the information provided, including the status of the PPS number quoted, in advance of the electronic file transfer. A problem is identified only when a transaction fails, in which case the Department of Social Protection notifies Revenue, which in turn makes contact with the taxpayer.

I note the Deputy's suggestion that Revenue should make reference on the LPT Return to the possibility of old style PPS numbers being invalid. While this is not possible for 2013 and 2014, Revenue will consider it in the future, having regard to the scale of the problem. In the meantime the LPT Frequently Asked Questions will be updated on the Revenue website with information and clarification on the issue.

On the specific case outlined by the Deputy in Question No. [42927], I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the person in question selected a number of different payment options when completing the LPT Return. This delayed the initial processing of the Return while the LPT team attempted to clarify with her which option she preferred. Unfortunately, Revenue was not aware that the person's spouse was recently deceased and arranged deduction at source from a Department of Social Protection pension, using the PPS number quoted, leading to the problem outlined above. In the intervening period, and prior to Revenue making contact with the person, a family member contacted LPT Branch and indicated that the person wanted to change her payment method to a service provider. The LPT team member immediately set up the new payment method as requested.

As the Deputy will appreciate, notwithstanding the delays in setting up a satisfactory payment option, the onus is still on the person to ensure the full LPT liability for 2013 is paid by 31 December 2013. However, I note the Deputy's comments in regard to her ability to pay the outstanding liability. The Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended) provides for a system of deferral and partial deferral arrangements for owner-occupiers where there is an inability to pay the tax. I am advised by Revenue that the person in question, on the basis of the information supplied, appears to qualify for both deferral and partial deferral and Revenue will contact her shortly to establish whether she wishes to avail of either option.

I offer my sympathy to the person concerned on her recent bereavement.

Financial Services Regulation

52. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 189 of 24 September 2013, if the Central Bank of Ireland set in place a time frame for financial institutions that have been notified by customers to resolve issues regarding the misselling of PPI prior to July 2007; the course of action available to customers if they believe the financial institution is not responding to their claim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42792/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been informed by the Central Bank that their review of payment protection insurance policies covers the selling of these products under the suitability requirements of the Consumer Protection Code, which was introduced in July 2007. Policies from that date only are included as part of the review.

In the case of payment protection insurance policies sold prior to July 2007, customers should contact their financial institutions directly and make a formal complaint which will then be dealt under the complaints handling requirements of the Consumer Protection Code. Section 10.9 of the Code sets timelines by which complaints must be dealt with by such institutions. Institutions have to acknowledge complaints, in writing, within 5 days and must provide updates to the complainant at least every 20 days. Within 5 days of completion of an investigation, the financial institution must inform the complainant of the outcome of the investigation.

I have been informed that the Central Bank has not requested financial institutions to review payment protection insurance policies taken out prior to the implementation of the Consumer

Protection Code. Therefore, other than the complaints handling requirements, there is no set timeframe.

NAMA Transactions

53. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Finance in view of the recent publicity the sale of loans by National Asset Management Agency attracted involving significant sums of money and in some cases multiple bidders, the procedures that are in place even before bidding commences to ensure maximum openness and transparency and competition within the process from the outset; if he will confirm that such bids are required to be handled by one of the professional loan brokers from the panel who have proven experience in this field and at this level to get the best financial result out of such sales; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42795/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): NAMA will sell a loan portfolio only where it concludes that this is likely to produce the best financial result for the taxpayer by comparison with the alternatives such as the sale of the underlying relevant secured properties. As has been previously described, NAMA has adopted a very thorough approach in line with international best practice for the sale of loans, central to which is the open marketing of the loans so as to ensure competitiveness and transparency.

For this purpose, panels of loan sale advisors have been selected through a public procurement process for each of the US and Europe. Where there are indications that a potential loan sale could be a feasible commercial option for NAMA relative to alternative options, an advisor from the relevant panel is selected by mini tender to conduct the loan sale process, which includes the public marketing of the loans.

The adviser's role includes the preparation of a data room and the circulation of outline information to potential qualifying interested parties so as to generate as much competition as possible. The advisor assembles all relevant data relating to the loans, which is made available at the appropriate stage to credible potential purchasers who complete the necessary confidentiality agreements. The sale process is conducted on the basis of all parties having equal access to the necessary information at the same time so as to make fully informed bids and NAMA will only approve a sale where it is satisfied that the price obtainable represents the best possible return for taxpayers.

As part of the formal sales process, potential purchasers are required to provide an undertaking that they will not engage with the debtor or other obligors at any stage during the sales process without NAMA's pre approval. Both debtors and potential purchasers are aware that the infringement of agreed protocols or undertakings may have an impact on NAMA's decisions as to whether and to whom it sells a particularly portfolio. Furthermore, where NAMA approves the sale of any loan or approves the sale of any secured property by a debtor, it requires a confirmation that the purchaser is not connected to the debtor or other obligors.

Private Pension Levy Yield

54. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the amount that has been raised in the 0.6 % levy in private pensions to date; the amount that has been invested in job creation to date; if any outstanding income that has not been invested in job creation will be reimbursed to the private pension sector; if private pensions will be safeguarded post 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42796/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): A temporary 0.6% stamp duty levy on pension fund assets was introduced in the Finance (No. 2) Act 2011 as a measure to fund the Jobs Initiative. This was estimated to yield €470 million a year for 4 years. The Revenue Commissioners have advised me that receipts amounted to €463 million in 2011 and €483 million in 2012. This is broadly in line with the amounts anticipated to be collected in those years. €517 million was collected in 2013 to date, due to an increase in the capital value of pension funds.

The table below shows the key revenue and expenditure measures in the Jobs Initiative as announced, to support the protection of existing jobs and the creation of new ones. The details of the expenditure on these measures are a matter for my colleague the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Brendan Howlin T.D.

-	2011 (€m)	2012 (€m)	2013 (€m)	2014 (€m)	Total
Revenue					
Air Travel Tax	-15	-90	-105	-105	-315
VAT	-120	-350	-350	-60	-880
PRSI	-95	-208	-201	-33	-536
Pension Funds Levy	+470	+470	+470	+470	+1,880
Expenditure (Additional)	-40	-30	-30	-30	-130
Net Benefit (+)/Loss (-)	+201	-208	-216	+242	+19

It should be noted that the proposed suspension of the Air Travel Tax, at an estimated cost of €15 million in 2011, €90 million in 2012 and €105 million in a full year, was conditional on the airlines increasing passenger numbers by restoring previously cancelled routes and by creating new routes. Negotiations with the airlines were not successful and the Minister for Transport Tourism and Sport, Mr. Leo Varadkar T.D., advised against reducing the Air Travel Tax to zero.

On the subject of outstanding income, I wish to advise the Deputy that it will only be when the levy has ended and the accompanying expenditure and revenue measures have also ceased that it will be possible to analyse the situation. At any given point before then, it would not be surprising if the income and expenditure did not match.

Finally regarding post 2014, I will not comment on this at this juncture, rather a decision will be made at the appropriate time in light of updates to fiscal and economic forecasts.

NAMA Investment Funds

55. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Finance his view on recent press reports that available overseas capital for Ireland will be substantially absorbed by portfolios of loans and properties being offered by overseas banks and therefore will not be available for investment in National Asset Management Agency assets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42798/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): NAMA's objective is to recover the greatest amount possible for the taxpayer through the management and disposal of its acquired loans and the property assets securing them. In line with this, NAMA does not engage in fire sales, which is the sale of a loan or asset at below its intrinsic value. Rather, loans and proper-

ties are made available for sale in line with the absorption capacity of the relevant market.

Through this approach, NAMA has, to date, generated €14bn in cash, including €9.4bn from asset and loans sales. This includes the sale of over 2,000 individual property assets in Ireland and there are currently €1.5bn worth of Irish commercial and residential properties on the market for sale through NAMA debtors and receivers. The Deputy will also be aware that NAMA will be bringing two portfolios, comprising prime residential and commercial property, with an estimated value of €350-€400m, to the market over the coming weeks, which follows the recent sale by the Agency of an €800m loan portfolio secured almost entirely on Irish property. I am satisfied there are ample opportunities for market participants to purchase assets secured by NAMA.

In terms of other investments in NAMA assets, NAMA is providing development funding, on a commercial basis, for the completion of existing projects and the development of new projects to meet the growth needs of the economy. NAMA has approved €800 million in advances for projects in Ireland, over €500 million of which has been drawn down. This is part of NAMA's capital funding plan to advance at least €2 billion for the projects in Ireland over the period to the end of 2016.

The types of projects being supported include residential, commercial and retail projects around the country for example The Grange, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin which is a mixed residential and commercial development, the Oranmore Town Centre, Co. Galway which involves the completion of a commercial development consisting of retail and office space and Phase 2 of Scotch Hall, Drogheda, Co. Louth to comprise of additional retail units and leisure facilities. NAMA also plans to advance significant new developments, for example, the development of substantial commercial and residential development in the Dublin Docklands to accommodate the continued expansion of the IFSC and the creation of new business and technology hubs linked to existing companies such as Google and Facebook.

Tax Collection

56. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will investigate a tax matter raised in correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42836/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): This is a matter for the Revenue Commissioners who advise me that they will investigate the matter raised by Deputy McGrath. For reason of taxpayer confidentiality, they will not be in a position to advise the Deputy of the outcome, but they will communicate directly with the person who contacted the Deputy regarding his personal tax affairs.

Consumer Protection

57. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 191 of 1 October 2013, the options that are available to the consumer if an international insurance company licensed in Ireland, which plans to cease operation, fails to provide at least two months' notice to affected consumers to enable them to make alternative arrangements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42837/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): If an insurance firm does not provide a consumer with two months' notice of their intention to cease operating, this is a potential breach

of Section 3.11 of the Consumer Protection Code. The consumer can make a complaint to the Financial Services Ombudsman who deals independently with unresolved complaints from consumers about their individual dealings with all financial service providers. The Office can be contacted at <http://www.financialombudsman.ie/> and is a free service to the complainant. If there has been a breach of the Consumer Protection Code then the Central Bank of Ireland can consider enforcement action.

Government Pay Cap

58. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Finance the number of public servants who are being paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary and in excess of the Government's pay cap; the annual cost of these excess payments over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42846/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Government pay cap was introduced on 21 June 2011 on foot of a Government Decision (S180/20/10/1333) when it adopted a general policy of a €200,000 annual salary pay ceiling for new appointees to Senior Positions across the Public Service. This equalled the then Taoiseach's annual salary of €200,000 which was reduced under the FEMPI Act 2013 to €185,350 from 1 July last, a figure which now acts as the pay cap. Similarly in June 2011, a pay ceiling of €250,000 was adopted for future appointees to CEO positions in the Commercial State Companies.

No formal pay cap existed for the Public Service prior to the June 2011 decision. No employee in the Department of Finance is being paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary or in excess of the Government's pay cap.

Financial Services Ombudsman Issues

59. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Finance the number of determinations that were made by the Financial Services Ombudsman; the number of these that were appealed; the number of these appeals that were successful; the total legal cost of these appeals over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42847/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I received the following information from the office of the Financial Services Ombudsman Bureau: During the period from 1 January 2010 to 8 October 2013, the Financial Services Ombudsman (FSO) received a total of 29,640 complaints; he issued some 10,753 findings during the same period. 142 findings were appealed to the High Court i.e. 1.32% of the finding issued. There have been 6 appeals to the Supreme Court to date.

Of the 142 appeals:

- 21 were allowed by the Court
- 26 were dismissed by the Court
- 19 were remitted to the FSO on consent
- 44 were withdrawn/settled/closed/adjourned for other reasons
- 32 are ongoing

The FSO's own legal costs from 1 January 2010 to date, including VAT was €2,586,832. This figure also includes the costs of the 6 Supreme Court appeals and some High Court appeals prior to 2010. High Court costs in appeals are awarded at the discretion of the Court. The payment and/or recovery of costs awarded in favour of or against the FSO are subject to negotiation and/or a recovery process, much of which is ongoing in respect of the period from 1 January 2010 to date. However not all costs awarded to the FSO lead to recovery either fully or partially, while every opportunity is taken to recover same.

VAT Rate Reductions

60. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will support the retention of the 9% VAT rate in the restaurant sector in order to save jobs. [42913/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The 9% reduced VAT rate for tourism related services was introduced in July 2011 as part of the Government Jobs Initiative. The measure was designed to boost tourism and create additional jobs in that sector. In line with best international practice it was introduced as a temporary measure and is due to expire at end December 2013, at which point it will revert to 13.5%. Retaining the 9% rate would be very costly to the Exchequer and would require an increase in taxation or reduction in expenditure elsewhere. Any proposal to maintain the 9% VAT rate will be considered in the context of the Budget.

Question No. 61 answered with Question No. 51.

Banking Sector Issues

62. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Finance the reason Allied Irish Banks have entered an outsourcing agreement with a company in India, which effectively is outsourcing jobs at a time when we have 13.5% unemployment while there are companies in Ireland that clearly could accommodate the outsourced strategy for AIB; if this can be revisited and reviewed to ensure that Irish companies who are capable of carrying out this work are considered for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42964/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Deputy will be aware the Relationship Framework with the Allied Irish Banks provides that the State will not intervene in the day-to-day operations of the bank or their management decisions. This framework is published on the Department of Finance website. I must ensure that the bank is run on a commercial, cost effective and independent basis to ensure the value of the bank as an asset to the State, as per the Memorandum on Economic and Financial Policies agreed with the EU Commission, the ECB and the IMF. I have been informed by AIB that the bank is seeking to deliver a better technology offering for customers as it attempts to return to sustainability over time. The decision to partner with the outsourcing company HCL has been taken as part of the overall strategy of introducing new productivity tools on the most commercial terms. The technical resources and expertise required to provide this service are in short supply in Ireland and AIB is similar to a number of companies in seeking support from an international company with access to scale and resources. AIB remains committed to managing the cost of and maximising value from this arrangement.

In line with AIB's normal practice all service providers' contracts are reviewed periodically.

IBRC Liquidation

63. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if there were any outstanding tax issues within the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation at the time of liquidation; if the special liquidators have become aware of any issues in respect of tax since their appointment; if the liquidators have engaged with the Revenue Commissioners regarding outstanding tax issues and or made a disclosure or settlement to Revenue; if the liquidators intend to make a settlement with or disclosure to the Revenue or both; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42970/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised by the Special Liquidators that on the appointment of the Special Liquidators, Irish Bank Resolution Corporation Limited was already in dialogue with the Revenue Commissioners in relation to an open tax audit. The Special Liquidators are working with the Revenue Commissioners to close out the tax audit and some additional tax issues that have come to their attention. As these are matters which are still being reviewed and discussed between IBRC Limited (in Special Liquidation) and the Revenue Commissioners it would not be appropriate to comment any further at this time.

Further Education and Training Issues

64. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the total number of apprenticeships made available throughout the country in each of the past five years to date; the extent to which this has met demand; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42791/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I am informed that the number of apprentices registered by employers in the past 5 years, as well as the total apprentice population for each year is as follows:

Year	Registrations	Apprenticeship population
2008	3,765	26,170
2009	1,535	21,407
2010	1,204	14,801
2011	1,307	13,001
2012	1,434	8,862
2013	1,266 (year to date)	7,725 (year to date)

The above figures also include the relevant data for this year to date. I understand that the equivalent year to date figure for apprentice registrations for 2012 was 1,010 which indicates a 25% increase in 2013. Under the Action Plan for Jobs my Department has commissioned a review of the Apprenticeship Programme.

The consultative phase of the Review, has invited submissions from stakeholders in Apprenticeship, and the review will address three key themes:

- Consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of the current model of apprenticeship and what improvements can be made to its current structure
- An examination of the alternative methods of work-based training in Ireland

- Consideration of the structural mechanisms, and criteria, under which collaboration with industry/employers can be pursued into the future, either through improved, alternative or complementary models of work-based training.

It is expected that the group leading the review will complete its work before the end of the year.

Apprenticeship Programmes

65. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which he has become aware of a shortage of apprenticeships throughout the public and the private sector with particular reference to the need to meet the ongoing requirements of the jobs market in terms of specific skills; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42942/13]

66. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which his Department has dialogues with other Departments with a view to the encouragement of apprenticeships in the public and private sectors and thereby facilitating young unemployed job seekers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42943/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 65 and 66 together.

Apprenticeship training in Ireland is regulated by legislation, with FÁS as the regulatory authority. It is an employer demand-driven programme aimed at developing the skills of the apprentice to meet the needs of industry and the labour market.

In recent years, the impact of the economic downturn has led to a collapse in demand for apprentices from employers, particularly in construction related trades. Significant numbers of apprentices have also been made redundant before completion of their training. While demand for a number of apprenticeship trades is not expected to recover to pre-recession levels, employment opportunities may emerge in other sectors of the economy not currently covered by the current apprenticeship scheme. Under the Government's Action Plan for Jobs my Department is committed to carrying out a review of the apprenticeship system in 2013. This review is being carried out in order to provide a modern 21st century, realistic and flexible Irish Apprenticeship System, reflective of the relevant skills requirements of industry both in the public and private sectors and potential apprentices including young unemployed jobseekers. The review of the Apprenticeship System is being undertaken in two phases, the first being the preparation of a background issues paper, and the second a public consultation process – which is being managed by an independent group appointed in May 2013. This phase of the review is currently under way. Following the consultation process, the review group shall recommend options recognising the broad spectrum of vocational training available, for the development of the apprentice formation system, and other work based education/training systems, including, as necessary: legislative changes; model of delivery/curriculum/range of crafts/occupations; funding and finance mechanisms; provision changes; staffing and resource implications; governance changes; transition actions resulting from recommendations.

