

## Written Answers.

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

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*Questions Nos. 1 to 7, inclusive, answered orally.*

### **Low Pay Commission Establishment**

8. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the position regarding the low pay commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [9968/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Gerald Nash):** The establishment of a Low Pay Commission is one of the key commitments in the Statement of Government Priorities agreed in July last.

The General Scheme of the National Minimum Wage (Low Pay Commission) Bill was approved by Government in January. The General Scheme, together with a Regulatory Impact Assessment, has been published on my Department's website and forwarded to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation for pre-legislative scrutiny.

The Commission will be a nine member body comprising an independent chairman, three members who will have a deep understanding of the interests of low-paid workers, three members who will have a deep understanding of the interests of employers, particularly small to medium-sized employers and those operating in traditionally low-pay sectors, and two members who will have relevant knowledge or expertise in relation to some or all of the following; economics, labour market economics, statistics, and employment law. The term of office of its members will be three years, subject to a maximum of two consecutive terms.

The 9 members of the Commission have been appointed. With the exception of the position of chairperson, the appointment process was managed by the Public Appointments Service (PAS). The Commission was officially launched on 26th February last to operate on an interim administrative basis and the Commission held its first meeting on the same day. It is intended that the interim membership will constitute the Commission when it is established on a statutory basis.

The principal function of the Low Pay Commission will be, on an annual basis, to examine and make recommendations to the Minister of the day on the national minimum wage, with a view to securing that the national minimum wage, where adjusted, is adjusted incrementally having regard to changes in earnings, productivity, overall competitiveness and the likely impact any adjustment will have on employment and unemployment levels.

Alongside examining the National Minimum Wage, the Low Pay Commission will also be tasked with examining matters related generally to the functions of the Commission under the

Act. This work programme will be agreed by Government and presented to the Commission in February of each year.

In discharging its functions, the Commission will be required to ensure that any advice or recommendations it makes to Government is evidence-based; utilising agreed data, carrying out research and consultations with employers, workers and their representatives and taking written and oral evidence from a wide range of organisations. This is to ensure that any suggested changes to the National Minimum Wage have minimum adverse impact on employment and competitiveness.

In addition, the Commission will be asked to consult with employers and workers who are directly affected by the National Minimum Wage. The Commission has already commenced its work in this regard and has recently placed notices in national newspapers seeking submissions on the issue.

The Commission is expected to submit its first report by the middle of July.

*Question No. 9 answered orally.*

### **Regional Development**

10. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his proposals for job creation throughout the regions, with particular reference to the need to achieve a reasonable balance in terms of economic investment, thereby contributing to a more co-ordinated, integrated and comprehensive development of job creation opportunities in the future; if any infrastructural deficiencies need to be addressed in this context; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12089/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Employment has increased nationally by almost 90,000 since the start of the Action Plan process in 2012. All regions have experienced job growth but some regions less than others. That is why the Government is placing an increased emphasis on supporting jobs growth in the region.

The Government recently announced details of the Regional Action Plan for Jobs initiative which will seek to build on the strengths and assets of each region to maximise enterprise growth and job creation. My objective is that six Regional Action Plans will be launched by July, with two remaining Strategies in development at that stage.

The objective of this new initiative is to strengthen and develop job creation in the regions by encouraging the enterprise development agencies, Local Authorities, regional bodies, higher education institutions, other public bodies, as well as the private sector and communities, to come forward with innovative ideas to boost job creation in their area.

While the Regional action plan process will not, in itself, address issues surrounding significant infrastructural deficits it will be of assistance in highlighting any such difficulties. Other Government strategies including Infrastructure and Capital Investment programme and the National Broadband Strategy will identify key infrastructural priorities to be addressed within the constraints of available resources.

The Regional Action Plans will provide up to €250 million over five years in additional funding to support regional enterprise development. This €150m IDA property programme will build on the recent investment by the IDA in a number of advance manufacturing facilities in regional locations. It should be noted that the Advance Facilities announced recently represent

less than half of the total investment in property solutions as part of the new IDA Strategy. Significant resources will be invested in utility intensive strategic sites which have a track record of attracting FDI as well as a substantial upgrade of large sections of the existing Business Park network to ensure an attractive suite of investment location options are available to potential investors.

The Enterprise Ireland €100m will be distributed through three new competitive calls which will be announced by EI over the coming months. Funding will be allocated to the best ideas across the regions. Tangible jobs impact, enterprise start-up and scaling are amongst the criteria against which applications will be measured. Innovative collaborations among different regional agencies or stakeholders will also be favourably weighted.

*Questions Nos. 11 to 13, inclusive, answered orally.*

### **Employment Rights**

14. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in view of industrial action looming at a company (details supplied), the measures he plans to take to address the issues of zero hour contracts and excessive use of temporary contracts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11958/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Gerald Nash):** I understand that the current dispute concerns a range of issues, including the introduction of banded hours contracts, individual and collective representational rights and a review of the use of temporary contracts. The union is seeking to engage with the company on these issues and the matter was referred by the union to the Labour Court under section 20(1) of the Industrial Relations Act, 1969 in October of last year.

The company was not represented at the Labour Court hearing. The Court found it regrettable that the company declined to participate in the investigation of the dispute or to put forward its position on the union's claims.

In its recommendation of 14th November 2014, the Court reaffirmed earlier recommendations it had made by noting that the Company and the union were party to a collective agreement signed in 1996 which provides a procedural framework within which industrial relations disputes and differences arising between the parties can be resolved by negotiation and dialogue. The Court pointed out that the dictates of good industrial relations practice requires parties to honour their collective agreements in both spirit and intent.

I regret that the company decided against attending the Labour Court hearing, contrary to good industrial relations practice in that regard. In my view, the experience and expertise of the Labour Court offer the most appropriate and effective avenue for resolving such issues.

I would urge both parties to avail of the services of the State's industrial Relations machinery who remain available to assist the parties, if requested. It is my opinion that engagement with the State's industrial relations machinery offers the best way whereby the parties involved in this dispute can hope to resolve their differences.

However, the system of industrial relations in Ireland is essentially voluntary in nature and recommendations of the Labour Court are not legally binding. Neither the Labour Court, nor the Minister, can compel a company to comply with such recommendations. Ultimately, responsibility for the settlement of a trade dispute rests with the parties to the dispute.

As regards zero hours contracts, in accordance with the Statement of Government priorities, the Deputy will be aware that I recently commissioned the University of Limerick (UL) to carry out a study into the prevalence of zero hour and low hour contracts and the impact of such contracts on employees. The appointment of UL follows a competitive tendering process.

The key objectives of the study are:

- To fill the gap in knowledge that currently exists in terms of the hard data and information that is available concerning the prevalence of zero hour and low hour contracts in the Irish economy and the manner of their use.

- To assess the impact of zero hour and low hour contracts on employees.

- To enable the Minister to make any evidence-based policy recommendations to Government considered necessary on foot of the study.

The study will have a broad scope, covering both the public and private sectors, with a particular focus on the retail, hospitality, education and health sectors. The study will examine how zero and low hour contracts operate in practice and how they impact on employees. It will assess the advantages and disadvantages from the perspective of employer and employee and assess the current employment rights legislation as it applies to employees on such contracts. The study will also consider recent developments in other jurisdictions, including the UK in particular. The study may also identify how the information gap might be addressed in the future.

Unlike the position in the UK, Section 18 of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 provides that where employees on zero hour contracts suffer a loss by not being given the hours they were requested to work or be available for work, they can be compensated for 25% of the time or 15 hours, whichever is less. There is no equivalent provision in the UK, where employees on zero hours contracts are only paid for time spent working and if they are not given any hours by their employer they receive no compensation.

A wide range of stakeholders will be canvassed to contribute to the study and I expect the study, which commenced recently, to be completed within six months.

It is worth noting that while the proportion of Irish workers who are on temporary contracts rose slightly during the recession, reaching 10.5% in 2011, it has since fallen back to the pre-recession level of 9.5% and remains significantly below the EU average of 14.4%. The CSO data for February 2015 indicates that the share of casual and part-time workers on the Live Register was down over 11% on February 2014, equivalent to 9,049 workers. The cumulative decrease is 17,625 workers since February 2013.

The Deputy will appreciate that I cannot anticipate the outcome of the study or the Government's consideration of the study's findings.

### **Job Losses**

15. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the progress to date in replacing jobs lost at a bank (details supplied) in County Leitrim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11962/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** A series of actions are being implemented by local and national bodies to source an alternative employer

and find alternative employment for those impacted by the MBNA redundancies, which unfortunately took effect on November 28th last.

An inter-agency group, led by Enterprise Ireland, has been formed and its membership includes representatives of all the relevant State players. This Group has met on a regular basis and is providing a coordinated approach to the needs of the affected staff and ensuring that all necessary steps are put in train to pursue an alternative employer.

The IDA, through its global network, continues to market the former MBNA facility to a range of potential investors and Enterprise Ireland is also marketing it to its client base. The availability of a skilled pool of the former MBNA employees is being highlighted.

There have been a small number of preliminary enquiries about the facility, both from foreign owned and Irish owned businesses but it is too early in the process to be specific about their potential.

The Government is very committed to Regional Job Creation. In pursuance of this objective, under the 2015 Action Plan for Jobs which I launched recently, it is intended to develop and publish a suite of Regional Enterprise Strategies, based on consultation with key stakeholders at regional level and on the analysis of the strengths of each region. All will include specific actions for all the enterprise development organisations and other public bodies active in each region, to promote enterprise growth and job creation. Of course specific issues and factors relevant to particular regions, such as the MBNA closure, will be fully embraced in the new Strategies.

### **Action Plan for Jobs**

16. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide an update on the way his Department is attempting to increase job creation in County Donegal through the Action Plan for Jobs; the number of jobs forecasted to be created in 2015 in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12081/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The aim of the Action Plan for Jobs is to help enterprises to create employment in all regions of the country. While employment has increased nationally by over 89,000 since the start of the Action Plan process in 2012, not all regions are yet fully experiencing the benefits of economic recovery. That is why the Government is placing an increased emphasis on supporting jobs growth in the regions.