It is expected that initial recommendations will be received by end 2013.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

67. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will seek to

have Student Universal Support Ireland deal expeditiously with information which has been submitted, to enable a decision on a student grant application by a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath and which information includes sworn documents, together with other evidentiary material; if this decision will now be made to enable the person to proceed with their college studies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42785/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland that the student referred to by the Deputy has been awarded a grant and an award letter issued on 1 October 2013.

Youthreach Programme

68. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow who has a place on the Youthreach programme in Blessington but cannot attend due to no transport link between the two towns; if funding is available to assist them to pay for travel; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42816/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): A travel allowance is payable to Youthreach learners to assist towards the cost of transport to centres. The person referred to by the Deputy is eligible to receive a weekly travel allowance of €17.60. The issue of the availability of public transport is a matter for the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

69. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding special needs assistants (details supplied) in County Kerry following a review of the existing support that was due to take place on 18 September; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42830/13]

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 Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) 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 15 March, 2013. The NCSE published details of all of their allocations for resource teaching and SNA support for the 2013/2014 school year in June. These details are now available on the NCSE website, www.ncse.ie, and detail the allocations made for each school on a per county basis. The NCSE subsequently requested all schools to submit outstanding applications for resource teaching and SNA support to the NCSE by 20 September, 2013. These applications are being processed by the NCSE. Schools can contact the NCSE if they have enrolled children who were not considered at the time that the SNA allocations were made to schools, or where they are seeking a revision to the quantum of SNA support which has been allocated to them. In general, a revision to SNA allocations will only be made in circumstances where schools have enrolled new pupils, or where schools can demonstrate that they do not have sufficient SNA posts to cater for the care needs of all of the qualifying children in their school.

As the Deputy's question refers to an individual SNA allocation and to a proposed review of a schools SNA allocation by the NCSE, I have arranged for the Deputy's question to be forwarded to the NCSE for its attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

State Examinations Issues

70. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the action he is taking to ensure that the 2014 leaving certificate maths papers are error free; if he will guarantee students that they will only be examined on material that is genuinely solvable; that they will only be examined on material that is on the mathematics course; that the State Examination Commission will only examine students on the syllabus-curriculum material that has been issued by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment; that the time outline on the paper be specific; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42839/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The State Examinations Commission (SEC) has operational responsibility for the operation of the certificate examinations.

One of the key objectives of the SEC is to provide an examinations system of the highest possible quality. The aspiration of any examining body, including the SEC, is to preside over a system that is completely error free. However, it is recognised, across the examination sector, that this will always be an aspiration rather than a completely achievable goal. In the 2013 State certificate examinations, a number of mathematics examination papers contained undetected errors which had not come to light before the examination and which had the potential to impact on candidate answering. The SEC has accepted that level of error in the 2013 examination papers was unacceptably high and has apologised to the candidates affected. Specific measures were implemented in the marking process by the SEC so that candidates were not disadvantaged as a result of these errors. In addition to its current quality assurance measures, the SEC will, in future, take the following additional steps to minimise the risk of error. It will: adopt a more formalised approach to strategic work-force planning; review the personnel structures and protocols for paper preparation in each subject; analyse all post print errors with a view to identifying patterns and underlying causes.

Regarding the request that the time allocation on the paper be specific, I am advised by the SEC that the time allocation for the examination is printed on the front of the examination paper and also on the published timetable for the certificate examinations and does not change annually. Each Leaving Certificate Mathematics paper is of two and a half hours' duration and there are no plans to change this. All examinations are designed so as to be readily answerable by candidates in the allotted time.

State Examinations Issues

71. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on whether the boxed answer paper provided in the leaving certificate maths paper has inadequate room for solutions and calculations; if this could be easily resolved by replacing the blank pages at the back of the answer paper with boxed pages; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the 5 millimetre paper is impossible to write on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42840/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations including organising the holding of examinations, determining procedures in places where

examinations are conducted including the supervision of examinations and making arrangements for the marking of work presented for examination. In view of this I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to you.

State Examinations Issues

72. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if it is the case that the 2013 leaving certificate maths papers were not ready until May 2013 instead of January as is normal, thereby leaving insufficient time for proper editing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42841/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations including organising the holding of examinations, determining procedures in places where examinations are conducted including the supervision of examinations and making arrangements for the marking of work presented for examination. In view of this I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to you.

State Examinations Issues

73. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will clarify the specific errors that occurred on the 2013 mathematics papers in the pilot schools; if these included a calculus question using a formula that was no longer on the course; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42842/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations including organising the holding of examinations, determining procedures in places where examinations are conducted including the supervision of examinations and making arrangements for the marking of work presented for examination.

In view of this I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to you.

School Car Parks

74. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding an application by a school (details supplied) in County Kerry for provision of a necessary additional car park area as the existing car park arrangements are inadequate. [42852/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The school referred to by the Deputy has been approved devolved funding to replace prefabs at their school. In recent days the school has submitted a further request for capital funding to provide additional car parking spaces on their school site. I wish to advise the Deputy that, in general, individual school authorities are responsible, in the first instance, for ensuring the safety and welfare of children and others in their care. Due to competing demands on my Department's capital budget, imposed by the need to prioritise the limited funding available for the provision of essential additional classroom accommodation to meet increasing demographic requirements, I am not in a position to give an indicative timeframe for progression of the school's request at this time.

School Funding

75. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will approve a capital grant application for a college (details supplied); the current status of the application. [42860/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department is currently considering the application to which he refers and a response will be conveyed to the school authorities shortly.

School Transport Availability

76. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the transport grant support available in respect of special needs children of pre-school age attending early intervention units; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42863/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Under the terms of my Department's School Transport scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs arising from a diagnosed disability, children are eligible for transport where they: 1. have special educational needs arising from a diagnosed disability in accordance with the designation of high and low incidence disability set out in Department of Education and Skill's (DES) Circular 02/05; and 2. are attending the nearest recognised: mainstream school, special class/special school or a unit, that is or can be resourced, to meet their special educational needs. Eligibility is determined following consultation with the National Council for Special Education through its network of Special Education Needs Organisers. A Special Transport Grant towards the cost of private transport arrangements may be provided at the discretion of the Department in situations where a child's age, behavioural difficulties or medical needs are such as to make the provision of a transport service impracticable. These grants will only be considered for the school year in which an application for transport is received.

Student Universal Support Ireland Administration

77. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of late applications that have been received by Student Universal Support Ireland; the number of these that are awaiting initial review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42886/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have been informed that as of close of business on 6th October, SUSI has received 7,073 new applications after 5th August 2013 closing date. SUSI has already initially assessed 3,284 of the late new applications.

Student Universal Support Ireland Expenditure

78. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reasons Student Universal Support Ireland awarded just €2,000 fees to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42887/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland that the student referred to by the Dep-

ty has been awarded a postgraduate fee contribution of €2,000 and an award letter issued on 26 September 2013. Under the terms of the Student Grant Scheme 2013 postgraduate students who meet the qualifying conditions for the special rate of grant under the Student Grant Scheme will be eligible to have their post-graduate tuition fees paid up to the maximum fee limit of €6,270. To qualify for the special rate of grant an applicant must meet the following conditions: 1. Reckonable income must not exceed €22,703; 2. On 31st December of the relevant period the reckonable income must include an eligible long-term social welfare payment prescribed under the scheme. A postgraduate student may qualify to have a €2,000 contribution made towards the costs of their fees. The income threshold for this payment is €31,500 for the 2013/14 academic year, increasing relative to the number of family dependents. Tax relief is also available on postgraduate tuition fees. Details in relation to this relief are available from the Revenue Commissioners. In addition to this, the Student Assistance Fund will continue to be made available through the access offices of third-level institutions to assist students in exceptional financial need. If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a student grant, or that the rate of grant awarded is not the correct one, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to SUSI. Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down, in writing, by SUSI, and remains of the view that SUSI has not interpreted the scheme correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the Student Grant Appeals Board. The relevant appeal form is available to download from www.studentfinance.ie.

Home Tuition Scheme Provision

79. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding home schooling hours in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5. [42909/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be aware that the purpose of the Home Tuition Scheme is to provide a compensatory educational service for children who, for a number of reasons such as chronic illness, are unable to attend school. The scheme was extended in recent years to facilitate tuition for children awaiting a suitable educational placement and also to provide early educational intervention for pre-school children with autism. The number of home tuition hours which are sanctioned in respect of children who have missed time from school due to chronic illness are based on that individual child's attendance at school. In respect of the case referred to by the Deputy in his question, the allocation which has been made is based on the child's record of school attendance for the previous school year. If the child's attendance deteriorates and if he is absent for a significant amount of days in the current school year, it is recommended that the parent/guardian make contact with officials in my Department to set out the position in relation to school attendance for the current school year.

Special Educational Needs Staffing

80. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a place on the special needs assistant panel in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 13. [42914/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The detailed arrangements regarding supplementary assignment arrangements for SNAs for the 2013/2014 school year are set out in Departmental Circular 0037/2013 which issued on 1 July 2013 and which is available on the Department's website at the following address: <http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars->

and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0037_2013.pdf. With effect from 1 May 2013 once an SNA with a minimum of one year's service is notified by his/her employer that he/she is to be made redundant then he/she shall be deemed to be a member of a Supplementary Assignment Panel for SNAs. With the exception of SNAs who have been re-employed on permanent contracts or have chosen to opt out of the panel in accordance with the terms of Paragraph 39 of the circular, all SNAs who have been made redundant since 1 May 2013 are members of the SNA Supplementary Assignment Panel. When an employer has a vacancy to fill, they must undertake the recruitment process in accordance with the provisions outlined in paragraphs 17-32 of Circular 37/2013. The Department has set up a dedicated e-mail address to deal with all queries in relation to the SNA Supplementary Assignment Panel and any queries in respect of the operation of the Panel can be directed to this dedicated e-mail address snasupplementpanel@education.gov.ie.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

81. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will give detailed consideration to the motion passed by a local authority (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42916/13]

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 (SNAs) 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. I wish to advise the Deputy that there has been no reduction to the number of SNA posts being provided for schools for the coming school year. This provision remains at 10,575 posts, which means that the same number of SNA posts are being made available this year as has been made available in recent years. In relation to the allocation of resource teaching support for schools, I wish to clarify that in June of this year I authorised the NCSE to maintain the level of resource teaching allocations to be provided for students with special educational needs for the current school year to the 2012/13 levels. There will therefore not be a reduction in resource teaching time for these pupils over the amount of support provided last year. Details of the SNA and resource teaching allocations which have been made to schools by the NCSE to date for the 2013/2014 school year are available on the NCSE website www.ncse.ie, which provides details of the SNA and resource teaching allocations for each school on a school by school and per county basis. In order to meet any late demand for resource teaching support which may have arisen between 15th March, 2013 and the start of the school year, the NCSE requested all schools to submit outstanding applications for resource teaching support to the NCSE by 20th September, 2013. A small number of applications have also been received after 20th September, which are still under consideration. The NCSE intend to notify schools of revised resource teaching allocations in the coming weeks.

Academic Publications

82. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of articles published, broken down by institution and year, for each institute of technology and university for the years 2011 and 2012, where each article is published in a journal published by Public Library of Science publishers and the fees paid for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42931/13]

83. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of articles published, broken down by institution and year, for each institute of technology and university for the year 2011 and 2012, where each article is published in a journal whose publisher appears on Beall's list of predatory open access (details supplied); the fees paid for this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42932/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 82 and 83 together.

The information sought by the Deputy is not readily available in my Department. Officials of my Department have asked the Higher Education Authority to check if the information is obtainable and any available information will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

84. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if and when a higher education grant will be awarded in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42959/13]

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, documentation was received on 3rd and 25th September, 2013. The documentation is currently awaiting review and the student will be notified directly of the outcome.

Education Schemes

85. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the impact the proposed cutbacks in primary teaching resources will have on outreach sessions for children of circus and fairground families. [42961/13]

86. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps that are being taken to ensure that children of circus and fairground families will receive improved secondary education supports. [42962/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 85 and 86 together.

The Circus & Fairground Service is a pilot initiative which provides primary school-age children with up to six hours tuition per week. The Service is delivered by qualified primary teachers retained by Education Centres throughout the country. The numbers of teachers retained to deliver the service has recently been reduced to reflect a decreased demand for the service - there are currently less than 10 children in receipt of tuition. Education Centres may also use teachers on stand-by to deliver the service where necessary to ensure a continuity of service. The Department of Education and Skills does not hold information on post-primary school age children of circus and fairground families and consequently cannot say whether they are in receipt of learning support for identified educational needs.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

87. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of public

servants in his Department who are being paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary and in excess of the Government's pay cap; the annual cost of these excess payments over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43394/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): There are no officials at my Department on salaries that exceed the amount of the Taoiseach's salary or the Government's pay cap.

Judicial Pay

88. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the total salaries and benefits paid to judges in each court; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42889/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The total salaries and annual expense allowances paid to members of the judiciary in each of the Supreme, High, Circuit and District Courts in the year 2012, and an estimate of the amounts payable for 2013 are set out at Appendix 1. Members of the judiciary may receive an annual expense allowance to cover expenses which are not dealt with under the normal claim and recoupment arrangements. The estimate for 2013 reflects the application of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2013 to the salaries of members of the judiciary, as well as appointments made to the judiciary during the year.

Judicial salaries and the annual expense allowance are payments made from the Central Fund. Details of any benefits, allowances and expenses paid from the Courts Service are a matter for the Minister for Justice & Equality.

Appendix I

Total amounts of judicial salaries and annual expense allowances paid/payable in each of the Courts

Court	Judicial Salaries - 2012	Judicial Annual Expense Allowances - 2012
Supreme Court	€1,747,150.42	€70,898.36
High Court	€7,298,186.02	€319,329.16
Circuit Court	€5,702,906.14	€124,575.17
District Court	€8,371,508.35	€95,571.44

Court	Judicial Salaries - 2013 Estimate	Judicial Annual Expense Allowances - 2013 Estimate
Supreme Court	€1,724,805.24	€72,460.08
High Court	€6,872,651.16	€315,201.21
Circuit Court	€6,026,500.54	€134,210.96
District Court	€8,112,333.13	€100,353.49

Public Sector Staff Recruitment

89. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of posts that will be filled by the recent competition for administrative officers in the

Civil Service. [42806/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Public Appointments Service advertised a series of Administrative Officer (AO) competitions on 30 August 2013 with a closing date of 19 September 2013. The competitions covered five streams: Economics, Human Resources, Tax Policy, Law, and Banking and Finance. 2,672 candidates applied for the competitions.

The Public Appointments Service is currently conducting a selection process to put panels in place by January 2014. Once panels are in place, a supply of qualified candidates will be available to meet the demand from Departments to fill vacancies at AO level. The number of posts filled will be dictated by the needs of individual Departments, having regard to the requirements of their Employee Control Framework (ECF). A similar series of AO competitions was held last year, from which a total of 125 candidates were placed on panels and 95 posts have been filled to date.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

90. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of public servants in his Department who are being paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary and in excess of the Government's pay cap; the annual cost of these excess payments over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43400/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Government Pay Cap was introduced on 21 June 2011 on foot of a Government Decision (S180/20/10/1333) when it adopted a general policy of a €200,000 annual salary pay ceiling for new appointees to Senior Positions across the Public Service. This equalled the then Taoiseach's annual salary of €200,000 which was reduced under the FEMPI Act 2013 to €185,350 from 1 July last, a figure which now acts as the pay cap. There is nobody in my Department being paid in excess of the Government's pay cap.

Employment Data

91. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation while welcoming the small increase in total employment in the year to June 2013, if he is concerned that the numbers in work for the 25-34 and 20-24 age groups actually declined in the same period. [42823/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The latest information from the Quarterly National Household Survey (QHNS) shows an annual increase in employment of 1.8% or 33,800 in the year to the second quarter of 2013, bringing total employment to 1,869,900.

The largest annual increases in employment were in the 35-44 (+16,600 or +3.4%) and 45-54 (+15,800 or +4.0%) age groups. The annual decreases in employment recorded were in the 20-24 (-2,100 or -1.7%) and the 25-34 (-11,900 or -2.3%) age groups.

While a decrease in employment is always a cause for concern, the results for these two age cohorts have to be viewed in the light of three critical factors. First, the increased rate of young persons staying on longer in education; secondly, increased emigration; and thirdly, the overall demographic decline for these two cohorts. It may also be noted that while the numbers employed in these two cohorts declined over the twelve month period, both age groups expe-

rienced small increases in the numbers employed between quarter 1 and quarter 2 of 2013 (by 3.2% and 0.4% respectively).

The Government's approach to tackling the issue of jobs growth and unemployment is through the twin strategies deriving from the *Action Plan for Jobs* and *Pathways to Work*. The primary strategy to tackle all forms of unemployment, including youth unemployment, is to create the environment for a strong economic recovery by promoting competitiveness and productivity. Economic recovery will underpin jobs growth. Past experience suggests that youth unemployment, which tends to rise relatively rapidly in a downturn, can be expected to fall relatively rapidly during the recovery. In addition to this economic growth and competitiveness strategy there are a number of programmes and services to assist unemployed persons and keep jobseekers close to the labour market. With limited exceptions, these approaches are not age-specific – they are available to all unemployed people on the same basis.

The 2013 *Action Plan for Jobs* contains a total of 333 actions for delivery across all Government Departments and 46 State agencies. Among the measures being delivered are:

- *JobsPlus*, a scheme to provide regular cash payments to employers to offset wage costs where they employ people who have been on the Live Register for over 12 months;
- the roll-out of 31 Local Enterprise Offices across the country, a network of first-stop shops to deliver world-class services to start-ups and micro-businesses in every county in the country;
- a new €175 million Seed and Venture Capital Scheme, aimed at leveraging private sector funds to provide a total of €700 million in funding to high-growth Irish companies with the potential to grow employment, as well as mentoring and networks;
- a National Step Change Initiative for manufacturing businesses, as part of the Government's plan to supply 20,000 additional jobs in the sector.

Pathways to Work 2013, the Government's 50-point action plan to fight long-term unemployment builds on the progress made over the past year by the Government to tackle the unemployment challenge. Increasingly, the Department of Social Protection's referrals for job-search assistance and guidance is based on profiling people at the beginning of a spell of unemployment, so as to focus resources on those most in need at an early stage.

During our recent EU Presidency, Ireland succeeded in achieving agreement among Member States on the introduction of a Youth Guarantee. This agreement provides 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." The Department of Social Protection has primary responsibility for implementing the Youth Guarantee in Ireland. An interdepartmental Group chaired by the Department of Social Protection has been established and includes representation from my Department. The group will co-ordinate the production of an implementation plan for the Youth Guarantee which will be submitted to Government in December 2013. A number of pilot projects will be run across the EU ahead of full implementation of the Guarantee, and a pilot project will be implemented in the Ballymun area in Dublin.

Official employment figures recently published by the CSO indicate that the Government's twin strategy approach is making progress. Figures show that the private sector has been adding an average of more than 2,000 jobs per month since the Government published and commenced implementing the Action Plan for Jobs in early 2012.

International Bodies Membership

92. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he has given consideration to joining the international research body, the European Particle Physics Centre at the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Geneva, Switzerland, in view of the fact that membership would bring financial benefits for Ireland, aiding science education and promotion; the amount membership would cost and the amount associate membership would cost per annum; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that multinational technology companies based here cannot compete for contracts from CERN because Ireland is not currently a member; his views on whether it will be economically beneficial for Ireland to become a member; when the last review was held by Ireland for becoming a member of the body; if he is considering conducting a new review in view of the economic advantageous position in which membership would place Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42571/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Sean Sherlock): Ireland's membership of international research organisations must be predicated on whether the benefit of membership, in terms of support to Irish researchers, companies and jobs, justifies the cost involved.

For example, in the case of the European Space Agency, Ireland has chosen to pursue membership because of the major benefits that can accrue to innovative Irish companies in the sector, where Irish companies have established expertise, exports and employment.

My Department, through its industrial and scientific advisory agency, Forfás, commissioned an expert report by consultants Georgia Tech to examine the case for Irish participation in a number of intergovernmental research organisations, one of which was CERN. That Report, in 2001, concluded that, because of high costs and limited potential industrial development returns, membership should not be a priority. Since then, of course, the severely depleted resources which this Government inherited has meant that there is an even greater imperative to ensure that publicly funded research and development will yield the maximum benefits for the country - most particularly in terms of downstream jobs.

As you are no doubt aware, the Government's priority in the area of science, technology and innovation is to implement the recommendations of the National Research Prioritisation Exercise which will see the majority of public research funding aligned with 14 priority areas where we are most likely to get economic and social returns, particularly in the form of jobs. The Steering Group which undertook the exercise included representatives of the enterprise sector and its terms of reference specifically required that it take account of complementary developments at EU level and other international initiatives. Research in the area of particle physics was not identified as a priority nor was there any recommendation that Ireland should join CERN.

The costs of full membership of CERN are understood to be over €10 million per annum. In addition to substantial fees for any type of membership, it is important to note that significant extra amounts of expenditure would be necessitated in order to ensure that Ireland benefits fully from membership. While other associate membership options may be available involving lesser amounts, the issue remains that a decision about joining CERN must take into consideration the opportunity costs involved, as payment of any fees would mean that less funding is available for our existing research priorities.

Should budgetary circumstances change over the next few years, the question of membership of CERN could be reviewed again but only if there is a compelling business case from a

cost/benefit viewpoint. Also, the selected national research priority areas will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure their continued relevance and to also ensure that new opportunities are identified.

Job Creation Data

93. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of jobs created in County Kerry and throughout the country to date; the areas in which these jobs have been created; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42799/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Forfás Annual Employment Survey reports on job gains in companies that are supported by the enterprise development agencies. Details of the number of jobs created in IDA and Enterprise Ireland client companies in 2011 and 2012 are set out in Tables 1 and 2 below on a county by county basis, including Co. Kerry.

2012 was a particularly good year for job creation in Agency supported companies, with IDA client companies creating 11,790 full time jobs, as per table 2 below, (In addition 932 part time jobs were also created). The IDA client base in Ireland now employs 152,785 full and part time people, a level last recorded before the global financial crisis began in 2008. Clients of Enterprise Ireland created 12,861 full time jobs, the highest net gain for Irish companies since 2006.

In addition, the County and City Enterprise Boards (CEB) supported a total of 5331 full time job gains in 2011 and 4,858 in 2012.

Table 1 - Job creation in companies supported by Enterprise Ireland (PFT=Permanent Full Time).

County	Data	2011	2012
Carlow	PFT Gains	253	152
Cavan	PFT Gains	369	374
Clare	PFT Gains	94	133
Cork	PFT Gains	1,997	1,663
Donegal	PFT Gains	301	180
Dublin	PFT Gains	3,938	4,097
Galway	PFT Gains	855	572
Kerry	PFT Gains	232	194
Kildare	PFT Gains	1,082	534
Kilkenny	PFT Gains	150	320
Laois	PFT Gains	158	76
Leitrim	PFT Gains	46	54
Limerick	PFT Gains	289	684
Longford	PFT Gains	86	116
Louth	PFT Gains	389	299
Mayo	PFT Gains	716	197
Meath	PFT Gains	362	615
Monaghan	PFT Gains	391	294
Offaly	PFT Gains	173	139
Roscommon	PFT Gains	108	29
Sligo	PFT Gains	140	247

County	Data	2011	2012
Tipperary North Riding	PFT Gains	127	49
Tipperary South Riding	PFT Gains	123	81
Waterford	PFT Gains	909	692
Westmeath	PFT Gains	340	275
Wexford	PFT Gains	191	385
Wicklow	PFT Gains	204	410
Total		14,023	12,861

Table 2 - Job creation in companies supported by IDA Ireland (PFT=Permanent Full Time).

County	Data	2011	2012
Carlow	PFT Gains	75	116
Cavan	PFT Gains	3	43
Clare	PFT Gains	27	37
Cork	PFT Gains	1,990	1,979
Donegal	PFT Gains	271	186
Dublin	PFT Gains	6,864	6,389
Galway	PFT Gains	1,047	859
Kerry	PFT Gains	163	74
Kildare	PFT Gains	398	176
Kilkenny	PFT Gains	33	180
Laois	PFT Gains	3	2
Leitrim	PFT Gains	7	1
Limerick	PFT Gains	233	400
Longford	PFT Gains	0	24
Louth	PFT Gains	109	386
Mayo	PFT Gains	69	126
Meath	PFT Gains	53	68
Monaghan	PFT Gains	0	3
Offaly	PFT Gains	31	31
Roscommon	PFT Gains	51	53
Sligo	PFT Gains	93	149
Tipperary North Riding	PFT Gains	22	0
Tipperary South Riding	PFT Gains	84	10
Waterford	PFT Gains	72	75
Westmeath	PFT Gains	194	252
Wexford	PFT Gains	51	111
Wicklow	PFT Gains	66	60
Total		12,009	11,790

Table 3 - CEB Employment Statistics for 2011 and 2012

-	2011	2012
CEB	Full Time Gains	Full Time Gains
Carlow	190	254
Cavan	154	138
Clare	56	200
Cork City	41	52

Questions - Written Answers

-	2011	2012
CEB	Full Time Gains	Full Time Gains
Cork North	57	59
Cork South	164	179
Cork West	77	83
Donegal	310	131
Dublin City	293	382
Dublin Dun Laoghaire / Rathdown	159	337
Dublin Fingal	98	240
Dublin South	122	168
Galway County/City	250	124
Kerry	348	316
Kildare	106	133
Kilkenny	151	84
Laois	136	69
Leitrim	61	35
Limerick City	174	100
Limerick County	190	73
Longford	117	79
Louth	255	148
Mayo	63	43
Meath	358	175
Monaghan	111	120
Offaly	224	75
Roscommon	107	81
Sligo	121	117
Tipperary(NR)	88	41
Tipperary(SR)	77	53
Waterford City	178	76
Waterford County	59	110
Westmeath	188	130
Wexford	167	269
Wicklow	81	184
Total	5,331	4,858

Departmental Reports

94. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in view of the commencement of intellectual property based derivatives trading by IPXI, Chicago, in June, the actions being taken vis-à-vis the report entitled Feasibility Study for Making Ireland a World Centre for Managing and Trading in Intellectual Property of January 2013; when this report will be published; the main conclusions and actionable recommendations of said report; when these recommendations will be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42867/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Sean Sherlock): In order to deliver on a commitment in the Programme for Government which was further articulated in the Action Plan for Jobs 2012, my Department commissioned a Feasibility Study to examine what structures and policies could be developed to make Ireland a world centre for managing and trading in intellectual property. The objectives of the study were to

identify and describe the emerging trends in IP Portfolio Management in corporations globally; and taking account of such global emerging trends, to identify options and models for Ireland to leverage its existing strengths to become an internationally attractive centre for managing and trading in IP, such that this could realise an economic and jobs potential.

The Study, which was undertaken by Deloitte, was finalised in January 2013 and is now being considered by officials in my Department in the context of wider policy developments and economic conditions domestically and globally. Following this consideration, proposals will be developed regarding the next steps to be taken resulting from the findings of the Study.

Job Creation

95. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which his Department has studied any contributory causes to job losses in the manufacturing sector in the course of the past eight years; if costs have been a factor; if so, to what extent and the precise elements of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42937/13]

96. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in the context of the total number of extra new jobs created in each of the past two years to date, the extent to which innovation and technology played a part, in respect of both manufacturing and services sectors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42938/13]

101. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will set out year on year the total number of jobs lost throughout the economy, in both manufacturing and services sectors, in each of the years 2007 to date; the number of new jobs created in each year over the same period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42945/13]

102. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which his Department continues to monitor the cost base in respect of manufacturing and services industries; the action, if any, taken to address any such issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42946/13]

103. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the total number of jobs lost in County Kildare in manufacturing and services in each year from 2006 to date; the number of net new jobs created in the same period in respect of both sectors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42947/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 95, 96 and 101 to 103, inclusive, together.

The most up to date figures available for job creation in the manufacturing and services sector are included in the Forfás Employment Survey 2012. There is no data available on a month to month or county basis for each of these sectors in the survey.

Please see the following table setting out the breakdown of Job gains and losses as requested.

While manufacturing has been an important sector in Ireland since the 1960s, there has been a noticeable decline in numbers employed in this sector. This is not necessarily surprising, and it echoes what has been happening in most developed economies. A similar trend has also been experienced in other industrialised countries such as Germany, UK, USA, Netherlands and Korea. We still have 205,000 directly employed in manufacturing here and, when account is taken of indirect employment that means about 400,000 depend on manufacturing for a livelihood.

This impressive statistic highlighted the need for action.

Hence the initiation by me of two research projects - Forfás's "*Making it happen Manufacturing 2020*" and "*The Future Skills Needs of the Manufacturing Sector to 2020*" published by the Expert Group on Future Skills. Both of these reports complement each other and will assist Government in reaching the target of creating an additional 20,000 jobs in manufacturing by 2016.

The *Action Plan for Jobs 2012* also included a series of actions for the Manufacturing Sector and noted that Ireland is well positioned to exploit the advances in manufacturing technology, and to build and maintain a strong base of manufacturing activity. Ireland currently has a very diverse range of manufacturing businesses with many exciting and innovative companies in high-technology and emerging sectors. We are well placed to take advantage of our current position to build on this expertise in both the FDI and indigenous companies.

The *2013 Action Plan for Jobs* also outlines a range of sectoral initiatives to facilitate new and established companies to grow in the Services sector with particular focus on International Financial Services, Business Process Outsourcing/Shared Services, Education Services, Retail and Wholesale, Tourism, Construction Services and ICT Services.

In respect of the contribution of innovation and technology to job creation in these sectors, my Department, and the relevant State Agencies under its remit, have a clear and steady focus on the potential and opportunities that exist and can be created by prioritising innovation as a key driver of success. Enterprise development agencies, Enterprise Ireland, IDA and Science Foundation Ireland, provide a spectrum of innovation and technology development programmes that deliver financial, technical and experiential support to help companies become more innovative, encourage and support competitiveness, and help them grow their sales and exports in order to create a climate in which sustainable employment will grow and expand. It is not possible to separate out the precise contribution of innovation and technology elements from other factors.

All of our businesses face similar Competitiveness issues including the manufacturing and services sector. It is clear that, arising from greater globalisation, reduction of tariff barriers and the ease of transporting goods, the nature of industry and the location of specialisations will be changing. There will be an inevitable movement of production of lower cost, less specialised goods towards cheaper labour economies, e.g. in Asia. This is part of a wider global pattern.

Last year, I requested Forfás to undertake research into a number of factors impacting on Ireland's international competitiveness, to benchmark these factors and to develop proposals to systematically reduce excessive key business costs or delays.

That wider Forfás research indicates that in the period between January 2000 and April 2008 Ireland suffered a 22.5% loss in competitiveness. However, in the period from April 2008 to July 2012, Irish cost competitiveness improved by 19% as measured by the Harmonised Index of Consumer Prices. Prices have now fallen back to levels last seen in 2002. The research benchmarks Ireland's performance against a number of our key trading partners, as well as the OECD and Euro area averages. Positive trends are emerging in relation to some key cost factors, including Labour costs, where our labour cost competitiveness continues to improve; Construction and new rental costs, which have fallen significantly since the collapse of the property bubble; and the cost of most business services, which have fallen to, or below, 2006 levels.

The numbers employed in manufacturing have stabilised over the last two years. It is noteworthy that exports of manufactured goods are continuing to rise despite a difficult environment. Even more heartening is the fact that exports by the Services sector are going from strength to

strength, with an 11% increase in the first nine months of 2012. In addition the contribution of manufacturing to GDP has risen significantly over the last decade.

Despite the considerable challenges in an internationally competitive environment, there is considerable potential for the manufacturing sector in Ireland, as we are strongly placed to create opportunities and employment in many higher-value sub sectors, for example chemicals, pharmaceuticals, medical devices and food, amongst others.

The provision of adequate and appropriate finance for both the manufacturing and services sectors is crucial, but as you will appreciate, EU grant aid is a less significant factor now than in former years. Obviously all potential sources of grant aid are pursued.

I am confident that all these measures, combined with other Government initiatives, including those to improve Competitiveness generally, will provide strong practical support to these important areas resulting in job creation.

The total number of jobs lost and gained, and the total of net new full-time jobs created in agency supported manufacturing companies, for the period 2006-2011 is set out as follows.

-	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Job Gains	34,497	28,888	23,664	13,962	20,388	21,038	10,704
Job Losses	-21,369	-24,099	-30,351	-47,325	-25,802	-16,599	-7,987
Net Change	13,128	4,789	-6,687	-33,363	-5,414	4,439	2,717

The following provides details of gains and losses in the services sector in agency supported companies.

Gains

-	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Job Gains	11,527	10,254	9,078	5,162	9,025	8,723	16,949

Losses

-	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Job Losses	-5,663	-7,356	-7,267	-12,973	-7,511	4,970	10,161

Foreign Direct Investment

97. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which his Department continues to attract foreign direct investment resulting in job creation into this jurisdiction; the issues most commonly raised by investors in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42939/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The attraction of foreign direct investment (FDI) to Ireland has been, and will continue to be, an integral part of Ireland's economic success. Foreign owned firms contribute substantially to Ireland's exports, jobs, expenditure in the Irish economy and to Exchequer funds. FDI plays a key role in stimulating the development of new sectors in Ireland, in enhancing our research, development

and innovation performance, in contributing to balanced regional development and in accelerating the achievement of critical mass within sectors.

At the end of 2012, there were 152,785 people employed in over 1,000 IDA Ireland client companies. This, in turn, results in another 100,000 spin off jobs in the Irish economy. The net effect is that 1 in 7 Jobs in the Irish economy is accounted for by FDI.