The *Action Plans for Jobs Regional* initiative seeks to build on the success of the annual Action Plan for Jobs process by developing locally driven plans that can build on the strengths and opportunities identified in each region. These plans will contain a series of specific actions to be delivered by a range of public bodies and local stakeholders, including Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, and the Local Enterprise Offices, to maximise the potential of each region to support enterprise development and jobs growth.

Eight Regional Action Plans will be published this year,. My objective is that six Plans, including one for the Border region which includes Co. Donegal, will be launched by July, with two remaining Plans in development at that stage.

It is not intended that specific job creation targets will be set for each county in the Regional Action Plans for Jobs, but, rather, that the plans will identify measures that can be taken to enable each region as a whole to realise its economic potential and create jobs, building on its



competitive strengths and opportunities.

### **Trade Agreements**

17. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the business sectors which have lobbied the Government in relation to the transatlantic trade and investment partnership talks; the percentage that were supportive; the sectors that opposed specific proposals and the sectors in total opposition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12047/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As part of our engagement and consultation on matters relating to EU-US trade negotiations my Department has met with stakeholders and in particular representative organisations and sectors of enterprise on questions arising in the negotiations. I am not aware of any total opposition to the negotiations arising in these consultations. Indeed business sectors have been broadly supportive of the negotiations and are assisting the Department in identifying priorities and sensitivities in the negotiations. Business sectors represented by IBEC in consultation and briefing meetings with the Department have been broadly supportive of the TTIP negotiations.

IBEC as an organisation are publically supportive of the trade agenda including the EU US trade negotiations. IBEC has 7,500 members. On the other hand, I have received 470 same content emails from individuals concerned about investment provisions in the negotiations. I have responded to these emails to clarify and explain the position.

As I have said previously in the House the purpose of the negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is to generate jobs and growth by reducing barriers to trade and investment.

I would like to add that My Department commissioned a study on the impact in Ireland of TTIP. The study, which has now been finalised will be published tomorrow. I welcome hearing the views of all stakeholders including all sectors of business so that we can be in the best position to get the best overall deal for Ireland.

### **Low Pay Commission Establishment**

18. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide a commitment that this Government will ensure that the 24,000 workers in the early childhood education sector will be included in the low pay commission. [7762/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The establishment of a Low Pay Commission is one of the key commitments in the Statement of Government Priorities agreed in July last.

The General Scheme of the National Minimum Wage (Low Pay Commission) Bill was approved by Government in January. The General Scheme, together with a Regulatory Impact Assessment, has been published on my Department's website and forwarded to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation for pre-legislative scrutiny.

The principal function of the Low Pay Commission will be, on an annual basis, to examine and make recommendations to the Minister of the day on the national minimum wage, with a view to securing that the national minimum wage, where adjusted, is adjusted incrementally having had regard to changes in earnings, productivity, overall competitiveness and the likely

impact any adjustment will have on employment and unemployment levels.

Alongside examining the National Minimum Wage, the Low Pay Commission will also be tasked with examining matters related generally to the functions of the Commission under the Act. This work programme will be agreed by Government and presented to the Commission in February of each year.

In discharging its functions, the Commission will be required to ensure that any advice or recommendations it makes to Government is evidence-based; utilising agreed data, carrying out research and consultations with employers, workers and their representatives and taking written and oral evidence from a wide range of organisations. This is to ensure that any suggested changes to the National Minimum Wage have minimum adverse impact on employment and competitiveness.

In addition, the Commission will be asked to consult with employers and workers who are directly affected by the National Minimum. The Commission has already commenced its work in this regard and has already placed notices in national newspapers seeking submissions on the issue. In this context, representatives of workers and employers in the early childhood education sector have an opportunity to make their views on the issue known to the Commission.

The Commission is expected to submit its first report by the middle of July.

## **Employment Rights**

19. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation in view of the scheduled day of strike action by Mandate members in Dunnes Stores on 2 April 2015, if he will introduce legislation outlawing the practice of zero-hour contracts; if he will make representations to the Central Statistics Office requesting it to collect data on the prevalence of zero-hour contracts in the workforce; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12084/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Gerald Nash):** I understand that the current dispute concerns a range of issues, including the introduction of banded hours contracts, individual and collective representational rights and a review of the use of temporary contracts. The union is seeking to engage with the company on these issues and the matter was referred by the union to the Labour Court under section 20(1) of the Industrial Relations Act, 1969 in October of last year.

The company was not represented at the Labour Court hearing. The Court found it regrettable that the company declined to participate in the investigation of the dispute or to put forward its position on the union's claims.

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I regret that the company decided against attending the Labour Court hearing, contrary to good industrial relations practice in that regard. In my view, the experience and expertise of the Labour Court offer the most appropriate and effective avenue for resolving such issues.

I would urge both parties to avail of the services of the State's industrial Relations machin-

ery who remain available to assist the parties, if requested. It is my opinion that engagement with the State's industrial relations machinery offers the best way whereby the parties involved in this dispute can hope to resolve their differences.

However, the system of industrial relations in Ireland is essentially voluntary in nature and recommendations of the Labour Court are not legally binding. Neither the Labour Court, nor the Minister, can compel a company to comply with such recommendations. Ultimately, responsibility for the settlement of a trade dispute rests with the parties to the dispute.

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The key objectives of the study are:

- To fill the gap in knowledge that currently exists in terms of the hard data and information that is available concerning the prevalence of zero hour and low hour contracts in the Irish economy and the manner of their use.
- To assess the impact of zero hour and low hour contracts on employees.
- To enable the Minister to make any evidence-based policy recommendations to Government considered necessary on foot of the study.

The study will have a broad scope, covering both the public and private sectors, with a particular focus on the retail, hospitality, education and health sectors. The study will examine how zero and low hour contracts operate in practice and how they impact on employees. It will assess the advantages and disadvantages from the perspective of employer and employee and assess the current employment rights legislation as it applies to employees on such contracts. The study will also consider recent developments in other jurisdictions, including the UK in particular. The study may also identify how the information gap might be addressed in the future.

Unlike the position in the UK, Section 18 of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 provides that where employees on zero hour contracts suffer a loss by not being given the hours they were requested to work or be available for work, they can be compensated for 25% of the time or 15 hours, whichever is less. There is no equivalent provision in the UK, where employees on zero hours contracts are only paid for time spent working and if they are not given any hours by their employer they receive no compensation.

A wide range of stakeholders will be canvassed to contribute to the study and I expect the study, which commenced recently, to be completed within six months.

The Deputy will appreciate that I cannot anticipate the outcome of the study or the Government's consideration of the study's findings.

### **Enterprise Support Services Provision**

20. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the progress made by his Department in developing and supporting entrepreneurship; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11961/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Govern-



ment's National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship in Ireland was launched in October 2014 and sets out the Government's strategic objectives as a facilitator within the Irish entrepreneurship ecosystem, covering the six key elements that impact on entrepreneurs and startups, and signposts the direction that policy will take in the coming years.

This Policy Statement represents the first time a Government has published a comprehensive national plan for entrepreneurship in Ireland. The key target contained in the plan is to double the jobs impact of start-ups in Ireland over the next five years. In order to deliver on this we must -

- Increase the number of start-ups by 25% - representing 3000 more start-ups per annum
- Increase the survival rate in the first five years by 25% - 1800 more survivors per annum
- Improve the capacity of start-ups to grow to scale by 25%

The National Policy Statement on Entrepreneurship is the Government's plan to deliver an ambitious but realistic increase in the numbers of start-ups in Ireland over the next five years.

The Government has set out a vision for Ireland to be among the most entrepreneurial nations in the world and to be acknowledged as a world-class environment to start and grow a business. To achieve the ambition, we will improve the key interlocking elements that impact on entrepreneurship and make up the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Ireland. These are: 1. Culture, human capital and education; 2. Business environment and supports; 3. Innovation; 4. Access to finance; 5. Networks and mentoring; and 6. Access to markets.

By driving implementation of the actions in the new National Entrepreneurship Policy Statement we will double the jobs impact of start-ups in Ireland over the next five years, from 93,000 currently.

The Action Plan for Jobs details a number of the immediate key actions to support the Government's ambition and confirms the commitment to continue to identify new approaches which will enhance and strengthen Ireland's entrepreneurial ecosystem and ultimately create jobs e.g. the Start Up Refunds for Entrepreneurs (SURE) scheme will add further support to start-ups to grow and develop their business. Actions are set out to expand reform measures to boost entrepreneurship across all areas of the economy and society.

The specific objectives for 2015 are to:

- Progress the actions from the National Entrepreneurship Policy;
- Utilise the New Frontiers Programme optimally to support emerging entrepreneurs;
- Continue to promote LEOs as one stop shops for small business; and
- Develop an action programme of support for pre-investment HPSUs.

I am personally driving and chairing the Implementation Group, comprised of senior officials from the key departments and agencies, charged with oversight and delivery of the actions set out in the National Entrepreneurship Policy Statement.

Enterprise Ireland and the LEOs continue to provide a comprehensive suite of supports to start-ups and established entrepreneurs. In the last few years Enterprise Ireland has supported approximately 500 new and early stage start-ups. These are ambitious companies, with innovative products and business development strategies that will enable them to carve out a place in global markets. The focus in the coming years is to continue to increase both the number of

quality start-ups and to identify those start-ups with the ability to scale at an earlier stage. Taking these trends together, and acknowledging the intensive focus that will be placed on scale and gaining commercial traction, an ambitious target of 550 new and early start-ups supported by 2016 has been set. With 183 new and early stage start-ups supported last year, Enterprise Ireland is on track to achieve this ambitious target.

In addition the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) have been established and are now up and running as the First-Stop-Shop service supporting start-ups, business growth and jobs in the micro-enterprise sector. Some specific initiatives in driving entrepreneurship under the LEOS banner include the *National Enterprise Awards*, the *Student Enterprise Awards*, *Women in Business Networks* and the *Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur competition (IBYE)*.