There are a number of factors which are considered by potential investors before deciding to locate here. These include:

- A pro-business and technologically advanced environment;
- An attractive corporate tax rate;
- An educated and talented workforce;
- A blend of appropriate skill sets;
- Access to world class infrastructure - road access to key cities, ports and international airports;
- a range of affordable, state-of-the-art property solutions;
- a track record of success coupled with the right attitude and ambition of its people.

In seeking to win FDI, IDA Ireland constantly promotes the availability of these factors to potential investors. Indeed, Ireland's performance in attracting FDI has been recognised internationally and these international comparisons are impressive. The 2012 IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook and IBM's Global Location Trends Report for 2012 have classified some of Ireland's strengths, with Ireland ranked:

- 1st in the world for availability of skilled labour, flexibility of workforce, investment incentives and attitudes towards globalisation;
- 1st in the world for inward investment by quality and value;
- 1st in Europe for jobs created in Research and Development;
- 1st in Europe for investment in the pharmaceutical sector;
- 2nd in Europe and 4th globally for the number of investment jobs per capita; and
- 4th for corporate tax rates.

Amid significant economic challenges globally and locally, IDA Ireland achieved a strong FDI performance in 2012. There were 145 individual investments, with over 40% from companies coming to Ireland for the first time. 12,722 gross job gains were generated with 6,570 net new jobs gains across a broad range of sectors. Helping FDI clients to transform their operations within Ireland has also led to a significant reduction in employment losses, producing a strong year overall.

Despite this success, Ireland faces a highly competitive landscape, with notable strong competition for FDI arising from the UK, the Netherlands and Switzerland, in particular. Nevertheless, IDA Ireland's performance in the first 6 months of 2013 has been solid with 70 FDI investments, with potential to create in the region of 7,000 jobs being secured.

Education and Training Provision

98. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which he and his Department continue to have dialogue with the educational level sector at second and third level with a view to meeting the educational requirements of the workplace in a more specific fashion in view of the regularly expressed concerns to the need for a more dedicated approach to the market; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42940/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The input of the educational sector in addressing, in a balanced fashion, the skills needs of enterprise is a keystone in the strategies devised with the input of Forfás and, in particular, of the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN), under the auspices of my Department and those of my colleague, the Minister for Education and Science.

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs advises Government on future skills requirements and associated labour market issues that impact on enterprise and employment growth. It operates as a significant conduit for discourse between representatives of education, enterprise and policy makers, on behalf of Government. The Group is composed of representatives of business, employees, education, training (FÁS, Skillnets), Government Departments (Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Department of Education and Skills and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform) and State agencies (IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland).

In addition to the regular meetings of the EGFSN, the group takes part in dialogue with education and training providers on an on-going basis as follows:

- a specific steering group is set up for each report the Group releases, which include representatives from education outside of the EGFSN membership appropriate to the work and wider consultation with relevant stakeholders from education also take place in that context;

- *the High Level ICT Skills - Action Plan* was developed in conjunction with the Department of Education and Science, the Irish Software Association, Enterprise Ireland, IDA and Forfás following the EGFSN analysis of the recruitment challenges in 2012 with recommendations including measures to double the output of honours level graduates from the third level sector by 2018 and, in conjunction with industry, provide conversion courses (760 places in 2012 and 770 places in 2013) to fast-track into ICT, honours level graduates from other disciplines;

- the EGFSN has written the guidelines that accompany the Springboard call each year in 2011, 2012 and 2013 to ensure that those tendering to provide high level education places for jobseekers are focused on the areas of current and future skills needs as identified by employers in the EGFSN research;

- *Guidelines for the Alignment of Further Education Programmes with Skills Needs of Enterprise* – Forfás undertook this research with a view to improving how the Further Education sector can better respond to current and future skills needs. Based on the work of the EGFSN, the report identifies the skills requirements of enterprise relevant to the Further Education sector across NFQ levels 1-6. This includes sectoral and occupational skills needs, in addition to generic skills requirements for those sectors/occupations and highlights recommendations (e.g. new/improved programmes; programmes designed directly with enterprises; wider availability of work placements; skills for employability) made to address these gaps.

There was an emphasis on ICT in the EGFSN/Forfás *Guidelines for Higher Education Providers on Current and Future Skills Needs of Enterprise* for the Springboard 2013 Call. Research work is currently underway by the EGFSN, in consultation with businesses, to quantify

the high level ICT skills demand to 2018 and propose recommendations to bridge any identified gaps.

In April this year, I launched, jointly with my colleague the Minister for Education and Science, the Forfás/EGFSN *Future Skills Requirements of the Manufacturing Sector to 2020* in parallel with the Government's Manufacturing Strategy. These studies were in response to the Government's focus on addressing challenges facing the manufacturing sector in Ireland and targeting specific actions in support of the sector. The EGFSN assessed the skills and competencies needed by the sector in the report. A further expansion of the Springboard initiative this year includes a focus on programmes for jobseekers in skills areas in manufacturing –for example, engineers in validation, polymer, supply chain and automation, and polymer and plastics technicians. FÁS in conjunction with the third level education sector is developing a range of initiatives which are designed to meet the skills identified at pre-craft, craft and technician levels. Currently, these initiatives are focused on the North-West region which contains a strong cluster of precision engineering companies, but the initiative will be extended to other regions as appropriate.

Skillnets have incorporated engineering skills into its new call for Networks and will address the scope and scale of training for the manufacturing sector and more specifically the area of supervisory development needs identified by companies. In addition, the Manufacturing report has been circulated to all VECs and higher education institutions for their response to those recommendations that are focused on amendments to their existing or future provision.

In addition to the work undertaken by the EGFSN, Forfás represents my Department on a number of education and training groups concerned with aligning education with the requirements of the workplace including the Project Maths Implementation Group and the Strategic Review of Further Education and Training of the Unemployed.

Job Initiatives

99. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the steps being taken to provide employment for the young and long-term unemployed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42941/13]

100. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which his Department expects to be in a position to create further job opportunities for the young and long-term unemployed over the next two years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42944/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 99 and 100 together.

The number of unemployed people under 25 years of age fell by 11,200 in the twelve month period to Quarter 2 2013. The unemployment rate for young people fell from 33% to 29.6% over the same period. This downward movement in youth unemployment in Ireland differs from the trend in the EU as a whole, where youth unemployment has continued to rise. However, youth unemployment continues to present a major challenge for Ireland as it does for most other EU Member States.

The latest CSO figures also indicate that the long term unemployment rate is also showing some signs of improvement, having decreased from 9.2% to 8.1% over the year to Q2 2013, a drop of 24,500 people. Long term unemployment now accounts for 58.2% of total unemployment, compared with 61.8% a year ago.

The Government's primary strategy to tackle unemployment is to create the environment for a strong economic recovery by promoting competitiveness and productivity through the Action Plan for Jobs. In addition, the Government recognises the need for measures to support the unemployed and keep jobseekers close to the labour market. In this context, the major elements of the Government's response are set out in Pathways to Work, which is aimed at ensuring that as many as possible of the job vacancies that are created as the economy recovers are filled by people from the Live Register - with a particular focus on those who are long-term unemployed or at risk of long-term unemployment.

Pathways to Work has a target of moving 75,000 people into employment by the end of 2015 through programmes such as JobBridge, Springboard, Momentum and the ICT Action Plan, which are delivered by the Departments of Social Protection and Education and Skills. The JobsPlus initiative, which encourages employers to recruit people who have been unemployed for 12 months or more, was also launched on 8th July last.

The Department of Social Protection is also working with relevant Departments, including my own, to produce a concrete plan for implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Ireland, for consideration by the Government before being transmitted to the European Commission by the end of the year.

My Department is also keen to support young entrepreneurs and, in this context, initiatives such as Enterprise Ireland's Competitive Start Fund and New Frontiers Programme, along with the Microenterprise Loan Fund, will all contribute to supporting young entrepreneurs. The Government will also publish a Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship, including youth entrepreneurship, this year.

The Government's aim is that, by continuing the process of transforming our economy through the Action Plan for Jobs, we can increase employment opportunities for all those who are seeking work.

Questions Nos. 101 to 103, inclusive, answered with Question No. 95.

Job Creation

104. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation based on the experience over the past two and a half years, the extent to which innovation, technology and financial support from the EU Commission in respect of such has facilitated job creation opportunities in this jurisdiction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42948/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Statistics on the creation of jobs by innovation and technology in the enterprise base are not available separately. Innovation and technology are elements of a series of inputs which are requisite for a job to be sustained in commercial enterprise - companies need to identify markets to sell their goods and services, they need to have finance in order to invest in capital and human resources, they need to put in place the delivery and production capacity which meets their customers' needs and they need to focus on the development of new and improved products, processes and services which can ably compete in international markets.

Ireland's enterprises must be able to competitively differentiate themselves in global markets so that they can win sales and create sustainable employment. A critical element of the Government's strategy is to provide supports to help companies to grow global sales and local employment through the most important economic differentiator; innovation. My Department and the State Agencies under its remit are focused on the development and support of interna-

tionally trading manufacturing and services firms in Ireland in this regard. The Action Plan for Jobs emphasises the significance of innovation and the use of technology as critical drivers of job creation in Ireland while seeking to maximise their impact in the coming years. Substantial ongoing investment has been made in Ireland's national innovation ecosystem and in the supports that build the innovative capability in Irish enterprise. In tandem with this approach it is recognised that substantial international expertise and important sources of non-exchequer funding are available via EU research initiatives.

The Seventh EU Framework Programme for Research and Development (FP7), with a budget of €55 billion for the period 2007 to 2013, is the EU's main instrument for funding research and development in Europe. FP7 offers Ireland's SMEs, multinationals, and research institutions valuable opportunities to participate in high-calibre research collaborations with our European counterparts. Enterprise Ireland is the Irish agency responsible for helping Irish companies and third level researchers to participate in FP7.

The most recent statistics available from the European Commission show that the total amount of funding received from FP7 to date by Irish research organisations and companies is €572 million. We are therefore well on track to achieve the target amount of funding from FP7 of €600 million. This funding has provided a considerable increase in the innovative capability of Irish academics and industry over and above existing exchequer investments in this area.

The innovation, technology and financial support from the European Commission to Irish research organisations, including companies, ultimately results in more sustainable jobs and leads to business expansion and increased job creation over the long term. I am confident that our research organisations and companies have the capability to continue this trend under FP7's successor EU Research and Innovation programme - Horizon 2020, covering the years 2014-2020.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

105. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of public servants in his Department that are being paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary and in excess of the Government's pay cap; the annual cost of these excess payments over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43398/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): No public servant in my Department is being paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary or the Government's pay cap.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

106. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when it is expected carer's allowance will be awarded in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42958/13]

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 8th October 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 Pro-

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

Community Employment Scheme Issues

107. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Social Protection the measures she has put in place, or will put in place, to ensure that FÁS scheme supervisors against whom complaints are made by scheme participants do not use their position to campaign against those who have made complaints against them, once the scheme participants have moved on to other employment, including instances where the company's website and Facebook have effectively been used to campaign against two former employees who made what I understand to be justified complaints. [42805/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): In the first instance the issue the Deputy raises is a matter between the Community Employment (CE) Sponsoring Organisation (the legal employer) and the CE participants (employees). Participants in the situation described by the Deputy should communicate their concerns to the Sponsoring Organisation directly. If the matter is not resolved and further assistance is required, an approach should be made to the Department Official who oversees the programme at Divisional level. All CE Sponsoring Organisations are expected to uphold the dignity and respect of the individual and support every individual's right to work in an environment which is free from any form of harassment, intimidation or bullying.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

108. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a date will be agreed for an appeal for invalidity allowance payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42824/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 4 April 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought from the Department of Social Protection. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 23rd August 2013 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on 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 in relation to social welfare entitlements.

Pensions Ombudsman

109. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of determinations that were made by the Pensions Ombudsman; the number of these that were appealed; the number of these appeals that were successful; the total legal cost of these appeals over the past five years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42849/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Office of the Pensions Om-

budsman is an independent agency under the aegis of the Department of Social Protection. The Pensions Ombudsman is an independent statutory officer who was appointed in 2003.

Over the ten years of its existence, the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman has received 10,000 queries and opened over 5,000 detailed complaint files in relation to occupational pension matters. The vast majority of these have been settled by informal intervention by the Office and have not gone to determination. Full details and statistics are available in the annual reports published by the Pensions Ombudsman.

I understand that there have been 611 determinations made by the Pensions Ombudsman since the establishment of his Office in 2003. To date, there have been 9 appeals against determinations of the Pensions Ombudsman and none of these appeals have been successful. Five determinations are currently the subject of High Court proceedings. I further understand that the total legal costs of the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman over the past five years was just under €349,000, which includes the cost of prosecutions taken by the Office against persons failing to furnish information. Legal costs have been awarded to the Pensions Ombudsman in all successful cases and are remitted directly to the State.

The Pensions Ombudsman is independent and impartial in the exercise of his statutory functions. The services of the Pensions Ombudsman are free and available to everyone.

State Pension (Contributory) Eligibility

110. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the support or assistance that will be provided by her Department to citizens who have availed of early retirement or redundancy schemes in which the scheme has specifically indicated that the citizen will begin to receive a State pension from the age of 65 years but who will not now be entitled to receive any State pension until they reach 66 years of age due to recent changes to the State pension scheme. [42856/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): In order to provide for sustainable pensions and to facilitate a longer working life, the Government decided to increase State pension age in three separate stages. This decision to reform State pension was taken in the context of changing demographics and increasing longevity. In 2014, State pension transition will cease and the State pension age will be standardised at 66. This will be increased to 67 in 2021 and 68 in 2028.

The Deputy may wish to note that significant numbers of people are on social welfare schemes well in advance of State pension age. For example, in 2012, 11,130 people were awarded SPT and of these, 12.5% (1,390) came from employment with 50% (5,635) coming from another social welfare payment including illness related schemes, indicating that quite a number of number of people are already in the social welfare system in advance of State pension age.

In relation to those who are already retired through early retirement schemes or through redundancy in advance of State pension age, social welfare schemes are payable up to State pension age. Each application for any social welfare scheme is assessed on its own merit in terms of qualifying criteria and contribution history. Where a person fails to meet the qualifying conditions of an insurance based scheme, the means tested assistance payment may be available provided they satisfy the qualifying conditions including a means test.

The main social welfare payments available to those who leave employment before pension age are jobseeker's benefit and jobseeker's allowance. Persons who qualify for a jobseeker's

payment who are aged between 65 and 66 years are generally entitled to receive payment up to the date on which they reach pensionable age (66 years). With the changes to State pension, social welfare support will continue to be available and targeted at those most in need.

Question No. 111 withdrawn.

Departmental Offices

112. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Social Protection when she expects the move of the social welfare office from Rockfield medical campus, Balally, to the redeveloped social welfare office at Nutgrove shopping centre, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14, to be completed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42869/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Community Welfare Office based at Rockfield Medical Campus, Balally, is designated to transfer to the proposed INTREO office at Nutgrove Shopping Centre, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14, during the first quarter of 2014.

Disability Allowance Appeals

113. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a disability appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42870/13]

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, has decided to allow the appeal of the person concerned by way of a summary decision. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officer's decision.

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 in relation to social welfare entitlements.

Statutory Instruments

114. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will confirm that Statutory Instrument 616/2011 is applicable to claimants in receipt of a benefit at the time the regulation was signed as well as future claimants; when and in what manner pre-existing claimants were informed of changes in the rules; and how new claimants are informed of these rules. [42871/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Statutory Instrument No. 616 of 2011 applies only to transfers of assets (income or property) occurring on or after the commencement date of the Regulation, 29 November 2011.

Where it is noted that such a transfer of assets has been undertaken, on or after that date, by a person in respect of whom a means-tested increase for qualified adult is being claimed by a contributory pension recipient, a deciding officer will carefully consider the facts and circumstances of the case. This will determine if the transfer constitutes a deprivation within the meaning of the Regulation, in order to qualify for, or to enhance the weekly rate of increase for qualified adult payable.

The Department ensures that all information in relation to its schemes are available on the website www.welfare.ie. This includes reference to the underlying principle of deprivation of assets in the context of means testing for schemes operated by the Department. The website has recently been updated to ensure that the information in relation to contributory pensions reflects the legislative provisions.

Free Travel Scheme Review

115. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an interdepartmental working group was established to carry out a review of the operation of the current free travel scheme; if the group has completed its work; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42919/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): There are currently in excess of 770,000 people in receipt of free travel from my Department. This increases to in excess of one million if companies are included. Expenditure on this scheme was frozen at €77 million, the provision in 2010, by the previous Government.

Given the increasing number of recipients and the funding pressures, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport and I established a working group with representatives from the two Departments, as well as the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the National Transport Authority to review the free travel scheme. The purpose of this review is to examine and report on the current operation and future development of the free travel scheme including how the scheme is funded. The work of this group is expected to conclude this year.

Unemployment Statistics

116. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons unemployed or signing on the live register with computer science qualifications at a diploma, graduate and postgraduate level; the total number of graduates unemployed; and the unemployment rates for graduates and the unemployment rate of computer science graduates. [42935/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The number of persons unemployed or signing on the live register with computer science qualifications at a diploma, graduate and post graduate level, the total number of graduates unemployed, and the unemployment rates for graduates and the unemployment rate of computer science graduates are not available from my Department. The occupation details previously held by each live register customer are collected and are the closest available proxy for educational attainment.