The first IBYE competition was launched in May 2014, with over 1,000 applications received by the 31 LEOs from entrepreneurs aged under 30. The nationwide competition formed part of the Action Plan for Jobs 2014 with an overall investment fund of €2 million awarded between County, Regional and National winners. It is intended to run a second iteration of the IBYE.

Further information on LEO supports for business ideas can be found on the LEO website at [www.localenterprise.ie](http://www.localenterprise.ie).

The LEOs have continued to use Microfinance Ireland loan facilities to provide credit in this sector. By end 2014 over €6m in loans were distributed by MFI with 851 jobs supported in 413 businesses. In addition to this activity the Government budgets have had a specific entrepreneurial focus. Measures were introduced to aid cash flow, reduce the administrative burden of tax compliance and incentive job creation to name but a few. While many of the measures were small in scale their cumulative effect has been to improve the environment for business to grow and develop and create jobs. The work in each of these areas continues as does work on upgrading the Microenterprise Loan Fund Scheme and the SME Credit Guarantee Scheme on which I hope to introduce legislation to the House in the near future.

No one policy intervention will generate substantial impact on the entrepreneurship ecosystem, but various actions if taken together will combine to create greater synergies. The overarching National Entrepreneurship Statement serves to co-ordinate all areas of Government policy in the area of entrepreneurship to drive these synergies and will deliver on the targets I referred to above.

## Trade Agreements

21. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the reason the State, in October 2014, communicated to the European Commission its support for the inclusion of an investor state dispute settlement mechanism in the transatlantic trade and investment partnership negotiations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12087/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Ireland was one of 14 EU member states that co-signed a letter addressed to the EU Commissioner for Trade, Cecelia Malmström, concerning the public consultation on investment protection in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) that the EU Commission had undertaken earlier in 2014. In the letter, it was pointed out that the consultation was an important step, that the outcome of the consultation should run its course and that the views expressed by stakeholders should be carefully considered before reaching firm decisions on the way forward.

The EU Commission published its report on the results of the on 13 January, 2015. The

report, along with explanatory material, can be found at <http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=1234>.

Commissioner Malmström has indicated that work is underway on developing specific proposals for the TTIP negotiations in the areas it identified in the report, namely, the protection of the right to regulate, the establishment and functioning of arbitral tribunals, the relationship between domestic judicial systems and Investor to State Dispute Settlement (ISDS), and the review of ISDS decisions for legal correctness through an appellate mechanism.

In line with Article 207 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the position to be taken by the EU on issues in the TTIP negotiations is the subject of consultation with the EU Council. Like other Member States, Ireland could only support an ISDS mechanism that is fair, transparent and efficient. Ultimately, the TTIP negotiations, once they are concluded, must be ratified by each member state. This means that Ireland will be part of the final decision to ratify the agreement.

### **Enterprise Support Services Provision**

22. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation under the Action Plan for Jobs, the concrete measures that will be taken to improve the supports for self-employed persons and entrepreneurs following budget 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12092/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Government's Action Plan for Jobs, which is co-ordinated and developed by my Department since 2012, has set out a comprehensive set of measures to support entrepreneurship, SMEs and the self-employed. The themes in this year's Action Plan for Jobs build on the reforms of previous years in the areas of competitiveness, innovation and entrepreneurship. The objectives and actions set out in the Plan are designed to achieve specific impacts such as in terms of jobs, exports and startups, market penetration and innovation, efficiency of public interaction with business, finance and access to talent.

Increasing entrepreneurial activity is a Disruptive Reform in the Action Plan for Jobs for 2015. Our key priority is driving implementation of the actions in the National Entrepreneurship Statement, which was published in October last year and to achieve the ambitions targets set out for a 25% increase in the number of start-ups and in the scaling and sustainability of new enterprises. The Action Plan for Jobs sets out a range of actions that will positively impact on entrepreneurship namely. These include measures to promote entrepreneurship in the areas of education and research, business environment and supports, innovation and access to finance, networks and mentoring; and, access to markets. These actions are being delivered by an inter-departmental/agency Group.

Specifically in 2015 the LEOs will have ambitious and robust county strategies and targets for startups, enterprise engagements and supports. We will build on the success of Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur competition in 2014 with a new 2015 Programme. We will launch an Entrepreneur Partnering Programme. The Startup Gathering 2015 will also be held in October, with events over five days in five cities. We will support 130 new entrepreneurs via the New Frontiers Programme, support 185 Competitive and High Potential Startups.

As reflected in the Action Plan for Jobs, a range of actions are also underway following Budget 2015 to support the self-employed and entrepreneurs. These include supporting SMEs through changes to the Seed Capital and Employment and Investment Incentive (EII) Schemes.

The EII is being amended to raise company limits, increase the holding period by 1 year and include medium-sized companies in non-assisted areas and internationally traded financial services. The Seed Capital Scheme is being revised and made easier to access, with eligibility extended to individuals who have been unemployed up to 2 years. The new Scheme will be called “Start Up Refunds for Entrepreneurs” (SURE) and full details will be announced shortly. We have also strengthened measures to encourage exports through improvements to the Foreign Earnings Deduction (FED). The FED is being extended for a further 3 years until the end of 2017 and qualifying countries are being extended to include Chile, Mexico and certain countries in the Middle East and Asia. The number of qualifying days abroad is being reduced from 60 to 40, the minimum stay in a country is reduced to 3 days and travelling time is being included as time spent abroad.

A range of agricultural related measures are being implemented including steps to maximise available agricultural land with measures to encourage long term leasing. We are also continuing to supporting the tourism sector with retention of 9% VAT rate.

More broadly improvements in personal taxation will benefit the self-employed and entrepreneurs and support growth in demand across the economy.

### **Low Pay**

23. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on the Nevin Institute’s Quarterly Economic Observer (Spring 2015); his further views on the finding related to earnings distribution and low pay, in particular the number of workers earning less than the living wage threshold; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12085/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Gerald Nash):** The Nevin Institute’s (NERI) Spring 2015 Quarterly Economic Observer outlines the Institute’s latest expectations for the economic outlook in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and provides a profile of the earnings distribution and low pay in the Republic of Ireland.

NERI concludes that the economic outlook differs for both parts of the island of Ireland. According to the report, an overdue recovery is gaining strength with ongoing improvements in the labour market, exports, domestic demand and earnings.

NERI projections for the Republic of Ireland include strong GDP growth of 3.4% in 2015, declining marginally to 3.1% in 2016; consumption to continue its recovery driven by rising real disposable incomes; improving household balance sheets and a strengthening labour market and strong growth in investment. NERI also forecast improvements in the economy impacting positively on Exchequer finances with the General Government Deficit falling to 2.7% in 2015 and 1.9% in 2016. NERI project a steady decrease in unemployment out to 2016, with the 2015 figure reaching 10% and 2016 figure reaching 9.1%. Also further employment growth of 2.1% in 2015 and 1.9% in 2016 is projected.

The ESRI forecasts released this week are for both GNP and GDP to grow by approximately 4 per cent in 2015 and by at least 3.5 per cent in 2016. Unemployment is forecast to fall to 9.7 per cent in 2015 and 8.4 per cent in 2016. The strong expected performance in 2015 comes after the Irish economy grew by over 5 per cent in 2014. The ESRI envisage continued strong contributions from investment, in particular, and consumption into 2015. In this scenario, the ESRI indicate that the Budget deficit should decline to 2.3 per cent of GDP this year, with a

further reduction to 0.3 per cent in 2016.

NERI estimated an update of the Eurostat low pay threshold by looking at those employees in NACE sectors B to S excluding sector O and who are in firms of 10 or more employees. Thus the 2013 median hourly wage rate estimate ranges between €17.14 and €17.25 per hour and low pay threshold estimate between €11.43 and €11.50 per hour.

This government has clearly demonstrated its commitment to the well being of lower paid workers. It restored the National Minimum Wage from €7.65 to €8.65 on taking office. Having returned the economy to sustainable growth through transformational policies implemented through the twin tracks of the Action Plan for Jobs and Pathways to Work, this Government is determined to ensure that the benefits of this recovery are felt by all in our society, both nationally and regionally.

Almost 90,000 more people are at work since the launch of the first Action Plan for Jobs in 2012. This increase has been in full-time jobs rather than casual or temporary jobs, with full time jobs accounting for 86% of the jobs growth. Every job created is a life changed, a family improved, a community enhanced. It is by increasing job creation that we can grow tax revenues and ultimately improve people's lives through better services and further tax reductions. That is why we have placed job-creation at the very heart of the Government's agenda.

The Government has established the Low Pay Commission, which will, on an annual basis, examine and make recommendations to the Minister on the national minimum wage, with a view to securing that the national minimum wage, where adjusted, is adjusted incrementally over time. The Commission will have regard to changes in earnings, productivity, overall competitiveness and the likely impact any adjustment will have on employment and unemployment levels. Legislation to restore the Registered Employment Agreement structure has completed Pre-Legislative Scrutiny and I expect to publish the resulting Bill shortly. Legislation has been passed and Orders made to re-establish Joint Labour Committees.

The second element of Government's strategy is to reduce taxation on low and middle-incomes. In this context, 410,000 low paid workers have been removed from the USC charge over successive budgets. The Government is committed to continuing this policy of targeted tax reductions for workers in the next budget.

The third element of the Government's strategy is to introduce targeted welfare supports for people returning to work, and particularly for the low-paid. From April, the Government will pay €30 a week to mothers or fathers returning to work from long-term unemployment for each child for the first year, and €15 per week per child for the second year.

For those trapped on rent supplement that cannot go back to work because they will lose their housing support, a new Housing Assistance Payment is being rolled out. The assistance from the State will be based on how much you earn and not by your employment status.

As a package, the Government expects these measures to have a transformative effect on incentives to work and on the wellbeing of those at work.

## **Trade Agreements**

24. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on whether the adoption of the transatlantic trade and investment partnership treaty will require a referendum here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12083/15]



**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is a Free Trade Agreement being negotiated between the European Union and its Member States and the US. It will be an Agreement within the meaning of Article 29.5.2 of the Constitution. Ratification by Ireland will therefore be subject to prior approval of Dáil Éireann. The question of a referendum does not arise.