As of the end of September 2013 there were 408,670 people on the live register. I have set out below a breakdown by occupation grouping of this number for the Deputy's information. There are 3,092 registrants in the 'Information Technology' occupation group in these statistics.

Occupation Grouping	Total	Percentage Occupation
Construction, Woodwork and Metal and Related Industries	96,417	23.59%
General Operatives	56,477	13.82%
Retail, Sales	49,921	12.22%
Other	41,257	10.10%

Occupation Grouping	Total	Percentage Occupation
Office Admin, Clerical and Secretarial	37,700	9.23%
Domestic and Catering	33,954	8.31%
Health and Related Industries	17,885	4.38%
Management	16,715	4.09%
Education	13,756	3.37%
Vehicle Trade	10,540	2.58%
Security, Military	7,382	1.81%
Agriculture, Fishing and Related Industries	6,146	1.50%
Beauty	5,911	1.45%
Business and Financial	5,891	1.44%
Information Technology	3,092	0.76%
Printing, Press, Communications	2,585	0.63%
Travel, Tourism	1,672	0.41%
Legal Profession	960	0.23%
Textiles	409	0.10%
Total	408,670	100.00%

Rent Supplement Scheme Payments

117. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an increase in rent support can be arranged in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42955/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by my Department that rent limits for the Celbridge area were increased on 17th June 2013. The customer was subject to review as their rent was in excess of the higher rate applicable based on their personal circumstances. The Department advised the customer to bring their rent within the set limits or source alternative accommodation on two occasions, most recently on 9th August 2013. An increase in rate is only considered in cases where exceptional circumstances apply and no such circumstances apply in this case.

Child Benefit Appeals

118. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will review the refusal and refusal on appeal in respect of child benefit application in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare. [42956/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned resided in Direct Provision accommodation up to June 2008, pending a decision from the Department of Justice regarding her permission to remain in Ireland.

Her claim to child benefit has been disallowed for the period prior to June 2008 as she did not satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition. This decision was appealed on two occasions, in March 2008 and again in January 2012. Both appeals were disallowed.

The file has again been reviewed. However, as there are no new facts or information in this case, there is nothing to warrant revising the earlier decision.

Rent Supplement Scheme Eligibility

119. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the action taken to alleviate the hardship caused to a family arising from the cessation of rent allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42957/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The customer concerned was informed by the Department on 13th September 2013 that her application would be processed immediately on foot of receipt of outstanding documentation. This information has not yet been provided to the Department.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

120. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Social Protection when an application for domiciliary care allowance will be dealt with in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42966/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary care allowance was received from the person concerned on 28th June 2013. This application was referred to one of the Department's Medical Assessors who provided an opinion that the child was medically eligible for the allowance. Following a decision on her claim, she was notified on 27th August 2013 that the claim was awarded. The first payment and arrears issued to her nominated Post Office on 17th September 2013.

Social Welfare Appeals Issues

121. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will be made by the appeals office in respect of a person (details supplied). [42971/13]

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 20 September 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 in relation to social welfare entitlements.

Departmental Offices

122. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Social Protection the areas nationally where social welfare offices were closed in the past two years; and if she will justify the rationale for same. [42978/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): As the Deputy will be aware the Department assumed responsibility for the Community Welfare Service (CWS) from the HSE in October 2011 and the FÁS Employment & Community services in January 2012. The Department is currently examining the operation of all its services in the context of the Pathways to Work commitments and the development of Intreo services nationally. The Pathways to Work Programme represents a significant reform in the social welfare system and highlighted

the need for the Department to focus its resources on the provision of opportunities, supports and assistance to unemployed people. The Department is intensifying its level of engagement with the unemployed, in particular, those who are, or become, long-term unemployed. The new Intreo service offers practical, tailored employment services and supports for jobseekers, a model which is currently being rolled out across the country. It is expected that three hundred staff will be redeployed to activation work from within the Department's existing resources by the end of the year.

Overall, this is resulting in a rebalancing of resources across the Department's range of activities including the relocation of some staff to main centres, primarily Intreo offices, which will provide a full range of services, including the CWS and these will, in general, be available in one location. While there has been no closure of local or branch offices in the last two years, some 300 CWS clinics across the country have been re-structured during 2012 and 2013 as well as a small number of former FÁS offices. This included offices where limited weekly CWS public clinics were held, in some cases for only one to two hours per week.

Where the community welfare service has been re-structured, alternative arrangements have been put in place to ensure that customers are provided with on-going access to the supports provided by the service. In general, this means that the frequency of available public clinics will be increased. The staffing needs for all areas within the Department are continuously reviewed, to ensure that the best use is made of all available resources with a view to providing an efficient service to those who rely on the schemes operated by the Department and that the services provided are reconstituted, where necessary, to meet the changing needs of Irish society.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

123. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of public servants in her Department who are paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary and in excess of the Government's pay cap; the annual cost of these excess payments in the past five years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43401/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): There are no public servants in the Department on a salary in excess of €185,350 which was the Taoiseach's annual salary at 1 July 2013. This figure equates to the Government's pay ceiling.

Departmental Funding

124. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will review a request by Granard Town Council for part funding in the amount of 50% to match the funding supplied by it to purchase the Granard Motte, which is a protected structure and of cultural and historical significance to Granard and the surrounding area. [42813/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Question No. 142 on 11 July 2013 in which I clarified the protection this monument already enjoys under the National Monuments Acts and the extremely limited scope for the State acquiring ownership of such properties in the prevailing budgetary circumstances. In the meantime my Department and the Office of Public Works have undertaken an on-site inspection and evaluation and are currently in discussion with the owner's agent and Granard Town Council with a view to determining the best available options for securing the long-term preservation and presentation of the monument.

Departmental Funding

125. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the discussions he has held regarding the ceasing of funding for Eagraíocht na Scoileanna Gaeltachta Teo from the end of December 2013 which provides support and advice to schools in Gaeltacht regions; and his plans to address the situation. [42189/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Eagraíocht na Scoileanna Gaeltachta (ESG) was established in 1987 as an umbrella group to represent the interests of primary and post-primary Gaeltacht schools and to provide advice and support to them. My Department has been in constant contact with the organisation since its establishment. As a result of discussions with my Department, ESG was restructured in 2007 and my Department has sanctioned over €780,000 in grant aid to the organisation since then. Towards the end of 2011, my Department became aware that discussions were ongoing between ESG and Gaelscoileanna with regard to amalgamating the two organisations. The funding that my Department sanctioned for ESG in 2012 and 2013 was conditional on this amalgamation taking place. My understanding of the current position is that the amalgamation has not as yet occurred and that ESG is considering disbanding the organisation.

In the current economic climate, it is more essential than ever to achieve efficiencies from Exchequer funding. In this context, it is worth noting the decision of the North South Ministerial Council on 10 July when it approved the new funding arrangements, to replace Foras na Gaeilge's existing core funding model, with the delivery by 6 lead organisations operating on an all-island basis of various strategic priorities, including Irish-medium education. It is envisaged that the lead organisation which will deliver this strategic priority will serve all Irish-medium schools, both inside and outside the Gaeltacht. Any organisation may apply under Foras na Gaeilge's selection procedures which are to be published in due course.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

126. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of public servants in his Department who are paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary and in excess of the Government's pay cap; the annual cost of these excess payments in the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43390/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): As the Deputy will be aware, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht was established on 2nd June 2011. No civil or public servants in my Department or the bodies under its aegis are currently, or were previously, in receipt of salaries in excess of the limits mentioned by the Deputy since that date.

Fisheries Protection

127. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans to reopen the Waterford Estuary to salmon fishermen for drift net fishing and eel fishing; if not, if a compensation package will be put in place for the eel fisheries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42934/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I refer to the reply to Question No. 771 of 18 September 2013 and Question No. 373 of 24

September 2013 which dealt comprehensively with these issues, including the matter of compensation.

Departmental Funding

128. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the annual subvention his Department provides to An Post; the amount on a yearly basis from 2007 to date in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42784/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): My Department does not provide any annual subvention to An Post.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

129. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of public servants in his Department who are paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary and in excess of the Government's pay cap; the annual cost of these excess payments in the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43392/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): There are no employees in my Department who are paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary or in excess of the Government's pay cap. In June 2011, the Government set pay rates for newly appointed CEOs to Commercial Semi-State Companies. This information is available on the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform website at www.per.gov.ie. All directions issued by the Government in relation to remuneration of CEOs in non-commercial Semi State Companies, including reductions arising from the implementation of the Haddington Road Agreement, have been brought to the attention of the relevant State Companies.

The Annual Reports of the companies contain details of incumbent CEOs' salaries. Copies of the Reports are available in the Oireachtas library or on the websites of the relevant companies.

Water Meters Issues

130. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in view of the earlier response this Deputy received from him, if he will clarify the accessibility features for severely vision impaired persons that were specified in the recent procurement contract for water meters; if this contract is illegal, given that it contravenes the Disability Act 2005 which states that every statutory authority has obligations to ensure that the procurement of any equipment or services intended for use by the general public must be accessible, or at the very least, consultations and a subsequent report into matters of accessibility must be concluded to show the reason such accessibility is being denied; and the action he will take regarding same. [42851/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the reply to Questions Nos. 459 and 476 of 1 October 2013, taken together, which stated that it is a matter for Irish Water to comply with all national and European legislation in the discharge of its functions in relation to the water metering programme. This remains the position. However, Irish Water has confirmed to my Department that water metering contracts are fully compliant with the Disability Act 2005 and that the water meters in use by Irish

Water comply with the Measuring Instruments Directive.

Irish Water has also informed my Department that it has been liaising with the National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI) with regard to any accessibility measures that need to be included by Irish Water in the wider water programme.

Motor Tax Exemptions

131. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the difficulties encountered by members of the Irish Showmen's Guild in obtaining motor tax and avoiding prosecution in respect of vehicles conveying funfair and circus equipment, due to the absence of a special vehicle taxation category; and if he proposes to follow most other EU states in providing a taxation derogation for vehicles used for this specific purpose. [42960/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I have no plans currently to introduce additional categories of motor taxation.

Register of Electors Administration

132. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if there is a common process and common criteria across the local authorities for checking the accuracy of the electoral register each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42803/13]

133. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if the local authorities, when revising the electoral register, avail of other sources of information in addition to field workers calling to a property to determine if a registered voter is, or is not, resident at the property. [42804/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 132 and 133 together.

The law in relation to the register of electors, as set out in the Electoral Act 1992, provides for the preparation and publication of the register of electors in their areas by registration authorities - city and county councils. It is their duty to ensure as far as is possible, and with the cooperation of the public, the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the register. My Department has issued guidance to registration authorities to assist them in managing the registration process.

For the purpose of preparing the register, each registration authority is required to make house to house or other sufficient inquiry in their registration area. As part of this process, they may require individuals to give any information in their possession which the authority needs and they may require individuals to produce documentary evidence, including a birth certificate or a certificate of naturalisation, or to make a statutory declaration regarding their age or citizenship.

The publication of the draft register in November each year in preparation for the coming into effect of the register on 15 February following allows for corrections to be made. The public is invited to check the draft during this period so that people can make sure that they are correctly registered. Any errors or omissions in the draft should be brought immediately to the attention of the registration authority. Claims for the addition or deletion of names are ruled on

by the county registrar who is a legally qualified court officer. The ruling is made in public and any person may attend and give evidence.

Also, if a person is not included in the register of electors currently in force but considers that he or she qualifies for registration - for example if they have come of age to register or if they have changed address - the person may apply for entry in the supplement to the register which is open year round subject to certain practical limits in the weeks before a polling day.

Local Authority Properties

134. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the proposals for the use of the civic offices in Tramore following the amalgamation of Waterford city and county councils; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42810/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Government's Action Programme for Effective Local Government sets out its policy for a range of local government reform measures, including the establishment of a new comprehensive model of municipal governance to strengthen local government within counties and address weaknesses and anomalies in the current system. Definitive details, arrangements and procedures in relation to the reform agenda are being developed in the context of the new local government structures generally, the implementation of the new sub-county system (including where appropriate metropolitan areas) and the preparation of the legislation in relation to the reform programme.

The full range of local authority functions and services will continue to be required to be delivered across each local authority area, and having regard to optimising the delivery of these functions and services, it is a matter for each individual local authority to decide on the utilisation of their assets, including existing civic offices.

Waste Management Issues

135. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of plastic drinking bottles used here annually; if he will provide a breakdown of the sizes of these bottles and the different categories of liquids used in each; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42811/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): While my Department does not collect or collate the information sought, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) produces the National Waste Report which provides some detail on waste streams in Ireland, on an annual basis. The most recent report, relating to 2011, is available for download from the EPA website.

National Housing Development Surveys

136. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when he will publish the national housing survey; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42825/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Gov-

ernment (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): Since 2010, the National Housing Development Survey has been conducted by the Department’s Architecture and Building Standards Inspectorate, in conjunction with relevant staff across all local authorities, over the summer months and published in the autumn. The 2013 survey data is being collated and analysed and it is expected to be published later in the year.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

137. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide in tabular form on a county basis a breakdown of vacancy rates on local authority housing stock; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42826/13]

138. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide in tabular form on a county basis a breakdown of vacancy rates on voluntary housing association stock; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42827/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 137 and 138 together.

My Department collates and publishes a wide range of housing and planning statistics that inform the preparation and evaluation of policy, and those data are available on my Department’s website www.environ.ie.

Data relating to vacancy rates in local authority housing stock and voluntary housing association stock are not included in this range. However, vacancy rates in local authority housing stock are collected annually as part of the Local Government Management Agency’s review of local authority service indicators. Electronic copies of the reports, including the most recent report for 2011, are available on the Local Government Management Agency’s website – www.lgma.ie.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

139. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide in tabular form on a county basis a breakdown of the total local authority housing stock; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42828/13]

140. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide in tabular form on a county basis a breakdown of the total voluntary housing association housing stock; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42829/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 139 and 140 together.

My Department collates and publishes a wide range of housing and planning statistics that inform the preparation and evaluation of policy, and those data are available on my Department’s website, www.environ.ie.

Data relating to local authority housing stock, broken down by county, are included in this range. Although my Department does not specifically collate data on the total quantity of voluntary housing association housing stock, data relating to all units provided under the voluntary

housing schemes, broken down by county, are also included in this range.

Shared Ownership Scheme

141. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if a review is underway regarding the unfair and inequitable shared ownership scheme for previous purchasers of affordable and non-affordable homes; if the rental equity held by local authorities on these homes has been amended to reflect the dramatic changes in market values over recent years; if it is proposed to devise a mechanism for the conversion of rental payments by purchasers to mortgage type repayments each month; the total number of homes that were purchased under the shared ownership scheme in all local authorities since its inception; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42864/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Government’s 2011 housing policy statement announced the standing down of all affordable housing schemes, including the shared ownership scheme, in the context of a full review of Part V of the Planning and Development Act. That review is available on my Department’s website www.envron.ie and the period for public submissions closed on 27 September 2013.

Earlier in 2013, I asked the Housing & Sustainable Communities Agency to conduct a standalone review of the shared ownership scheme, including identification of the main difficulties and recommendations for mitigating measures. I have received an interim draft of the review from the Agency and I intend to issue a circular letter to local authorities this month with preliminary recommendations arising from the review.

A number of issues have been identified that need further detailed financial analysis in order fully to assess the impact on local authority finances of possible mitigating measures. This additional work is underway and I expect to be in a position to address other aspects of the matter in the coming months.

Statistical information on the numbers of homes purchased under the shared ownership scheme, as well as other affordable housing schemes, can be found on my Department’s website, www.envron.ie.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Status

142. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position regarding the Castletownbere sewerage scheme; when he expects the project works to commence; the expected timetable for its completion; if funding will be provided by his Department to complete the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42865/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Castletownbere Sewerage Scheme is included in my Department’s Water Services Investment Programme 2010 – 2013 (WSIP) as a scheme at planning. This scheme, when completed, will provide for the upgrading of the existing sewage collection system and the installation of a Wastewater Treatment Plant serving Castletownbere and its environs.

Cork County Council submitted a Preliminary Report for the scheme to my Department in July 2010. Following examinations, this was not approved, and my Department responded to

Cork County Council in March 2011. I understand that a revision of the Preliminary Report is being prepared.

The Preliminary Report, when completed and approved, will make recommendations on the necessary upgrading of the sewage collection network and the provision of a Wastewater Treatment Plant. The Preliminary Report will also outline the costs and the time scale for the delivery of the proposed works.

Irish Water will be responsible for the delivery of water services capital infrastructure from 1 January 2014, and is currently preparing a Capital Investment Plan for 2014-2015. This Plan is expected to take account of the transition of projects that are included in the current WSIP into the new Investment Plan.

Local Authority Housing Repossessions

143. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of houses repossessed by local authorities during the course of 2013; if these repossessions were forced or voluntary; if the properties were mortgaged or rented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42884/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department collates and publishes a wide range of housing and planning statistics that inform the preparation and evaluation of policy, and those data are available on my Department's website www.environ.ie.

Data on number of houses repossessed by local authorities are included in this range. Repossessions in that dataset relate to mortgaged units only. The data are broken down by area and by forced and voluntary repossessions.

Gender Balance Issues

144. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of females who hold the position of Director of Service or County Manager within each local authority here at the present time; the percentage of the total overall this represents; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42885/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): There are 33 City and County Managers of which 4 or 12% are women. As at June 2013, there were 190 Directors of Service in local authorities. This represents a reduction of 72 WTE or 27% since 2008 and meets the recommended level from the Local Government Efficiency Review Group's Report, July 2010.

While information regarding staffing levels in local authorities is routinely gathered, specific information on the gender of local authority employees is not. Local Government competitions at senior level are held by the Public Appointments Service in co-operation with my Department and the relevant local authorities, all of whom are committed to the highest standards of customer service and comply with equality and other relevant legislation and codes of practice.

Wastewater Treatment Issues

145. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position regarding the Clonsbaugh waste disposal proposal and the environmental concerns of local residents. [42908/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Proposals for the North Dublin Wastewater Treatment Plant/Orbital Sewer project, which was part of the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GSDSDS), are included in my Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2013 as a scheme to advance through planning.

It is a matter for Fingal County Council to advance the further planning of the project. To date, the Council has engaged in a number of statutory and non-statutory consultation processes as planning for the project developed. The project will require planning permission and will be the subject of an Environmental Impact Assessment; it may also require a Foreshore licence all of which have a statutory public consultation element. These consultation processes provide an opportunity for interested parties to comment on the proposed project and to highlight any areas of concern.

Local Government Reform

146. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in view of the fact that persons voted in favour of retaining Seanad Éireann whether he will consider giving the persons the right to have a say in whether town councils should be abolished; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42926/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the reply to Question No. 937 of 18 September 2013. The Action Programme for Effective Local Government sets out Government decisions for a range of local government reform measures, including the establishment of modern sub-county structures that will provide a robust mechanism for connection between local government and communities, with enhanced democratic accountability and operational efficiency. There are no proposals in relation to the matter referred to in the question.

Nitrates Usage

147. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will extend the dates for the spreading of slurry and farmyard manure in view of the significant grass cover on land, exceptional ground conditions and the fact that 20% of farms have a fodder deficit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42933/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Nitrates Directive and Ireland's National Nitrates Action Programme are given legal effect by the consolidated European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2010. The objective of the Regulations is to protect ground and surface waters, including drinking water sources, primarily through the management of livestock manures and other fertilisers.

Good agricultural practice involves the land spreading of organic fertilisers as early as practicable in the growing season in order to maximise the uptake of nutrients by crops and to minimise pollution risks to water courses and groundwaters. In accordance with the requirements of the Nitrates Directive, the Regulations include provisions regarding periods when the land

application of certain types of fertilisers is prohibited. In addition, the Regulations prohibit such application at any time of the year when the ground is frozen, waterlogged or heavy rain is forecast.

On 22 May 2013 my colleague, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and I announced measures to alleviate the crisis in fodder availability caused by poor Spring weather conditions. These included a two week extension of the spreading season for chemical fertilisers from 15 September to 30 September to address the potential fodder shortage during the coming winter.

In view of these measures and of the prolonged period of favourable weather that has prevailed this summer, no extension to the spreading periods for organic fertilisers is proposed.

Housing Adaptation Grants Funding

148. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will make more funding available to Westmeath County Council for the distribution of the housing adaptation grant for the elderly and persons with a disability; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42969/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): 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. Through active management of my Department’s overall housing budget for 2013, I allocated further funding across all local authorities on 19 July bringing the overall funding for these grants to €45.607 million. In the case of Westmeath County Council the initial allocation for the grant schemes in 2013 amounted to €435,723. I approved two subsequent supplementary allocations in April and July, bringing the Council’s overall allocation to €653,376.

My Department is closely monitoring expenditure across all measures under the housing programmes. I will consider allocating further funds to the grants measure in the event of any savings arising elsewhere.

Motor Tax Exemptions

149. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to detail his plans to allow a further extension to the new motor tax regime to allow exemptions for cars off the road and to allow for some cases where the deadline was missed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42973/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the reply to Questions Nos. 371 and 396 of 8 October, which set out the position in this matter.

Motor Tax Exemptions

150. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will consider allowing an exception to the new motor tax regime and exemptions for cars off the road in cases where older cars have been off the road for a significant

period, for example, in excess of ten years and are being renovated for vintage purposes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42974/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I have no plans to provide for exemptions from the requirement to make a declaration of non-use of a motor vehicle in advance for particular categories of vehicle.

Electoral Reform

151. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the measures he is taking to increase voting turnouts; if he has considered the model of compulsory voting as implemented in Australia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42975/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Whenever an election or referendum takes place, my Department places advertisements in the national papers advising eligible voters who are not registered to vote to take the opportunity to apply for inclusion in the supplement to the register of electors so that they can take part in that election or referendum.

In the case of referendums specifically, the role of any Referendum Commission established for that referendum includes the promotion of public awareness of the referendum and the encouragement of the electorate to vote at the poll. My Department also undertakes an annual poster campaign to encourage voters to ensure that they are registered to vote.

In addition, a number of measures are in place to facilitate greater voter participation. They include the facility to include photographs and party emblems on ballot papers, the display of a large print copy of ballot papers in polling buildings and companion voting for persons with literacy difficulties. Provision was also made to enable registered voters who change address to apply for entry in the supplementary register. Information leaflets on the electoral process are available from my Department and are on my Department's website.

While I will continue to keep under review any further measures to improve voter participation, I have no proposals to introduce compulsory voting.

Register of Electors Administration

152. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will consider using personal public service number information when compiling the register of electors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42976/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): In law, the preparation of the Register of Electors is a matter for each local registration authority – city and county councils. It is their duty to ensure, as far as possible and with the cooperation of the public, the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the register. This is done on an ongoing basis in accordance with the electoral acts. There is no provision for linking the electoral register to PPS numbers.

The Programme for Government contains a commitment to establish an Electoral Commission to subsume functions of existing bodies and my Department, including positions in respect of the electoral register. Matters associated with the registration process, including linking the register to PPS numbers, would be appropriate for consideration by the Electoral Commission.

Local Government Fund

153. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 477 of 01 October 2013, which indicated that the current gross payroll bill for the local government sector amounts to €1.354 billion whereas the payroll figure in his Department's consolidated Financial Statement is €1.682 billion, if he will explain the significant difference between the figures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42977/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Quarterly returns including Payroll and Superannuation are collected and collated by my Department in a prescribed format under the IMF/EU Programme of Financial Support (PFS) for Ireland. In this regard, the Gross Cash Remuneration costs in 2012 for all local authorities amounted to €1.354 billion. This figure comprises core pay, overtime, allowances and other pay related costs for the period 1 January 2012 to 31 December 2012 inclusive.

2011 is the latest year for which audited local authority Annual Financial Statement data are available. Total payroll expenses, sourced from Appendix 1 of the audited 2011 Annual Financial Statement, were €1,785,020,113 in that year, inclusive of salaries and wages, pension and gratuities and other payroll costs.

Public Sector Staff Recruitment

154. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the communication his Department has had with Fingal County Council in relation to assisting them to deal with the crisis in the operation of libraries as a result of retiring librarians who have not been replaced as a result of the recruitment embargo. [42297/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): My Department operates a delegated sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for implementation of the moratorium in relation to local authorities. Any exceptions to the moratorium in local authorities require sanction from my Department.

Under section 159 of the Local Government Act 2001, each City and County Manager is responsible for staffing and organisational arrangements necessary for carrying out the functions of the local authorities for which he or she is responsible. In this regard, it is a matter for City and County Managers, in the first instance, to ensure that the moratorium is implemented while the appropriate service levels are maintained.

My Department examines all staffing sanction requests on a case by case basis having due regard to the continued delivery of key services in the context of staffing and budgetary constraints. In considering sanction requests public safety, maintaining key front line services, and economic issues are given precedence.

In relation to the specific posts referred to in the question, my Department recently sanctioned two library assistant posts on a permanent basis for Fingal County Council.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

155. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of public servants in his Department that are being paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary and in excess of the Government's pay cap; the annual cost of these excess payments over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43395/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): There are no civil servants employed by my Department and no public servants employed by local authorities or by agencies under the aegis of my Department who are being paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary and in excess of the Government's pay cap.

Road Traffic Offences

156. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide in tabular form information according to the figures available for each of the past five years on the amount of revenue collected for drink driving offences; the number of offences involved; the number of fines that went unpaid; the revenue subsequently lost by the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42904/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have asked the Courts Service to provide the information sought by the Deputy and I will write to him as soon as the details are available.

Garda Stations Closures

157. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans for the Donegal town Garda station; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42800/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Donegal Garda station was not identified for closure in the Policing Plan for 2013 and currently there are no proposals being prepared to close the station or alter its opening hours. As the Deputy is already aware, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the detailed allocation of resources, including personnel, throughout the organisation and I have no direct function in the matter. This allocation of resources is constantly monitored in the context of demographics, crime trends, policing needs and other operational strategies in place on a District, Divisional and Regional level to ensure optimum use is made of Garda resources and the best possible Garda service is provided to the public. As of 31 August 2013, Donegal Garda Station had a complement of 30 members.

Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission Administration

158. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason he has not enabled GSOC to access the PULSE system under the new protocols, despite their outlining on a number of occasions that this was necessary to enable them to carry out their function effectively. [42873/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Last month, revised protocols between the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission and the Garda Síochána under section 108 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 were agreed by the Chairperson of the Ombudsman Commission and the Garda Commissioner. The revised protocols provide the Ombudsman Commission with access to PULSE through the two Garda Superintendents working on secondment with the Ombudsman Commission.

I have no function in determining the content of protocols under section 108 of the 2005 Act, but it is clear that it is the view of both the Ombudsman Commission and the Garda Síochána, as evidenced by this agreement, that these protocols provide a basis for timely and complete co-operation in the conduct of investigations by the Ombudsman Commission.

It is also the case that, in order to facilitate early engagement in relation to any future emerging issues concerning the protocols, I have established a committee chaired by a senior official of my Department, with senior representatives from the Ombudsman Commission and the Garda Síochána, to act as a forum where any such issues can be identified and appropriately addressed.

Courts Service Issues

159. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide a breakdown of the running costs for the courts over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42888/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy may be aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998 management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service which is independent in exercising its functions and I have no role in this matter.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has provided expenditure details in respect of the period 2008 to 2012, as set out in the table below. It should be noted that this expenditure is reported annually in the appropriation account for the Courts Vote.

Year	Total Gross Expenditure	Appropriations in Aid (Receipts)	Total Net Expenditure
2012	107,697,000	48,541,000	59,156,000
2011	112,724,000	50,085,000	62,639,000
2010	148,594,000	50,447,000	98,147,000
2009	125,772,000	51,358,000	74,414,000
2008	138,038,000	39,018,000	99,020,000

In addition to the standard running costs, incorporating payroll and other administrative costs, the details supplied include capital expenditure and the repayment costs related to the Criminal Courts of Justice Complex which was provided under a Public Private Partnership arrangement. The Courts Service also receives moneys to the benefit of the Exchequer (Appropriations in Aid), by way of its court fees, thereby reducing greatly the overall cost to the Exchequer. The above figures do not include judges remuneration which is paid from the central fund.

Courts Staff

160. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of judges appointed to each court and the total hours the courts sit for annually; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42889/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Supreme Court consists of the Chief Justice and seven ordinary judges. In addition, the Government recently nominated

two additional Supreme Court judges and they are due to be appointed shortly. The High Court consists of the President and thirty four ordinary judges. The Circuit Court consists of a President, thirty-six ordinary judges and six specialist judges who were recently appointed to deal with the new work arising as a result of the Personal Insolvency Act 2012. The District Court consists of a President and sixty two ordinary judges.

As the Deputy will be aware, the management and administration of the courts is a matter for the Courts Service. The allocation of the business of the courts, scheduling of court cases and the management of court lists are matters for the judiciary and the Presidents of the courts. The sittings and vacations of the courts are currently provided for in Rules of Court. The Presidents of the respective courts can and do, on occasion, schedule additional sittings to address particular issues. In addition to the scheduled sittings High Court judges are at all times available to hear urgent applications outside of regular business hours. In order to guarantee access to justice when required as a matter of urgency, this includes late evening and night time sittings as well as regular sittings at weekends and during any court recess.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

161. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of public servants in his Department who are being paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary and in excess of the Government's pay cap; the annual cost of these excess payments over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43399/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can inform the Deputy that no civil or public servants employed in my Department or agencies under its aegis are being paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary or in excess of the Government pay cap.

Defence Forces Employment Contracts

162. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Defence the number of different contracts of employment that exist within the Defence Force in relation to the terms and conditions and related benefits for personnel and their families; the number of personnel under each type of contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42845/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): It has not been possible in the time available to compile all the necessary documentation requested by the Deputy. The information will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Defence Forces Personnel

163. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Defence the number of qualified doctors and nurses who are currently serving in the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42850/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The military authorities advise that there are 18 Doctors and 8 Nurses currently serving with the Defence Forces. A competition for the appointment of doctors to the Defence Forces Medical Corps remains open with applications being accepted on an ongoing basis. As suitably qualified applicants are identified they will be interviewed with regard to their suitability for service in the Defence Forces. In this regard, a successful applicant was appointed on 30 September 2013, while another 4 applicants are cur-

rently progressing through the selection process.

Based on the medical requirement across the Defence Forces as a whole, there is a current requirement for approximately 32 doctors within the Defence Forces Medical Corps.

Against this background, alternative options for the provision of medical services to the Defence Forces are also being considered. In this regard, an integrated model for the provision of the required medical services, involving both the Medical Corps and outsourced service provision is being progressed.

I would like to take this opportunity to assure the Deputy that Defence Forces personnel requiring medical treatment are getting the care they need and that I am committed to providing a sustainable medical service to meet the needs of the Defence Forces both at home and abroad.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

164. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Defence the number of public servants in his Department that are being paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary and in excess of the Government's pay cap; the annual cost of these excess payments over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43393/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Defence Organisation includes civil servants, military personnel and civilian employees. None of these staff have been employed on a salary in excess of €200,000 per annum.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

165. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will investigate and expedite a disadvantaged area scheme payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42794/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As processing of the 2013 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme application has recently been finalised, payment will shortly issue to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Single Payment Scheme Applications

166. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding disadvantaged area payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42797/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a Single Farm Payment/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme application on 15 May 2013. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases on-farm inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a ground eligibility/cross compliance inspection. The ground eligibility inspection has been completed and the results are now being finalised. In the event that any queries arise officials of my Department will shortly be in contact

with the person named.

During the course of the cross compliance inspection discrepancies were recorded in relation to the tagging and registration of cattle that resulted in a 5% penalty. The person named was notified of this decision on 1 October 2013. The person named was also informed of the right to seek a review of the decision. In the event that the person named is dissatisfied with the outcome of the review, the decision can be appealed to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office within 3 months.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

167. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment under the single farm payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42801/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): A 50% advance payment under the Single Farm Payment Scheme will commence on 16 October. EU Regulations governing the administration of the scheme require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases on-farm inspections, be completed before any payments issue. Processing of the 2013 application of the person named has recently been finalised and I expect that payment will issue on that date to the person named.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

168. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive an area based payment; the reason for the delay in same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42807/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As processing of the 2013 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme application has recently been finalised, payment will shortly issue to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Forestry Grants

169. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of appeals that have been received by his Department regarding the digitisation of forestry holdings for the years 2012 and January to September 2013; the number of these appeals that were successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42815/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): There were six such appeals received in 2012 of which one was successful. For the year 2013 to date fifty four such appeals have been received. Of these twenty five cases have been determined of which five were successful.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Eligibility

170. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a person (details supplied) in County Galway who is participating in the Twelve Bins/Maam Turk

Complex can amend their agri-environment option scheme plan to allow them to put sheep back on the hill due to the fact that the Twelve Bins/Mam Turk Complex Scheme is not being renewed after November; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42843/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am aware that the Twelve Bins/Maam Turk Complex Scheme, which the National Parks and Wildlife Service put in place for the purpose of regenerating these commonages, expires on 1 November, 2013. The future management of these commonage lands will now be considered in the wider context of the ongoing examination of issues relating to all Commonages. This process will involve the farmers directly managing the lands, relevant stakeholders, the farming organisations and all other interested stakeholders. The aim is to achieve a practical solution which will ensure that the farmers actively farming these lands are protected and that the land is maintained or returned to GAEC and that the requirements of the governing EU regulations are met.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

171. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason payment under the disadvantaged area based scheme did not issue to a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42844/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2013 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 26 February 2013, following processing of which an over-claim was identified in respect of a parcel declared by the person named. The person named was subsequently notified of the over-claim and, as the resultant penalty on Disadvantaged areas is greater than 20%, no payment is due under this Scheme. However, it remains open to the person named to submit an application seeking a review of the decision in his case; such an application should be supported by any necessary evidence.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

172. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive their farm payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42848/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a Single Farm Payment/Disadvantaged Area application form on 14 May 2013. Applications were also submitted to my Department on 14 May, 2013 requesting the transfer of 5.72 and 8.57 Single Payment entitlements to the person named. Following contact between officials in my Department and the relevant parties, issues arising from errors on the transfer application forms were resolved and these applications were subsequently processed.