### Trade Agreements

25. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the progress of talks between the European Union and the United States of America on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership; the meetings he has attended; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11959/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Since the formal negotiations between the European Union and the United States on a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) began in July 2013, eight negotiating rounds have taken place. The 9th round is scheduled to take place in Washington from 20th-24th April 2015.

Reports of previous Rounds, together with background documents, are available on the European Commission's TTIP website at <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/in-focus/ttip/>

In accordance with Article 207 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the EU Commission negotiates on behalf of the EU and regularly reports to the Council of Ministers which I attend.

### Trade Agreements

26. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on the EU's regulatory co-operation provisions in the transatlantic trade and investment partnership talks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12046/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The European Union's initial proposal for legal text on Regulatory Cooperation in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) was tabled for discussion with the United States in the negotiating round of 2-6 February 2015. The text, which was made public by the Commission on 10 February 2015, can be found at the following link: [http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/february/tradoc\\_153120.pdf](http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/february/tradoc_153120.pdf)

The draft contains proposed text establishing a regulatory co-operation body, the purpose of which would be to monitor and facilitate the implementation of any agreed regulatory co-operation provisions under TTIP.

It is usual that an international agreement would provide for the appropriate structures to oversee the implementation of the various provisions of the agreement, and so an appropriate structure should be provided for to oversee any regulatory co-operation provisions agreed under TTIP.

### Trade Agreements

27. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the

proposals in the transatlantic trade and investment partnership negotiations that have been discussed to liberalise the market for public services and water; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12078/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The EU's mandate to negotiate the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) states that services supplied in the exercise of governmental authority as defined by Article I.3 of GATS shall be excluded from these negotiations.

Both the EU and the US have repeatedly confirmed that no commitments will be taken on public services. This means that TTIP will have no implications for health, education, social services and other public services, including water.

### **Low Pay Commission Establishment**

28. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he and his officials considered the independent report by a person (details supplied) entitled *Low Pay: The Nation's Challenge* and the Resolution Foundation Review of the Future of the National Minimum Wage: The Final Report, before concluding the draft heads of the low pay commission legislation. [12099/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Gerald Nash):** I am aware of the report referred to by the Deputy and commissioned by the UK Labour Party who requested Alan Buckle, former Deputy Chairman at KPMG International, to investigate how to restore the value of the UK minimum wage, ensure that where sectors can afford to pay more, they do, and promote the Living Wage.

The report, published in May 2014, notes that the UK National Minimum Wage has been a great success, boosting pay at the bottom without loss of jobs. The report seeks to build on the success of the Low Pay Commission in a wider context of building an economy with fewer low skill, low paid jobs and more high skill, high paid jobs.

The position in Ireland is quite different to the UK in that, in addition to the National Minimum Wage and the new Low Pay Commission, the Government has also legislated for Joint Labour Committees and has also brought forward comprehensive legislation to replace the Registered Employment Agreement system. Both of these initiatives provide for rates of pay above or significantly above the National Minimum Wage that can be given statutory backing on a sectional basis. Thus the Report's views of a wider remit for the UK LPC do not necessarily translate to a very different Irish position.

Making work pay continues to be a cornerstone of this Government's agenda and the setting up of a Low Pay Commission is one of the key commitments in the Statement of Government Priorities agreed in July last.

The General Scheme of the National Minimum Wage (Low Pay Commission) Bill was approved by Government in January. The General Scheme, together with a Regulatory Impact Assessment, has been published on my Department's website and forwarded to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation for pre-legislative scrutiny.

The principal function of the Low Pay Commission will be, on an annual basis, to examine and make recommendations to the Minister of the day on the national minimum wage, with a view to securing that the national minimum wage, where adjusted, is adjusted incrementally over time having had regard to changes in earnings, productivity, overall competitiveness and

the likely impact any adjustment will have on employment and unemployment levels.

Alongside examining the National Minimum Wage, the Low Pay Commission will also be tasked with examining matters related generally to the functions of the Commission under the Act. This work programme will be agreed by Government and presented to the Commission in February of each year.

I am conscious of the need to balance a basic statutory minimum pay rate that is fair, with one that is sustainable and which allows employers to continue to create quality jobs.

In this context, a particular function of the Commission will be to ensure that any advice or recommendations it makes to Government is evidence-based; utilising agreed data, carrying out research and consultations with employers, workers and their representatives and taking written and oral evidence from a wide range of organisations. This is to ensure that any suggested changes to the National Minimum Wage have minimum adverse impact on employment and competitiveness.

This approach proposed draws on that adopted in the UK where, since 1997, the recommendations of the UK Low Pay Commission have brought about a progressive increase of the minimum wage that has little detrimental effect on the functioning of the economy or labour market.

### **Employment Rights**

29. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on au pairs and domestic workers being paid the minimum wage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12086/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Gerald Nash):** Ireland's strong commitment to protecting the rights of domestic workers was highlighted last July when we ratified the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Convention No. 189 on Domestic Workers. Ireland is among the small group of seventeen ILO member countries that have ratified this Convention to date. To mark the occasion of Ireland's ratification of the Convention and to help promote greater awareness of domestic workers' rights, Minister Bruton welcomed members of the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland's Domestic Workers Action Group, along with IBEC and ICTU, to the Department on 9 July 2014 for the launch of a NERA Information Leaflet on the employment rights of domestic workers in Ireland. Ireland's strong track record in the area of protecting people involved in domestic work is evidenced by the fact that we were in a position to ratify the Domestic Workers Convention without having to amend our existing suite of employment rights legislation.

The National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) has undertaken a programme of inspections involving domestic workers, and continues to respond to any complaints received from domestic workers. In addition, the Labour Relations Commission, in conjunction with the social partners, produced a Code of Practice for Protecting Persons Employed in Other People's Homes which recognises the unique circumstances that occur in the domestic work employment relationship.

There is no legal definition of the term "au pair" in Irish legislation. However Ireland's body of employment rights legislation protects all employees who are legally employed on an employer-employee basis, regardless of what title is given to them. Therefore, once it is clear that a person is working under a contract of employment, on a full-time or part-time basis, that person has the same protection under employment law as other employees. For example, the National Minimum Wage Act 2000 requires that any persons working under a contract of

employment to be paid the statutory National Minimum Wage. For the purposes of this Act, this means a contract of service or apprenticeship, or any other contract whereby an individual agrees with another person to do or perform personally any work or service for that person.

Where the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) receives a complaint involving somebody described as an au pair, NERA will investigate with a view to establishing the person's statutory entitlements under employment law. The question as to whether a person is an employee or not is generally established by reference to the provisions of existing employment legislation and established contract law, regardless of any title or designation given to the individual. Complaints involving "au pairs" are considered on a case-by-case basis, in the light of the facts of each case.

Any persons with questions or complaints regarding their rights under employment law should contact the Workplace Relations Customer Service on lo-call 1890 808090 or at [www.workplacelrelations.ie](http://www.workplacelrelations.ie).

## Employment Rights

30. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the measures within the Action Plans for Jobs 2015 that will address the high levels of part-time and casual work which are now embedded in the structure of the labour market. [12095/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Gerald Nash):** The premise of the Deputy's question is false. Since 2012, the Action Plan for Jobs (APJ) has put in place a comprehensive set of measures agreed by Government to promote job opportunities and employment growth in all parts of the country. Almost 90,000 more people are at work since the launch of the first Plan in 2012. This increase has been in full-time jobs rather than casual or temporary jobs, with full time jobs accounting for 86% of the jobs growth. While the proportion of Irish workers who are on temporary contracts rose slightly during the recession, reaching 10.5% in 2011, it has since fallen back to the pre-recession level of 9.5% and remains significantly below the EU average of 14.4%. The CSO data for February 2015 indicates that the share of casual and part-time workers on the Live Register was down over 11% on February 2014, equivalent to 9,049 workers. The cumulative decrease is 17,625 workers since February 2013. The CSO data further indicates that the rate of unemployment has declined from a peak of 15.1% at the start of 2012 to 10.1% at end February 2015. The latest Quarterly National Household Survey figures show that, for the year to end Q4 2014, the numbers of people in employment increased by 29,100, which was represented by an increase in full-time employment of 39,600 and a decrease in part-time employment of 10,500.

The Action Plan for Jobs process is working and the Government is determined that this progress continues so that full employment can be achieved by 2018. In 2014, client companies of Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland created 8,476 and 7,131 net new jobs respectively; this represents the highest levels of net new job creation by agency client companies in over a decade and most of this employment growth was in full-time employment.

The 2015 Action Plan for Jobs, which was launched on January 29th, contains a suite of 382 actions to ensure we deliver the promised 100,000 additional jobs by 2016, with the target to create 40,000 jobs this year. Specifically, in 2015, Enterprise Ireland will target the creation of 13,000 gross new full-time jobs in indigenous firms. IDA Ireland will target the creation of 14,000 gross new jobs in multinationals. It is estimated that every direct job created in agency assisted firms indirectly supports another job in the wider economy thereby making a strong contribution to the overall target of achieving full employment in 2018.

While it is very encouraging that the majority of jobs being created are full-time, in accordance with the Statement of Government priorities, I have commissioned the University of Limerick to conduct a study into the prevalence of zero hour and low hour contracts and the impact of such contracts on employees. The key objectives of the study are:

- To fill the gap in knowledge that currently exists in terms of the hard data and information that is available concerning the prevalence of zero hour and low hour contracts in the Irish economy and the manner of their use.
- To assess the impact of zero hour and low hour contract on employees.
- To enable me as Minister to make any evidence-based policy recommendations to Government considered necessary on foot of the study.

All sectors of the economy, both public and private, will come within the scope of the study, and a wide range of stakeholders will be canvassed to contribute to it. It is expected that the study will be completed within six months of commencement.