Payment in respect of the Disadvantaged Area Scheme will issue shortly to the person named. A 50% advance payment under the Single Farm Payment Scheme will commence on 16 October and I expect that payment will issue to the person named on that date.

District Veterinary Offices

173. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will reverse the decision to close all public District Veterinary Offices desks throughout the

country in view of the low computer literacy skills of many older farmers; if he will ensure that a number of regional public desks are established; if he will ensure that the Roscommon office provides such a service in view of its strategic location; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42859/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department has not made any decision to close down all public District Veterinary Offices. The position is that, following on from the successful restructuring of my Department's local office network, which reduced the number of local offices from 58 to 16, my Department has decided to centralise the administrative support currently provided in the local offices into two offices, Cavan and Portlaoise.

The decision to centralise the administrative support is based on a review by the Department of the business processes and procedures and, in particular, the administrative support requirements, in its remaining Local Offices. Arising from this review, the Department introduced a number of significant changes earlier this year to the procedures in relation to the implementation of controls in the context of the TB eradication programme. These changes and, in particular, the decision not to take up passports from restricted herds and to abolish the movement permit requirement for clear cattle in restricted herds, combined with the eradication of Brucellosis and a substantial reduction in the incidence of TB in the country, has significantly reduced the administrative staffing requirement in the local offices. In light of these developments, the review concluded that further significant efficiencies in terms of the number of administrative staff required will accrue from the centralisation of administrative support in one or more centralised office(s).

My Department is in the process of implementing this recommendation and has already transferred the administrative functions out of a number of local offices, including Clonakilty, Limerick and Tipperary. The transfer of the administrative functions out of other regional offices, including Roscommon, will be considered in light of the availability of opportunities to redeploy the staff concerned to support other critical public services.

Centralising administrative procedures will enable my Department to reduce the number of administrative staff it requires to support Veterinary Office operations and, accordingly, the cost of providing its services. This is in line with Government policy. In addition, the centralisation of administrative functions will facilitate the re-deployment of staff from the regional offices to other State agencies and, thereby, enable the Government to provide services through these agencies more efficiently.

I would like to emphasise that the centralisation of the administrative functions of the local offices should not negatively impact upon local access and services for local customers and experience to-date indicates that there has been no negative impact on the services provided by these offices. The Department vets, inspectors and technical officers will remain in place at these offices to service our clients across all of the schemes that are provided from our Regional Offices. In view of this, I am satisfied that frontline services will be fully maintained and public access for all of the Departments stakeholders will continue to be available at the 16 regional offices, including Roscommon.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

174. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a person (details supplied) has had a deduction taken off their area based payment following on from their land being digitized. [42893/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted an application for Single Payment on 2 May 2013 and declared four land parcels, which represented a claimed area of 83.25 hectares. Following a review by my Department of the eligibility of the land parcels declared, two of these parcels declared by the applicant included ineligible features, i.e. buildings, roads, rock and scrub amounting to an ineligible area of 2.57 hectares. Such areas are not eligible for payment under the Direct Payment Schemes such as the Single Payment Scheme and the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme.

The person named was notified of the position regarding these two parcels by letter dated 21 September 2013. The applicant submitted an application to my Department for a review of this decision on 3 October 2013. However, the person named did not provide any information to substantiate her application. It is open to her to submit supporting documentation to support this appeal.

Payments under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme issued to the person named on 7 October 2013 based on the maximum area payable of 34 hectares, as the determined area was greater than 34 hectares. The issue of payments under the Single Payment Scheme will commence on 16 October and the amount to issue to the applicant will be based on the reduced area pending the outcome of the review.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

175. **Deputy Áine Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the payments that have been made to a person (details supplied). [42917/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Applications under the 2011 Single Payment and Disadvantaged Areas schemes were received from the person named and payments issued. The person named passed away on 25 January 2012.

An application was made by the legal personal representatives of the person named on 15 May 2012 under the 2012 Single Payment and Disadvantaged Areas Scheme. Payments issued to the estate of the person named on receipt of the testamentary documents.

An application was received from the legal personal representative to transfer the single payment entitlements to another person in the 2013 scheme year. This application was accepted and both parties were notified on 3 July 2013.

Meat Processing Plant Licences

176. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when an application will be finalised in respect of a company (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42920/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Applications for approval to operate meat processing plants must meet the requirements of the European Communities (Food and Feed Hygiene) Regulations 2009 (S.I. 432 of 2009) and related EU Regulations. The applicant in this instance has upon request provided clarification in relation to the proposed range and scale of activities. As a consequence one of the preconditions for approval has been adjusted and the applicant has been notified accordingly. The onus is on the applicant to meet the conditions of approval.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

177. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding payments in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42921/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted a Single Farm Payment/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme application on 12 March 2013. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases on-farm inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a ground eligibility inspection. This inspection has been completed and the results are now being processed. In the event that any queries arise officials of my Department will shortly be in contact with the person named.

Single Payment Scheme Administration

178. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the exact percentage of the number of persons that have had their area aid cut due to discrepancies following on from their land being digitised (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42923/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Deputy will be fully aware of the importance of payments made under the Single Payment Scheme, the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and other Direct Payment Schemes to the annual income of Irish farmers. My Department is bound, under EU Regulations, to maintain the accuracy the Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS), which underpins the processing of applications under these Schemes as well as REPS and AEOS.

At the start of each year, my Department issues colour maps of all land parcels declared by farmers in the previous year together with a covering letter. In that letter, farmers are reminded to examine each map carefully and to identify and exclude from their application all ineligible features such as buildings, farmyards, scrub, roadways, forests, lakes etc. included in the land parcels. There is, therefore, an onus on all farmers to ensure that the area of land declared by them as eligible for payment under the Direct Payment Schemes is accurate. These requirements are also made clear in the Terms and Conditions of the Schemes, which accompanies the pre-printed application form issued to all farmers at the commencement of the application period each year. In view of the size and structure of farm enterprises in Ireland, farmers are fully aware of all of the non-eligible areas of their holdings.

In addition to any changes submitted by farmers, in order to insure the integrity of the LPIS, and in line with the EU conditions governing the payment of funds, my Department continuously reviews the eligibility of lands claimed by farmers for the Single Payment Scheme and other Direct Payment Schemes.

In line with this position, all lands claimed under Direct Payment Schemes in respect of the 2009-2012 scheme years are currently subject to ongoing review for eligibility purposes. As this work is ongoing, it is not possible to give a county by county breakdown at the present time. As a result of this phase of this review, payments made to farmers in respect of claimed areas, which were found to be ineligible, must be reimbursed. In such circumstances, farmers are advised that they can either refund the over-payment directly to my Department, or, alterna-

tively, the overpayment can be recouped from their next payment(s) due from my Department. Such reviews can only be undertaken when up-to-date imagery becomes available to my Department. During the cross-checks undertaken it is necessary to verify that the ineligible feature (e.g. a house) was in existence in the years when over-claims of eligible areas are established. Where ineligible features are identified, farmers are issued with maps of the re-digitised land parcel and are advised of the right of appeal.

Applicants will be entitled to have their case reviewed by submitting their appeal on the form provided by my Department. If they are not satisfied with the outcome of the review, they can appeal their case to the independent chaired Land Eligibility Appeals Committee. This Committee will consist of an independent Chairman and Appeals Officers from the Agriculture Appeals Office.

Farms Data

179. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide a breakdown of the number of registered farmers that are under 35 years of age; the number of persons over the state pension age that are registered as farmers; the number of persons over 85 years of age that are registered as farmers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42925/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The following tables shows the breakdown of the age profile of farmers requested, based on the Department's 2012 SPS database.

Age Category	Number of Farmers	% of Total Farmers
Under 35	6,828	5%
Over 66 (State pension age)	33,072	26%
Over 85	2,961	2%
Total Farmers	124,843	

The table shows that 26% of all farmers in Ireland are over the State pension age, with 2% over 85; and only 5% under 35.

I have been working to encourage more new entrants to take up farming as a career. Budget 2013 saw the extension of key reliefs that were already in place for young new entrants (such as the 100% relief from Stamp Duty and the 100% stock relief for Young Trained Farmers). The Deputy will also be aware that changes were made to retirement relief in Budget 2012 to encourage inter-generational land transfers. It should also be noted that there has been no change to the very important 90% agricultural relief on Capital Acquisitions Tax (CAT). This means that farms worth up to €2.25 million will continue to be fully exempt from CAT with regard to transfers to a child.

In addition, a new restructuring relief was announced in the 2013 budget. Re-structuring is essential for us to meet the Food Harvest 2020 targets. We need to use land more productively and encourage more young farmers to make the best use of the land. An EU Commission study found that '*younger [farm] managers tend to perform better than the EU average, with 46% more area and 57% more economic potential for 21% more labour force.*'. The new restructuring relief on Capital Gains Tax will give young farmers an opportunity to consolidate their holdings and increase efficiency.

Measures to provide targeted support to young farmers are included the final CAP reform

agreement. I strongly support the proposal for a top-up for young farmers under Pillar 1 of the CAP, and indeed Ireland was one of the first countries to suggest this measure in the negotiations.

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

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

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

180. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) will receive their disadvantaged area payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42972/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As processing of the 2013 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme application has recently been finalised, payment will shortly issue to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Commonage Framework Plans

181. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a person (details supplied) in County Galway who is participating in the Twelve Bins/Maam Turk Complex can amend their agri-environment option scheme plan to allow them to put their sheep back on the hill due to the fact that the Twelve Bins/Maam Turk Complex scheme is not being renewed after November; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42980/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am aware that the Twelve Bins/Maam Turk Complex Scheme, which the National Parks and Wildlife Service put in place for the purpose of regenerating these commonages, expires on 1st November, 2013. The future management of these commonage lands will now be considered in the wider context of the ongoing examination of issues relating to all Commonages. This process will involve the farmers directly managing the lands, relevant stakeholders, the farming organisations and all other interested stakeholders. The aim is to achieve a practical solution which will ensure that the farmers actively farming these lands are protected and that the land is maintained or returned to GAEC and that the requirements of the governing EU regulations are met.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

182. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of public servants in his Department that are being paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary and in excess of the Government's pay cap; the annual cost of these excess payments over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43389/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): No officer

in my Department has been in receipt of salary payment in excess of the Government pay caps first introduced in June 2011 and revised in July of this year.

HSE Data

183. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the position regarding the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42954/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have requested the information from the HSE and I will revert to the Deputy when this information is to hand.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

184. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of public servants in her Department that are being paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary and in excess of the Government's pay cap; the annual cost of these excess payments over the past five years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [43391/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I can confirm to the Deputy that the answer to this PQ in respect of my Department is 'Nil'.

Professional Fees

185. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health the reduction of payments to health professionals that has been made by his Department over the past year; his plans to reduce further payments made by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42788/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): A review was carried out earlier this year under the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Act 2009 in relation to the operation, effectiveness and impact of the amounts and rates payable to certain health professionals under the relevant Regulations.

The professionals concerned were General Practitioners, Pharmacists, Dentists, Ophthalmologists, Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians who hold contracts with the HSE, Smeartakers contracted under the CervicalCheck programme and Consultant Psychiatrists who hold contracts with the Mental Health Commission.

Having carefully considered the submissions made during the consultation process, the Minister for Health decided to make the following reductions:

- An overall reduction of 7.5% in fees and allowances payable to GPs under the GMS Scheme, Immunisation Schemes, HeartWatch and the Maternity & Infant Care Scheme.

- The elimination of the 20% retail mark-up to Community Pharmacists in respect of items dispensed under the Drug Payment Scheme, the Long Term Illness Scheme, the European Economic Area Scheme and the Health (Amendment) Act 1996 Scheme.

- A 3% reduction in fees paid to Consultant Ophthalmologists.

- A 3% reduction in fees paid to Consultant Psychiatrists who hold contracts with the Mental Health Commission.

The following Regulations have been prepared to give effect to the Minister's decisions and these came into effect on 24th July 2013:

- S.I. 277/2013 - Health Professionals (Reduction of Payments to General Practitioners) Regulations 2013;

- S.I. 278/2013 - Health Professionals (Reduction of Payments to General Practitioners) (National Immunisation Programmes) Regulations 2013;

- S.I. 279/2013 - Health Professionals (Reduction of Payments to Community Pharmacy Contractors) Regulations 2013;

- S.I. 274/2013 - Health Professionals (Reduction in payments to Ophthalmologists, Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians) Regulations 2013;

- S.I. 276/2013 - Health Professionals (Reduction of Payments to Consultant Psychiatrists) Regulations 2013.

Under the FEMPI legislation, the Minister for Health is required to carry out a review of the operation, effectiveness and impact of the amounts and rates fixed under the regulations each year. This will involve a full consultation with stakeholders in 2014.

Medical Card Applications

186. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if a medical card will be awarded in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42790/13]

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 issued to Oireachtas members.

Orthodontic Services Provision

187. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding children who are on a programme of free dental treatment, that is, orthodontic treatment, braces and so on, who were attending national school last year and are now in first year in secondary school and need to continue on the programme of treatment started in national schools; the position in connection with continuing with this necessary dental treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42793/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The HSE provides orthodontic treatment to those who have been assessed and referred for treatment before their 16th birthday. Where a course of orthodontic treatment commences while a child is in primary school the necessary treatment will continue after the child enters secondary school.

Orthodontic referrals are generally received via the Public Dental Service primary school screening programme. Those who attend private schools or are home schooled are also included. An individual's access to orthodontic treatment is determined against a set of clinical guidelines called the Modified Index of Treatment Need. Patients with the greatest level of need, i.e. Grade 5 or Grade 4 are provided with treatment by the HSE.

Organ Removal

188. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health the reason a hospital (details supplied) in the early 1990s took the organs from stillborn babies; the reason they were taken without the knowledge or permission of mothers; where those organs went and what was done with them and the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42809/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My Department published two reports by Dr Deirdre Madden in 2006. The first of these reports "Post Mortem Practice and Procedures" inquired into the policies and practices relating to the removal, retention and disposal of organs from children who had undergone post-mortem examination in the State since 1970. The second report "Working Group on Post Mortem Practice" considered the application of the recommendations of the first Report to (a) babies who died before or during birth, (b) minors and (c) adults.

In line with a recommendation in Dr. Madden's reports, an independent audit of all retained organs in the State was carried out by Ms Michaela Willis and her report was published in 2009.

In March 2012, the Health Service Executive published "Standards and Recommended Practices for Post Mortem Examination Services" and these were circulated to all relevant hospital staff. The overall aim of the standards and recommended practices for post-mortem examinations is to drive high quality services based on best professional practice and current legal requirements. Meanwhile, the Heads of a Human Tissue Bill, which will incorporate aspects of the key recommendation of Dr. Madden's Reports are at an advanced stage of drafting.

Hospitals Discharges

189. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Health the number of delayed discharges there have been in Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown in 2013; the reasons for these delayed discharges; the actions that has been taken to reduce this figure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42831/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Delayed Discharges continue to present a significant challenge to the optimal use of acute hospital resources. They impede the operational functioning of a hospital and expose patients concerned, predominantly older persons, to the inappropriate risks of longer acute hospital stays e.g. hospital acquired infections. Higher numbers of delayed discharges can also be associated with extended waits in the Emergency Department.

My Department and the HSE remain seriously concerned regarding the situation in relation to delayed discharges and consider it essential that this issue is successfully addressed. A number of actions have been initiated in this regard. These include the establishment by me of a Ministerial task force to deliver substantial improvements in delayed discharges, including a review of the operational arrangements associated with the 'Fair Deal' scheme. Senior personnel have been tasked with improving cross hospital-community process issues, focusing first on

the 'longest waiting' delayed discharges (>100 days). The aim is to remove all local barriers to discharge and identify those matters which require action at a national level. The management teams have been making good progress with respect to these tasks and it is intended to quickly roll-out this structure to all areas.

The HSE increased allocations of Fair Deal approvals, temporarily prioritised Fair Deal referrals for patients in acute hospitals, including referrals to long stay facilities from acute hospitals for older persons with complex needs and also targeted appropriate homecare packages for older persons in acute hospitals experiencing significant delayed discharges. New reporting systems and processes have also been introduced. A HSE web-based database that allows tracking at patient level (on an anonymous basis) is in the implementation phase in a number of hospital sites. In addition, the categorisation of reasons for delay has been reviewed. The data captured through the web-based system will facilitate revised metrics for each hospital. There will be a greater emphasis on reducing the bed days lost to delayed discharges, with targets established on a site-by-site basis.

As the issues raised regarding the number of delayed discharges and the reasons for these delayed discharges from Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown are operational matters for the HSE, I have asked the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy in relation to this.

Care of the Elderly Provision

190. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Health the funding and grants available to assist communities established day care centres for the elderly; the other supports his Department and the Health Service Executive offer communities that wish to establish day care centres for the elderly; if he has a strategy for the development of day care centres for the elderly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42832/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Government policy is to support older people to live in dignity and independence in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. Approximately €392 million has been allocated by the Health Service Executive in 2013 to provide for community support services, including the Home Help Service, Home Care Packages, day care and meals-on-wheels. The HSE estimate that approximately 21,460 clients will avail of Day Care services in 2013. In the context of the development of an integrated model of care for older people, the HSE is currently reviewing the provision of day care services to ensure that clients are receiving the most appropriate service to meet their needs. As the Health Service Executive has responsibility for the funding of these services, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Strategies

191. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Health if he is confident that the structures and systems are in place for the introduction of money following the patient in January 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42833/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My Department is working closely with the HSE to ensure that full phased implementation of Money Follows the Patient (MFTP) will commence from January 2014. I am confident that all necessary steps are being taken to deliver the new funding model in line with this target date.

Progress has been made on a number of areas in this regard including completion of a “State of Readiness” review by an internationally recognised expert in MFTP. The purpose of this review was to assess the health system’s capacity to roll out MFTP in public hospitals. I am happy to report that the assessment concludes that the Irish health system exhibits the key components required for a MFTP funding system and is in a strong position to begin phased implementation of MFTP in line with the target date of 2014.

The Department and HSE have also been working towards the establishment of a National Pricing Office from January 2014. This Office will be comprised of staff working in the HSE Casemix Programme and the ESRI Health Information and Research Division. Its main functions will be to set the national Diagnosis Related Group prices, on which the MFTP system is based, and manage the HIPE dataset.

Preparations are now being made for the commencement, in November, of a shadow funding exercise in a selection of hospitals from across the hospital groups. This exercise will involve hospitals continuing to receive their existing base budgets. However, a process will be put in place to: (i) compare on a systematic basis, actual hospital activity against baseline activity targets; and (ii) inform hospitals of what the financial implications of any variance from the targets would be in a “live” system, without changing budgets during the shadow period. This will be a valuable learning exercise for the hospitals concerned.

I regard MFTP as a key building block in the move to Universal Health Insurance and I am committed to supporting MFTP fully as it develops.

Home Help Service Provision

192. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Health in view of the fact that the one million hours that have been cut in recent years from home help services, if he will ring fence resources for home help from any further cuts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42834/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Health Service Executive has committed in its National Service Plan 2013 to maintaining community supports such as home help and home care packages at the levels planned for in 2012. This means that 10.3m hours of home help will be provided with 50,000 people receiving this service, and that 10,870 people will be in receipt of home care packages. On-going regular reviews of home support services by the HSE will help to ensure that service users receive supports that are aligned to their assessed needs and that new applicants can, as far as possible, continue to be processed and allocated appropriate supports within the available resources.

Disease Incidence

193. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of children and adults who have come to the attention of his Department as having been diagnosed with Ehlers–Danlos syndrome; the research that has been undertaken by his Department to determine the prevalence of this condition here [42855/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As the particular queries raised by the Deputy are service matters, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy.

Services for People with Disabilities

194. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if support for the disability sector will be maintained by his Department in budget 2014, particularly for Prosper Fingal which has services across north County Dublin. [42857/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Prosper Fingal was established in 1978 as a parents and friends organisation (formerly called The Fingal Association for the Handicapped), to provide a local day service for adults with a moderate or mild learning disability. The aim of the organisation is to “enable people with disabilities develop their true potential towards full and independent participation in society”. Prosper Fingal provides personal and social services to adults with an intellectual disability on behalf of the Health Service Executive under Section 39 of the Health Act 2004. Services are provided through a Service Arrangement which is reviewed on an annual basis.

The HSE will continue to work closely with voluntary service providers and service users and their families to ensure available resources are used in a creative and flexible manner in order to be responsive to the needs that present. The Health Service as a whole has to operate within the parameters of funding available to it and given the current economic environment; this has become a major challenge for all stakeholders, including the HSE, voluntary service providers, services users and their families. The level of funding available for the health budget and the extent of the savings required in the health sector are being considered as part of the estimates and budgetary process for 2014 which is currently underway. Pending completion of the national estimates, budgetary and service planning process for 2014 it is not possible to predict the service levels to be provided next year for the disability sector.

Hospice Services

195. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that funding for children’s hospices (details supplied) will not be cut in Budget 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42868/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Children’s Sunshine Home (now operating under the title of LauraLynn House) has provided specialist disability services to children with severe disabilities since 1925. It is funded by the Health Service Executive (HSE), under Section 38 of the Health Act 2004, to deliver services on behalf of the HSE.

The HSE will continue to work closely with voluntary service providers including LauraLynn House, service users and their families to ensure available resources are used in a creative and flexible manner in order to be responsive to the needs that present. The Health Service as a whole has to operate within the parameters of funding available to it and given the current economic environment, this has become a major challenge for all including the HSE, voluntary service providers, service users and their families. The level of funding available for the health budget and the extent of the savings required in the health sector are being considered as part of the estimates and budgetary process for 2014, which is currently underway. Pending completion of the national estimates, budgetary and service planning process for 2014, it is not possible to predict the service levels to be provided next year for the disability sector.

Hospital Waiting Lists

196. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Meath will be treated at Navan orthopaedic unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42872/13]

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 been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists. In relation to this particular query raised by the Deputy, I have asked the Health Service Executive to investigate the situation and respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

197. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health when a determination will be made regarding a mobility aid in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42875/13]

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.

Ambulance Service Provision

198. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Health the number of ambulances that are based in County Waterford to service the needs of the population (details supplied); his views on whether this is adequate; his plans to increase the number of ambulances servicing this area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42881/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy.

Health Services Staff Data

199. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Health the number of orthopaedic positions that are meant to be in place to service the south-east area and Waterford Regional Hospital (details supplied); the number of orthopaedic consultants at present working in this area; his plans to increase the number of these consultants; the timeframe for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42882/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

200. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there is currently no pain clinic in Waterford Regional Hospital; the reason for

same; the efforts being made to address this situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42883/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy.

Sudden Adult Death Syndrome

201. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health the number of deaths annually in Ireland due to Sudden Adult Death Syndrome; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42890/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): This matter has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Sudden Adult Death Syndrome

202. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health the number of people in Ireland who may be unwittingly vulnerable to sudden adult death syndrome; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42891/13]

203. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health his plans to introduce screening to identify persons at high risk of sudden adult death syndrome; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42892/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 202 and 203 together.

The Report of the Task Force on Sudden Cardiac Death (2006) estimated that approximately 5,000 cardiac deaths are sudden cardiac deaths. These are due to coronary heart disease, valvular heart disease or other cardiac abnormalities. Whilst it recommended prevention strategies for coronary heart disease, it did not do so for mass population screening for sudden cardiac death, but rather the identification of priority groups such as close relatives of those who died from sudden cardiac death under 40 years of age for risk assessment. The National Cardiovascular Health Policy (2010) has endorsed these recommendations.

The HSE is the main agency responsible for implementing these recommendations and in its 2010 Progress Report on Sudden Cardiac Death it sets out progress in this area. I have requested that the HSE furnish the Deputy with an update.

Health Services Provision

204. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a person's residential services, use of disability allowance to pay, and if the person has to go to accident and emergency with their health matters (details supplied) in Dublin 9 [42906/13]

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.

Questions - Written Answers
Health Services Provision

205. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite physiotherapy in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5. [42910/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

206. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a hospital place in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5 [42912/13]

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.

Medical Card Applications

207. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9 [42915/13]

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 issued to Oireachtas members.

Health Services Expenditure

208. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the Health Service Executive budget; if there will be a shortfall in the budget; if there will continue to be sufficient funds to pay subvention for elderly persons who require long term residential care in nursing homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42922/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): It is too early to say whether there will be a shortfall in the HSE budget in 2013.

Significant savings have been required of the health services since the downturn in the economy. The underlying reduction in health spend is over €3bn since 2008, a reduction of 20% in real terms. The number of staff within the health service has reduced by 10% and the population has increased by 8%. Despite this we are still managing to reform and improve the service.

The total budget for long-term residential care in 2013 is €974m. The HSE operates a national placement list to enable it to operate within the budget. All applicants for the Nursing Homes Support Scheme who are approved for funding are put on the national placement list in chronological order by the date of determination of their application. Funding issues to applicants in this chronological order to ensure equity nationally. The HSE makes every effort to

match available funding to demand by releasing funding on a weekly basis.

Health Services Access

209. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 291 of 30 of May 2013, the extent of diagnostic and support services made available to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 24; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42949/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The particular issue raised by the Deputy is a service matter for the Health Service Executive. Accordingly I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Care of the Elderly Provision

210. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the existing and future role in the provision of services for the elderly in respect of St Brigid's Hospital, Crooksling, Dublin 24, in view of the high level and quality of care, competence and ancillary facilities therein; if he will accept the need for the ongoing fundamental role provided by the hospital for the region; if he will ensure the retention of the maximum number of patients and staff at the facility; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42950/13]

211. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to attempts to encourage staff to redeploy from St Brigid's Hospital, Crooksling, Dublin 24 to other locations with obvious resultant consequences; if he will ensure the retention of the full complement of staff and patients therein to provide for the viability of the hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42951/13]

213. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if any part of the current disused section of accommodation at St Brigid's Hospital, Crooksling, Dublin 24 might be considered a suitable location for setting up VETOS nursing training courses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42953/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 210, 211 and 213 together.

As these are service matters they have been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Registration of Title

212. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which the land registry details of title have been resolved to the satisfaction of the hospital authorities and the Health Service Executive in respect of St Brigid's Hospital, Crooksling, Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42952/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I understand the land registry details of title the Deputy is referring to is Crooksling Hospital.

Management of the healthcare property portfolio is a service matter. Therefore your ques-

tion has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Question No. 213 answered with Question No. 210.

Primary Care Centres Provision

214. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the number of local health centres or clinics which were closed over this Government's term in office. [42979/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive (HSE) has responsibility for the provision of Primary Care Centres, the operation and maintenance of existing health centres and clinics and the provision of services at such centres. Therefore, this matter has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

215. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Health the number of public servants in his Department that are being paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary and in excess of the Government's pay cap; the annual cost of these excess payments over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43397/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): There are no staff employed directly in my Department who are paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary or the Government's pay cap.

With regard to the Health Service Executive and the other health agencies, they have been asked to collate the data sought as soon as possible and it will be provided directly to the Deputy when available.

Public Transport Issues

216. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when a ticket vending machine will be put in place at a train station (details supplied) in Dublin 7; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42802/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issue raised is an operational 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.

Haulage Industry Regulation

217. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 628 of 1 October 2013, if he intends to introduce maximum vehicle height restrictions in the form of secondary legislation; if not in the form of primary legislation; if this is currently under consideration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42817/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Regulations are already in place relating to the maximum height of vehicles. Statutory Instrument 366 of 2008.

Statutory Instrument 366 of 2008 - Road Traffic (Construction and Use of Vehicles) (Amendment) Regulations, 2008 sets the maximum height limit of vehicles at 4.65 metres.

With the introduction of the Regulations in 2008, a five-year derogation from the limit was agreed for certain classes of vehicles registered, licensed or in use prior to 1 November 2008. The derogation was introduced in order to allow a five-year period within which vehicles in excess of the new statutory limits could be withdrawn from use in Ireland.

Sport and Recreational Development

218. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the capital grants available for the provision and improvement of loop walks, coastal walks and other walkway infrastructure for tourists; the level of funding available each year since 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42835/13]

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 contact my private office if a response is not received within ten working days.

Driving Licence Issues

219. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to extend the date by which driving licenceholders may get the trailer pulling category added on to their normal licences; if he is willing to amend the regulations to enable farmers who have a normal licence for ten years or more rather than prior to 1989 to be able to get this added on without doing another driving test; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42838/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Prior to 1989, a person holding a licence to drive a car was entitled to tow trailers. A change to regulations in that year introduced new categories of licence, including the categories B and BE. Category B was for a car alone or with a trailer up to 750 kg design gross vehicle weight, and BE for a car with a trailer of up to 3,500 kg design gross vehicle weight.

A driver who held a car licence in 1989 could retain the entitlement to tow trailers by ticking boxes for both categories at their next renewal date. It appears that some drivers, unwittingly, did not apply to have the trailer category added to their licences at renewal time, and as a result lost their entitlement to tow trailers.

I have agreed with the Road Safety Authority (RSA), as an exceptional and once off measure, that category BE will be added to the licence of those drivers who can provide proof that they held this entitlement prior to 1989. I understand that the proof required can be obtained from the Motor Tax Office that issued the licence. Where proof is not available, the RSA will accept a sworn affidavit from the licence-holder indicating that he/she held a Class C licence prior to 1989.

The offer to add the trailer category will be available for a limited period to be determined by the RSA. Drivers who obtained a driving licence after 1989 are still required to undertake a test in order to add an additional category, such as towing a trailer. It is important to remember that the requirement for such a test has been the case since 1989.

Private Bus Operator Licences

220. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a private contractor has been granted the licence by the National Transport Authority to serve the Cavan-Dublin bus route in competition with Bus Éireann route 109. [42853/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Bus Éireann Services

221. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the National Transport Authority has granted a licence to Bus Éireann for its route 115 service to stop near the entrance of National University of Ireland, Maynooth. [42854/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Road Traffic Accidents Data

222. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport according to the most recent statistics available, the percentage of fatal collisions on Irish roads in relation to which inappropriately high speed was a significant contributing factor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42895/13]

223. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport according to the most recent statistics available, the percentage of fatal collisions on Irish roads in relation to which alcohol use by a motorist was a significant contributing factor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42896/13]

224. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport according to the most recent statistics available, the amounts by which motorists were exceeding the respective speed limits in cases where inappropriate speed was a contributing factor to fatal collisions on Irish roads; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42897/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 222 to 224, inclusive, together.

Under the Road Safety Authority Act 2006 (Conferral of Functions) Order 2006 (S.I. No. 477 of 2006) the Road Safety Authority has responsibility for the analysis of road safety collision statistics.

Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy's questions to the Road Safety Authority for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Road Safety Issues

225. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on the effectiveness of the imposition of speed limiting devices on vehicles driven by drivers that have been before the courts on driving offence charges; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42898/13]

226. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has studied the experiences of other countries that have used the fitting of speed limiting devices on vehicles as a means of improving road safety; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42899/13]

227. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has studied the effectiveness of fitting anti-alcohol immobilising devices on vehicles as a means of improving road safety; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42900/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 225 to 227, inclusive, together.

Currently there is no legal basis providing for the approval, certification, fitting and monitoring of speed limiting devices for mandatory use on mechanically propelled vehicles following a conviction for a road traffic offence. I do not have any plans at this time to provide for the use of such devices in legislation. On the more general issue of speed limiters, the European Commission recently conducted a study on the implementation of the Directive on speed limitation devices and its possible extension to light goods vehicles and cars. Ireland took the position, expressed through the Road Safety Authority, that there is currently no justification for extending the scope of the Directive to other categories of vehicle.

As regards alcohol interlocks, Action 121 of the Road Safety Strategy 2013 to 2020 provides for undertaking a cost benefit analysis for the use of alcohol interlocks as a sanction for repeat offenders. The lead agency responsible for the implementation of the Action is the Road Safety Authority and the completion date for the Action is the first quarter of 2014.

Road Safety Issues

228. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will request emergency funding from the Department Finance to intensify road safety warnings and awareness in the final weeks of 2013, in view of the worrying rise in road tragedies in the first nine months of 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42901/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Advertising and education regarding road safety for all road users is the responsibility of the Road Safety Authority (RSA). My Department provides funding to the RSA in order to allow it fulfil its functions. It is a matter predominantly for the RSA to decide the allocation of funding across its functions. I am aware that a considerable amount of its total income is allocated to education and awareness campaigns and funding is available for this activity.

I have asked the Road Safety Authority to respond directly to the Deputy in relation to his concerns, providing details of the education and awareness campaigns that it operates, and I would ask him to contact my office if he has not received a reply within ten days.

Road Safety Strategy

229. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he

will meet the Department of Justice and Equality to co-ordinate an intensification of road safety efforts in the final weeks of 2013, in view of the worrying rise in road tragedies in the first nine months of 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42902/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Action 111 of the Road Safety Strategy 2013-2020 provides for the maintenance of the Ministerial Committee on Road Safety to monitor progress on the implementation of the Strategy.

The Committee met in April this year, following the publication of the Road Safety Strategy 2013-2020 and the next meeting is scheduled to take place in November.

The Minister for Justice and Equality and the Garda Commissioner are among those invited to attend the meetings of the Committee. The enforcement of road traffic legislation and the current trends in road fatalities are included in the issues discussed at meetings of the Committee and I will be focussing on the period remaining in 2013 in that respect.

In addition, the Road Safety Authority meets regularly with the Gardaí to analyse the causes of road traffic collisions and to agree appropriate measures to take to enhance road safety generally.

Departmental Bodies

230. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a person (details supplied) in Dublin 3 may opt out of their VHI payment. [42911/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issue raised is a matter for CIE and I have referred 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.

Road Projects Status

231. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of money which has been allocated to improvement works on the N24 at Dromkeen, County Limerick; what has been achieved to date and when he expects to see works commencing on the junction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42918/13]

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 do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

232. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number

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of public servants in the Department being paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary and in excess of the Government's pay cap; the annual cost of these excess payments over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43403/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): No individual in my Department is being paid in excess of the Taoiseach's salary or in excess of the Government's pay cap.