### **Grocery Industry Competition**

31. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation when the final regulations for the grocery goods sector, as provided for under the Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2014, will be signed into law; and if his attention has been drawn to any current practices by large retailers that are unduly and unfairly burdening their suppliers. [12096/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** As the Deputy is aware, the *Programme for Government* contains a commitment to regulate certain practices in the grocery goods sector and this will be met by way of enabling powers to regulate certain practices in the grocery good sector. These powers are contained in the Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2014. On 22 December 2014, I issued a set of draft regulations for public consultation with a deadline for submissions of the end of February 2015. However, some respondents requested an extension of the deadline into March 2015 for submissions. The content of submissions received are currently being fully considered before the final version of the regulations is promulgated, and the regulations are signed by me, as soon as possible during 2015.

Allegations of unfair practice in the grocery goods sector have been made over a number of years. As the Deputy will know, I have consistently emphasised that it is important to ensure there is balance in the relationship between the various players in the grocery goods sector and that Ireland continues to have robust agri-food and retail sectors, particularly given the importance of these sectors to the national economy. The regulation of certain practices in the grocery goods sector is intended to achieve such a balance taking into account the interests of all stakeholders in the grocery goods sector including the interests of the consumer and the need to ensure that there is no impediment to the passing-on of lower prices to consumers.

### **Irish Airlines Superannuation Scheme**

32. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he is satisfied with the manner in which the Irish Airlines (General Employees) Superannuation Scheme Expert Group dealt with the initiative proposed by the Secretary General of his Department and



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the Secretary General of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport on 2 December 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11964/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Gerald Nash):** At the request of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, the Expert Panel was asked to re-engage with SIPTU and ICTU in relation to matters dealt with in its June 2014 report on its review the Irish Aviation Superannuation Scheme (IASS), including the actuarial assumptions, and to provide clarity on those matters. There were also discussions immediately before Christmas between the two Departments, members of the Expert Panel and ICTU in relation to this engagement which helped to refine the areas of focus for the Panel.

On 9 March last, the Expert Panel presented its Final Determination on the resolution of the industrial relations issues. The Report states that the unions have confirmed that the June 2014 Report, together with the Panel's Final Determination, will be put to an immediate ballot/reballot of all members to be conducted as quickly as possible. The Report also states that the unions confirmed that it will be made clear to members that this outcome is the absolute best that can be achieved in negotiations.

I wish to express my thanks to the Expert Panel for completing its work in such an effective and efficient manner and to all parties that engaged so constructively in the process.

### **Apprenticeship Programmes**

33. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his Department's role in encouraging apprenticeships; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11960/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In its submission to the Apprenticeship Review in 2013, this Department identified the need for apprenticeships that better reflected the changing occupational needs brought about by advances in technology and productivity in modern manufacturing and service occupations.

The focus of this Department has been on advocating for a wide range of enterprise-led apprenticeships to meet the needs of enterprises and to equip individuals for the current or future job opportunities across the economy in areas such as manufacturing technician, manufacturing machine operators, practical engineering apprentice, polymer technologists, tool-making, customer support, transport/logistics, supply chain management, IT user and application roles, hospitality and healthcare.

Key to these apprenticeships is developing a curriculum for the relevant occupations that reflects the tasks needed to be performed in the modern workplace with the length, breadth and depth of technical coverage and work-based practical experience to ensure qualifications and learning outcomes are achieved leading to full awards on our National Framework of Qualifications. It is vital that apprenticeships encompass an access path for those who wish to enter it from different educational attainment levels including accelerated entry routes recognising prior experience.

Career progression for those engaging in apprenticeships is important so that it provides for well-structured and mapped progression routes to higher levels of technical skills, supervisory and management roles operating seamlessly between second level, further and higher education and on the job training. The new apprenticeships should be seen by school leavers as a valuable flexible work based training programme leading to a range of recognised valuable careers in

services, and manufacturing occupations.

This Department has undertaken a number of initiatives around raising awareness of the recent Apprenticeship call in its day-to day dealings with businesses specifically, Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland client companies. The new apprenticeship scheme is being actively marketed to informing them of specific sectoral trade associations with whom they might collaborate in an apprenticeship submission, e.g. Food and Drink, Financial Services, Medical Devices, Pharmaceuticals, Engineering and ICT.

Both I and Minister English have taken every opportunity to raise awareness of the apprenticeship call at various engagements since it issued in January.

Minister English recently met with Freight Transport, distribution and logistics representative bodies and further and higher education providers in that sector to draw their attention to the possibilities that the apprenticeship might provide for them to address the specific skills gaps identified in the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs report for the sector which he launched in February.

Minister Nash, at the Retail Consultation Forum, also highlighted the opportunities for that sector by collaborating in a submission.

Department executives actively promoted the apprenticeship call at a series of workshops with the hospitality sector in the course of their work on the skills requirements for that sector.

### Scientific Research

34. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will respond to the open letter signed by more than 900 scientists calling on the Government to rebalance its funding for scientific research away from a commercial-heavy focus and towards the funding of research across all disciplines; if the successor to the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation 2006-2013 will include a focus on third level research projects on sustainable and renewable energy technology; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12077/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Damien English):** The Government remains committed to the importance of science, technology and innovation (STI) given the key role that it plays in underpinning economic recovery and maintaining Ireland's competitiveness.

Ireland has successfully built up a strong science base as result of significant funding and an ambitious policy of building up capacity in our Higher Education Institutes and in our enterprise base over the last decade and a half. The Strategy for Science, Technology & Innovation (2006 to 2013) was a broad based strategy which covered funding for research and innovation across all disciplines and across the full continuum of research from basic to applied as well as commercialisation of research.

Economic and fiscal conditions in the intervening period informed the Government's decision to implement a range of policies directed at accelerating the economic and societal return on our STI investment. Research Prioritisation was one such key policy initiative and saw a concentration of the majority of competitive funding on areas which were deemed most likely to secure greater economic and societal impact, particularly in the form of jobs.

While Research Prioritisation saw a greater emphasis on the economic and societal impact

of research it did not represent a move away from funding basic research. Policy has been and will continue to support research across the full continuum from basic to applied, through to commercialisation of research. While the mandate of Science Foundation Ireland was expanded in 2013 to include applied as well as basic oriented research, SFI is still mandated to fund earlier stage research. However, all research supported by SFI must be in strategic areas of opportunity for the State in line with our research prioritisation agenda and it must have impact - this approach will continue to underpin policy into the future and will be a central pillar of the Government's Strategy.

Excellence in scientific research has also been and will continue to be a cornerstone in the development of our science base in Ireland. In the context of our vision for the future, we must have a strong and excellent research base particularly in areas where our strengths can match opportunities.

I welcome the open letter from "Irish Scientists for Basic Research" as part of the consultation process designed to inform the development of a broad based Strategy which will be a successor to the Strategy for Science Technology & Innovation. This letter along with all other submissions received from the various stakeholders will be considered in detail by my Department and the Interdepartmental Committee which has been established tasked with developing proposals for the new Strategy. The new whole-of-Government Strategy will articulate a vision for science policy across all disciplines and will address Government wide goals on innovation in key sectors for job creation and societal benefit.

### **Foreign Direct Investment**

35. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his plans to ensure Ireland at number one in the world in terms of the provision of investment incentives to attract inward investment; the way this encourages companies to invest here; the way it improves the creation of direct and indirect jobs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12079/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department's Policy Statement on Foreign Direct Investment, which was published at the end of July 2014, sets out the strategic direction for FDI to 2020 and the key actions needed to enhance Ireland's attractiveness and business environment in the context of intensified international competition for investment and talent. As the Deputy is aware Ireland continues to perform well in the attraction of new investment and particularly so in recent years as FDI inflows to Europe have slowed considerably.

Total employment at IDA client companies now stands at 174,488 people, the highest level in the history of IDA Ireland. The job performance took place against a particularly challenging European economic environment and changing corporate taxation landscape. There were 197 investments in 2014, equating to a 20% increase on 2013. There was a notable rise in new-name investment, with 88 new name investors in 2014.

This highlights both the draw of large wealthy markets for FDI, particularly when the focus activities are sales and marketing, but also investor options across Central & Eastern Europe and Western Europe for manufacturing, R&D and business support services. The range of countries competing for FDI in Europe demonstrates the intensity of the marketplace to secure investments for Ireland. In Ireland's case, cost competitiveness, the availability of a dynamic talent pool and targeted sectoral focus, was underpinned by the strong economic management and certainty on the 12.5% corporate tax rate.

The US continues to be the largest single investor in Europe accounting for about 25% of all inward investment projects and job creation. While Ireland is a very significant recipient of US FDI for contestable investments, competition with the UK, Germany and France, the major overall beneficiaries of US investment into Europe, is intense. The proposed TTIP currently under negotiation could be transformational in this area. There are potentially many benefits for Ireland from a successful deal but we must also be aware that such trade deals can impact FDI flows.

IDA Ireland constantly monitors competitor locations and the value propositions they offer potential mobile investment. Competitor locations differ depending on the sector of the mobile investment. In this respect, IDA Ireland is continuously working to ensure that Ireland is the most competitive, innovative and relevant to the investment being targeted.

Multinational companies account for almost 10% of the Irish workforce and are of crucial strategic importance for the economy due to the quality of the jobs involved, their export focus and the massive knock-on impact they have on the wider economy.

Ireland's relative cost competitiveness, corporate tax regime and available direct firm level financial supports remain critically important - but in reality they are no longer aspects that will substantially differentiate Ireland's offering for FDI over the longer term. So in addition to maintaining a competitive offering in these areas we must at the same time redouble efforts to develop and reinforce the aspects that truly differentiate Ireland's offering in a context of intensified global competition for mobile investment. With this objective in view, I recently launched IDA Ireland's new corporate strategy for the years 2015 to 2020 which aims to create 80,000 new jobs in the economy over the next five years.

We are determined to ensure that every region will benefit from the recovery. I recently announced along with the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste, the details of a comprehensive new strategy to support enterprise growth and job creation at regional level. The Regional Action Plan for Jobs initiative seeks to build on the success of the annual Action Plan for Jobs process by developing locally driven plans that can build on the strengths and opportunities identified in each region.

The strategy will provide up to €250 million over five years in additional funding to support regional enterprise development. This includes the roll out of a five year, €150 million property investment programme by the IDA to attract foreign direct investment into the regions. This programme will build on the recent investment by the IDA in a number of advance manufacturing facilities in regional locations. A further sum of up to €100 million will be available to Enterprise Ireland to support enterprises in the regions to start-up, grow and export, thereby creating more jobs in regional locations.

## **Retail Sector**

36. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his plans to act on the recommendations of the recent Retail Excellence Ireland and Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association report on building the all-island retail industry, North and South. [12098/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Since coming into office, the Government has recognised the importance of the retail sector to the economy. The Wholesale and Retail sector accounts for the largest share of employment in the Irish economy, employing 276,000 people in Ireland and representing approximately 15% of the

workforce. The sector provides employment in every community in the country and is an important part of every locality.

Retail Excellence Ireland and the Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association published the “Building Retail: North & South” report earlier this month. The report was funded through the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade’s Reconciliation Fund, as it was recognised that a vibrant retail sector plays an invaluable role in the economy of the whole island.

The report makes a number of recommendations, many of which focus on positioning Ireland as a shopping destination and on marketing retail as part of the tourism strategy of Tourism Northern Ireland and Fáilte Ireland. These recommendations can best be progressed through engagement between the relevant retail associations and the tourism bodies across the island.

The report also recommends the establishment of a North-South Retail Forum which would be chaired by the retail bodies. My Department established a Retail Consultation Forum in June 2014 as one of the key deliverables in the Action Plan for Jobs to support the recovery of the retail sector in Ireland. The Retail Consultation Forum is chaired by the Minister for Small Business and Employment, Mr. Ged Nash, T.D.

The Forum provides a platform for a structured engagement between the Retail sector and relevant Government Departments and aims to be interactive, participative and solutions-focused. Membership comprises retail representative bodies, including Retail Excellence Ireland, retail practitioners, and relevant Government Departments and public bodies.

The Work Programme of the Retail Consultation Forum is driven primarily by the retail representatives on the Forum. However, the Forum could be asked to study the “Building Retail: North & South” report at a future meeting and consider if it can make a contribution to building an all-island retail industry.

The Forum will also shortly be considering the forthcoming report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation on Town Centre Retailing, which is an important issue for retailers both North and South of the Border.

### **Community Employment Drug Rehabilitation Projects**

37. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will provide details of the most up-to-date available information on the annual cost of the special community employment schemes. [12525/15]

38. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will provide details of the most up-to-date available breakdown of annual costs, including all wage, salary, training and capital costs. [12526/15]

39. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will provide details of the number of client participants and service users currently employed in the special community employment schemes. [12527/15]

40. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will provide details of the wage cost for the client participants and service users currently employed in the special community employment schemes. [12528/15]

41. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will provide details of the gender breakdown of the client participants and service users.



ers currently employed in the special community employment schemes. [12529/15]

42. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will provide details of the current number of key workers employed in the special community employment schemes (details supplied). [12530/15]

43. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the current wage cost of key workers employed in the special community employment schemes. [12531/15]

44. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the budget allocated specifically for key worker training for key workers employed in special community employment schemes. [12532/15]

45. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the current actual expenditure incurred specifically for training key workers employed in special community employment schemes. [12533/15]

46. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if key workers employed in the special community employment schemes are paid the same wages and work the same hours as participants on the same schemes and are subject to the same employment contract terms and conditions, including duration of employment contract. [12534/15]

47. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will provide details of the policy justification for the equal employment conditions of client participants, service users and key workers, considering their clearly distinct role involvement in the special community employment schemes. [12535/15]

48. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will provide details of the policy justification for there being no recognition in regard to the accumulated training and experience of key workers employed in a special community employment scheme. [12536/15]

49. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will provide details of the breakdown between men and women employed as key workers in the special community employment schemes. [12613/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Kevin Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 37 to 49, inclusive, together.

There are 1,000 drug rehabilitation places ring-fenced on Community Employment (CE). As of December 2014, there are 936 referred clients (292 female, 644 male) on drug rehabilitation schemes and 220 support workers (117 female, 103 male).

There has been no change to the CE Budget for Drug Rehabilitation places in 2015 over 2014 which remains at €14.5m. This is based on the average cost of a CE place of €13,000 which includes a budget for participant allowances (€12.5m), supervisory costs (€1.5m), material costs (€250,000) and training costs (€250,000). The combined weekly wage cost for referred clients and support workers is approximately €254,400. The conditions relating to participation on CE are contained in the CE Operations Manual. All CE participants receive a payment of €208 per week while participating on CE and the hours are 19.5 hours per week or 39 hours per fortnight.

There are no key workers posts on CE Drug Rehabilitation Schemes. The structure of a CE

Drug Rehabilitation scheme is 1 Supervisor to 7 referred participants (a ratio of 1:7). In addition, 2 support workers may support the delivery of the CE Scheme. Support workers who are job-seekers and over 1 year unemployed, comply with normal CE eligibility conditions and are referred from Intreo Offices. Participants on the ring-fenced places must be referred by a recognised addiction practitioner.

The quality of a supervisor can be the single most important factor in the success of a CE drug rehabilitation scheme, together with the support of an active Sponsoring Committee. All supervisors must be competent to provide coaching and mentoring to participants and ensure that relevant training or work experience opportunities are provided for participants in their path to rehabilitation and progression.

The role of CE schemes is to help recovering drug users to develop their personal and employment skills and to find a pathway back to work. Part of this engagement involves working closely with existing services to progress an interagency focus on education, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and training – five key pillars of the National Drugs Strategy (2009-2016) - for the advancement of the participant.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has responsibility for ensuring that each person is appropriately supported through the rehabilitation system. The supports are clearly outlined in the National Drugs Rehabilitation Framework Document (2010) and include provision for a key worker - *“the key worker is the named person who is assigned to work closely with the service user and provide a range of psycho-social interventions/advocacy ”* (2010:11) and falls within the services and supports provided by the HSE.

A key feature of the Department’s response in supporting CE rehabilitation schemes was the establishment of a key Drugs Stakeholders Group in 2013 which now assists the Department to identify and implement enhancements to the scheme. In addition, training workshops have been held with the scheme supervisors and departmental staff to ensure that the schemes continue to meet the needs of participants.

### **Rent Supplement Scheme Payments**

50. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if an increase in rent supplement will be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12376/15]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Department has not been informed of any change of circumstance for the client concerned. The client should provide the department with an up to date lease agreement and Rent Supplement application form. On receipt of same the client’s entitlement can be assessed.

### **Disability Diagnoses**

51. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection her plans to have severe epilepsy designated as a disability for the purposes of the social protection system. [12391/15]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** Severe epilepsy is accepted as a certifiable medical condition. Each case is individually assessed on its own merits after careful review of medical evidence in accordance with the Department’s evidence based

medical protocols and guidelines.

### **Legislative Process**

52. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the number of pieces of legislation that were submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by her Department since 2011; her plans to allow pre-legislative scrutiny for any upcoming pieces of legislation from her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12419/15]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Government approved an expansion and reinforcement of the arrangements for pre-legislative scrutiny in September 2013. A number of new Standing Orders were adopted by the Dáil on 17 October 2013 in order to underpin these new arrangements and these Standing Orders came into effect on 5 November 2013.

In order to clarify the operation of these new Standing Orders, an Agreed Protocol for Pre-Legislative Scrutiny of the Heads of Bills by Oireachtas Committees was published in September 2014. This Agreed Protocol provides that certain Bills are exempted from the requirements for pre-legislative scrutiny, including Bills which are required to implement Budget changes such as the Finance Bill and the Social Welfare Bill, “emergency” Bills and Bills that were at an advanced stage of drafting at the time the Standing Orders were adopted.

The Heads of the Gender Recognition Bill were referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Social Protection for pre-legislative scrutiny in July 2013. Following consideration of the Heads the Joint Oireachtas Committee issued its report in January 2014. The Bill passed all stages in the Seanad in February 2015 and passed Second Stage in the Dáil in March 2015. The Dáil Committee Stage of the Bill has been deferred until later in the year.

The other Bills which I have initiated since September 2013 fall into the categories of Bills exempted under the Agreed Protocol from the requirements for pre-legislative scrutiny. These include the Social Welfare Bills enacting provisions arising from Budgets 2014 and 2015 and the Civil Registration (Amendment) Bill 2014 which was at an advanced stage of drafting at the time the Standing Orders came into effect.

Future Bills initiated by my Department will be subject to the agreed Protocol for Pre-Legislative Scrutiny of Heads of Bills by Oireachtas Committees.

*Questions Nos. 53 and 54 withdrawn.*

### **Carer’s Allowance Appeals**

55. **Deputy Noel Coonan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when an appeal relating to carer’s allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary will be finalised. [12466/15]

**Tánaiste and 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 25th February 2015, 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.

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

56. **Deputy Noel Coonan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection when an appeal in respect of carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary will be finalised. [12467/15]

**Tánaiste and 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, decided to disallow the appeal of the person concerned by way of a summary decision on 30th January 2015. Under Social Welfare legislation, the decision of an Appeals Officer is final and conclusive and may only be revised in the light of new evidence or new facts which would make the original decision incorrect, or in cases where the decision of the Appeals Officer was to allow the appeal, there has been a change of circumstances which has come to notice since the date of the Appeals Officer's original decision.

I understand that the appeal of the person concerned was disallowed following a summary decision on the basis of a means assessment of income from her spouse's insurable employment and capital, neither of which has been disputed. I am advised that in making her appeal, the person concerned questioned the fact that certain living expenses and household costs had not been considered in assessing the means in her case.

In making the decision to disallow the appeal, the Appeals Officer advised the person concerned that the expenses referred to are not allowable under the social welfare legislation in assessing means for the purposes of Carer's Allowance.

I am advised that following receipt of the Appeals Officer's summary decision the person concerned requested an oral hearing but did not offer any new facts or evidence which could render the Appeals Officer's decision incorrect. In the circumstances, as there is no prospect that additional information could be provided which would affect the outcome of the appeal, the Appeals Officer does not consider that an oral hearing is warranted or that his decision should be changed. This decision is fully in accordance with the policy of the Social Welfare Appeals Office with regard to the granting of an oral hearing if requested.

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 Staff**

57. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection her plans to provide extra staff to alleviate queuing times on signing days for payment of jobseeker's allowance; if she is aware that recipients on these days are being exposed to the elements while waiting in the lengthy queues outside the social welfare offices; her further plans to provide adequate shelter for recipients; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12492/15]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I am not aware of any particular problems in relation to queuing at the Department's offices. Should the Deputy have specific instances in mind, I would be very happy to have them investigated.

Intreo is the new integrated income support, employment and support service which is now

provided by the Department. Intreo, which was launched in 2012, has delivered significant office accommodation improvements with the conversion of 'Social Welfare Local Offices' into 'Intreo Centres'. There are currently 47 fully functional Intreo centres across the country with three further offices nearing completion. Work is proceeding on the remaining 15 offices.

The Intreo Centre is a one-stop shop for all income and employment support services where customers can access job-seeking advice, information on vacancies and income support services all in the one place.

Long queues outside offices were unfortunately a feature when the live register was at its height but customer service has generally improved with the development of Intreo, and the streamlining of claims-taking processes with quicker payment times but also direct referral of jobseekers to a range of activation supports.

Overall, the response to the Department's Intreo project has been very positive as evidenced by an October 2014 report from the INOU which highlighted the steps being taken by the Department's Intreo process to reduce both queueing within offices and overall claims processing times.

During 2014, the Intreo/local office network processed some 500,000 claims, hosted over 186,000 at group information sessions (an increase of 50% on the previous year) and conducted more than 330,000 one-to-one interviews.

In parallel with office accommodation improvements, the Department has also embarked on a significant system modernisation programme and has been rolling out improved systems to Intreo Centres which maximise the use of technology for greater efficiency and improved customer service.

In relation to signing, the most important business improvement has been a switch to 'electronic signing'. This system functionality now provides offices with the capacity to capture a signature on an electronic signature pad as part of the certification process for fully unemployed clients. This improvement has eliminated a paper-based system and has introduced greater flexibility to the signing process. In effect it means that jobseekers can now sign at multiple customer service points in the Intreo Centre with consequential reduction in waiting times and long queues.

Intreo Centres now have the facility to respond immediately to emerging queues by opening and closing counters, as required, to deal with peaks which might arise at any particular time rather than being limited to having a set fixed number of counter points open. This enables offices to reduce queuing times and provide a higher quality of customer service.

In addition, it would be normal for Intreo Centres to stagger the signing times for jobseekers so as to spread out the numbers attending in an office at any particular time but also to reduce queues and waiting times. Where customers adhere to their allotted 'signing time', queueing is further reduced.

### **Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications**

58. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if domiciliary care allowance is payable in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12579/15]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The person con-



cerned was notified on the 25th March 2015 that her domiciliary care allowance application was successful and that the allowance has been awarded from 1st January 2015.

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

59. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if carer's allowance is payable in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12580/15]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I confirm that the department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person in question on the 23rd December 2014. To be entitled to CA, where the care recipient is aged under 16 there must be a domiciliary care allowance (DCA) in payment in respect of that child. The CA application is with a deciding officer (DO) for decision, however, as the only alternative is to refuse the application out of hand as DCA is not in payment, the DO wishes to wait until the DCA case has been determined before making a decision.

### **Rent Supplement Scheme Payments**

60. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if partial rent support can be offered in the case of persons (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12583/15]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The client concerned has been requested to provide the Department with current payslips, a Rent Supplement application form and an up to date lease agreement confirming any increase in monthly rent. On receipt of this documentation the client's rate of Rent Supplement entitlement can be assessed.

### **Guardian's Payment Appeals**

61. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the basis on which the claim for Guardian's Payment has been withdrawn in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare who received notice to this effect, notwithstanding the fact that the person did not withdraw the claim and has responded to the request for information to the best of that person's ability, and in view of the fact that the claim was closed by her Department and not withdrawn as suggested; if the matter can be referred for appeal and if this Parliamentary Question will be confirmed as basis for such appeal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12584/15]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The person concerned applied for a guardian's payment (contributory) in respect of her two grandchildren.

On 25 March 2015, it was decided by a deciding officer that the person concerned is not entitled to guardian's payment as, based on the evidence available, the children concerned do not satisfy the definition of orphans under social welfare legislation as they have not been abandoned by their mother.

A letter detailing this decision has issued to the person concerned and it is open to her to appeal this decision to the Chief Appeals Officer in the Social Welfare Appeals Office, stating the grounds of her appeal.

### Semi-State Bodies Pensions

62. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will provide a breakdown, in tabular form, of the number of employees in semi-State companies with pensions; the number of persons in each company who have deferred pensions; if she envisages allowing persons with deferred pensions to have a say in who will represent them on boards of trustees; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12614/15]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Department does not collect the information sought by the Deputy.

The trust deed of a pension scheme sets out the basis on which the trustees of a pension scheme are appointed or elected, and the law does not put any restriction on this. Section 62 of the Pensions Act already provides for a procedure whereby members representatives can be elected. However, the procedure must be invoked as it does not apply automatically.

### Departmental Properties

63. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection the brief for accommodation requirements in her Department's premises in Ballybay, County Monaghan, to include all specification requirements; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12654/15]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** Due to the unsuitable nature and poor condition of the accommodation where staff are currently located in Ballybay, Co. Monaghan, my Department has requested that OPW identify an alternative premises. OPW would be best placed to provide the detailed technical specification requirements of accommodation to be occupied by Government Departments.

However in terms of basic accommodation requirements, the space needs to include: open plan seating for approximately 32 people; two individual offices for managers; postal sorting area; file storage area; communications room; staff canteen; staff toilets; general store room and rest room would also be required.

My Department also has an urgent requirement to establish a Public Service Card (PSC) public office in Monaghan; the only county which does not yet have such an office. This would require a reception counter, two to four PSC customer points, an interview room, a waiting area, a public toilet as well as back office areas for staff.

There would be economies of scale and an operational advantage to be gained if these two functions were located in the same building. A building of approximately 4,500 – 5,000 square feet (420-475 square metres) is envisaged. However, the geographical location of the PSC public office requires careful consideration, as it needs to serve the entire county.

### Departmental Contracts Data

64. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection if she will provide a list, in tabular form, of all contracts and tenders awarded by her Department to a company (details supplied) since 1 January, 2004, including any such awarded singularly or as a joint bid or consortium including said company; if she will indicate which Department, agency or semi-State company was the contacting party in each case; the value in each case; the purpose of each contract; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13115/15]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** No contracts or tenders have been awarded by my Department to the company referred to since 1 January, 2004.

### **Tax Agreements**

65. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which he remains satisfied that proposals for a consolidated tax base throughout Europe will not detrimentally affect foreign direct investment, FDI, to this country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12564/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** While Ireland is participating constructively in the discussions on the Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base draft directive (CCCTB), no consensus has yet been reached by Member States on this proposal.

We are committed to an active engagement on this tax dossier and on other discussions being undertaken at EU level to tackle tax fraud, tax evasion and aggressive tax planning. Only by actively engaging on these matters can we ensure a full and comprehensive discussion and advancement of Ireland's interests in these areas.

This engagement has no impact whatsoever on our corporation tax rate. In fact the draft proposal on the CCCTB specifically states that there is no intention to extend harmonisation to the rates.

We remain steadfastly committed to the 12.5% corporation tax rate on companies' trading profits which is a central element of our strategy for an export led sustainable economic recovery and which promotes investment and employment. We will continue to play fair but play to win.

The Commission has indicated that it intends to relaunch the CCCTB proposal as part of its June Action Plan on Corporate Tax. Ireland will actively participate in any ensuing discussions, however, we would not support any proposal to harmonise tax rates. Tax harmonisation would reduce the flexibility of Member States, in particular smaller Member States, to address particular economic objectives.

### **Tax Exemptions**

66. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Finance if an exemption from Deposit Interest Retention Tax is available when a person reaches 65 years of age; the level of eligibility for exemption when the person is married; the stipulations and conditions attached to the said exemption; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12596/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that where an individual or their spouse/civil partner is aged over 65 and their income does not exceed the appropriate exemption limit, their deposit interest earnings are exempt from appropriate tax as provided for in sections 256 to 267 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 and commonly referred to as Deposit Interest Retention Tax (DIRT).

In April 2007, this exemption became automatic on the submission of a declaration to the financial institution where the account is held. To qualify for the automatic exemption, the individual must declare on Form DE1 that they or their spouse or civil partner are aged 65 years or over during the year and that their total annual income does not exceed the exemption limit. The current exemption limits are €18,000 in the case of a single person and €36,000 in the case

of a married couple or civil partners.

Where the individual's circumstances change following the submission of this declaration form, they are required to notify the financial institution to that effect.

Where a person's income exceeds the relevant exemption limit by a small amount, he or she will not be entitled to the exemption but may be entitled to a partial refund of the DIRT deducted.

### **Tote Licences**

67. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the legal conditions attached to the granting of a tote licence; the groups or bodies who are eligible to apply, and the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12374/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The tote was established under the Totalisator Act 1929 and to date Bord Na gCon and Horse Racing Ireland (or their predecessors) are the only bodies licensed to operate a tote. The primary purpose of this arrangement is to fund the horse and greyhound racing industry in Ireland.

The licence for Bord na gCon was renewed for a period of 5 years which commenced on 24 October 2013 and the licence for Tote Ireland was renewed for a period of 7 years which commenced on 7 March 2014.

The Government in approving the General Scheme of the Gambling Control Bill in July 2013 indicated that the Tote should be brought within the scope of the scheme. The Deputy will be aware that the Gambling Control Bill is currently under preparation by my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality.

### **Credit Unions Regulation**

68. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding the CP88 Consultation on Regulations Paper issued by the Central Bank of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12375/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The Registrar of Credit Unions at the Central Bank is the independent regulator for credit unions. Within her independent regulatory discretion, the Registrar acts to support the prudential soundness of individual credit unions, to maintain sector stability and to protect the savings of credit union members.

My role as Minister for Finance is to ensure that the legal framework for credit unions is appropriate for the effective operation and supervision of credit unions.

On 27 November 2014, the Central Bank issued consultation paper CP88 entitled 'Consultation on Regulations for Credit Unions on commencement of the remaining sections of the Credit Union and Co-operation with Overseas Regulators Act 2012'. The Central Bank provided a 3 month consultation process to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to set out their views across a range of issues, with a closing date for submissions on 27 February 2015. In June 2015, following analysis of submissions received, the Central Bank will publish a feedback statement summarising information submitted, the Central Bank's response and the final regulations for credit unions. All submissions received will be published on the Central Bank's website.

The Central Bank propose a transition period of six months between publication of the feedback statement and final regulations to commencement of the regulations. This is to facilitate credit unions in making any changes to systems, controls, policies and procedures that may be necessary for any new or amended requirements. The new regulations, which will come into effect from 31 December 2015, will be informed by feedback received on CP88.

The provision of regulation making powers to the Central Bank on commencement of the remaining sections of the 2012 Act means that in the future, the Central Bank will be in a position to review and amend the regulations as appropriate on a timely basis following consultation with the credit union sector. I have been informed by the Central Bank that where credit unions set out a clear path on how they wish to develop their business model, the Central Bank will consider any amendments to the regulations that may be appropriate.

The safety of members' savings and the security of the credit union sector as a whole are priorities for this Government and while the Government recognises the important role of credit unions as a volunteer co-operative movement in this country, it is vital that measures implemented will ensure a viable credit union sector into the future.

### **Departmental Investigations**

69. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 140 of 14 January 2015, if further investigation has been conducted with regard to the targeting of Irish businesses and small and medium enterprises by scam marketing companies offering to obtain a valid Value Added Tax number against an advance payment; the advice provided by the European Union Commission on this matter; if there have been any further moves at European Union level to clamp down on this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12383/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As advised by the Revenue Commissioners in January, there is currently no official EU VAT register and only national tax administrations have the right to issue a VAT number.

Any unsolicited correspondence received from unknown or suspicious sources in relation to VAT registration numbers should be brought to the attention of the Revenue Commissioners.

The Revenue Commissioners advise that if companies are unsure about any such documentation they receive, there are a few simple steps that are advisable to take:

- Check the sender's email address tallies with a trusted organisation's website address, in this case, the Commission.

- Check the email is sent from a verifiable address.

- Check the email uses your proper name and not a non-specific greeting like "dear customer".

- Check that where a prominent website link is used that this has not been forged to make it look similar to a prominent website. Even a single character's difference means a different website.

- Beware of a request for personal information such as user name, password or bank details.

- Beware of an email when you were not expecting to get an email from the company that appears to have sent it.



## Tax Exemptions

70. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Finance if there have been any provisions made for a parent (details supplied) who was in receipt of the single person child carer tax credit as the secondary claimant, under the new legislation to replace the one-parent family credit in 2014, now that the single person child care tax credit has been withdrawn in 2015, due to the fact that the ex-partner married in 2014; his plans to address this difficulty; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12392/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As the Deputy is aware, the One-Parent Family Tax Credit (OPFTC) has been replaced with the Single Person Child Carer Credit from 1 January 2014. However, the reformed credit is more targeted in that it is, in the first instance, only available to the primary carer of the child.

Given the difficult fiscal environment, it is essential to review all tax reliefs, credits and incentives in order to ensure that they are properly targeted and if necessary re-focused in order that they can achieve the socio-economic objectives that are set for them.

The Commission on Taxation acknowledged that the previous One Parent Family Tax Credit played a role in supporting and incentivising the labour market participation of single and widowed parents. However, in its recommendations it concluded that the credit should be retained but that it should be allocated to the primary carer only. The restructuring of the credit achieves such an outcome.

The person who cares for the child for most of the year is entitled to the credit in the first instance. Agreement as to who will be the primary carer of a child is a matter for the parents or guardians. However, only the primary carer is entitled to the credit.

It should be noted that where a primary carer is married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting they would not be entitled to the new credit (or indeed the former one), on the basis that the relevant child is not, in the main, being cared for by a single person. In such circumstances the primary carer cannot relinquish the credit to a secondary carer. In addition, a secondary carer who is married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting, would not be entitled to the new credit (or indeed the former one) regardless of the marital status of the primary carer.

In the case referred to by the Deputy, the primary claimant has remarried so she no longer qualifies as a primary claimant and therefore cannot relinquish the credit. More information on the SPCCC is available from the Revenue website at: <http://www.revenue.ie/en/tax/it/credits/single-credit-faq.pdf>

## VAT Rate Reductions

71. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance the amount it would cost to the Government to lower the rate of value-added tax by each 1% point from 23% to 17%. [12401/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners information on estimated costs of VAT rate changes can be found in the post-Budget 2015 Ready Reckoner: <http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/statistics/ready-reckoners.pdf>. While the Ready Reckoner does not show all of the specific costings requested by the Deputy, other changes can be estimated broadly on a pro-rata basis with those displayed in the Reckoner. The

cost of lowering the 23% VAT rate by 1% is estimated to be €275 million. Further decreases can be estimated on a straight line basis, where the cost of the additional 1% is added to the cost of the preceding 1% reduction estimate.

### Tax Data

72. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance the amount the Government would raise by imposing a 48% tax on incomes over €100,000. [12402/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** It is assumed that the threshold for the 48% Income Tax rate proposed by the Deputy, would not alter the existing standard rate band structure applying to single and widowed persons, to lone parents, married couples and civil partnerships.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that, given the current band structures, major issues would need to be resolved as to how, in practice, such a new Income Tax rate could be integrated into the current system and how this would affect the relative position of different types of income earners.

Notwithstanding these issues, the Revenue Commissioners estimate that the first and full year yield to the Exchequer of the introduction of the suggested new third rate of Income Tax of 48% would be of the order of €317 million and €512 million respectively.

All figures above are estimates for 2015, using the actual data for the year 2012 (the latest year for which data are available) adjusted as necessary for income, self-employment and employment trends in the interim. They are provisional and may be revised. A married couple or civil partners who have elected or have been deemed to have elected for joint assessment are counted as one tax unit.

### Legislative Process

73. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of pieces of legislation that were submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by his Department since 2011; his plans to allow pre-legislative scrutiny for any upcoming pieces of legislation from his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12413/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** Following changes to Standing Orders (agreed by the Dáil on 17 October 2013), Ministers are now required, except in exceptional circumstances, to bring the general scheme or draft heads of a Bill to a Select Committee for consideration.

Committees are empowered to consider the draft Heads of Bills but they are not required to do so – it is the Committee’s prerogative to decide on a case by case basis whether it wishes to engage in pre-legislative scrutiny on any particular Bill.

The table below provides details of the Bills initiated by the Department of Finance since 2011 on which the Committee held a pre-legislative scrutiny hearing.

Number of Bill	Name of Bill	Date initiated
27 of 2014	Central Bank Bill 2014	7 April 2014
87 of 2014	European Stability Mechanism (Amendment) Bill 2014	26 September 2014

Number of Bill	Name of Bill	Date initiated
1 of 2015	Consumer Protection (Regulation of Credit Servicing Firms) Bill 2015	14 January 2015

The Central Bank Bill 2014 underwent Pre-legislative Scrutiny on 26 March 2014. The European Stability Mechanism (Amendment) Bill 2014 underwent Pre-legislative Scrutiny on 24 September 2014. The Consumer Protection (Regulation of Credit Servicing Firms) Bill underwent Pre-legislative scrutiny on 3 December 2014.

A pre-legislative scrutiny hearing was also held on 27 January 2015 and 25 February 2015 in relation to the Finance (Tax Appeals Commission) legislation. This proposed legislation has not yet been published as a Bill.

Future legislation will be submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny as a general rule, in accordance with Standing Order requirements. Finance Bills are exempt from pre-legislative scrutiny.

### Tax Exemptions

74. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to re-activate the disabled drivers and disabled passengers (tax concessions) scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12461/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I take it that the Deputy is referring to the fuel grant I am introducing to replace the excise relief element of the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Scheme that was revoked at the end of 2014.

In April 2013 the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that the excise relief element of the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers Scheme was incompatible with the EU Energy Tax Directive.

My Department informed the European Commission of my intention to remove the excise relief element of the Scheme at the end of 2014 and replace it with a fuel grant in 2015. The European Commission raised no objections. To give effect to this I signed a statutory instrument in March 2014 (S.I. 139 of 2014) with the effect that Regulation 16 of the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations (S.I. 353 of 1994) would be revoked as of 1 January 2015. In January 2015 I informed members of the Scheme that they should claim any outstanding excise relief due on fuel used up to 31 December 2014.

From 1 January 2015, current and prospective members of the Scheme have been eligible for a fuel grant in respect of fuel used during the year. I intend to maintain the current practice of paying the sum a year in arrears, so that the first payment of the fuel grant will take place from 1 January 2016. I have instructed my officials to design the new grant in such a way to provide a seamless a transition as possible between the excise repayment on fuel element of the Scheme and the new fuel grant and, as I stated in March 2014, members of the Scheme will not be at a loss in the transition.

### Banking Operations

75. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding bank

accounts (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12468/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** It is a matter of good commercial practice that any firm should know its customers. It is particularly important that a financial institution confirms the identity of their customers because financial institutions often undertake high value transactions on behalf of their customers. In addition, EU directives require that financial institutions ascertain the identities of their customer in order to prevent the use of the financial system for the purpose of money laundering and terrorist financing.

Section 33 of the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010, as amended, sets out the requirements in relation to customer due diligence ('CDD'). Pursuant to section 33, designated persons are required to identify the customer and verify the customer's identity on the basis of documents (whether or not in electronic form) or information, that the designated person has reasonable grounds to believe can be relied upon to confirm the identity of the customer. The Central Bank does not prescribe what documents or information designated persons should obtain from a customer in order to satisfy the requirements of section 33. This is a matter for each designated person to determine.

General Principle 2.11 of the Consumer Protection Code 2012 (the CPC) provides that '[a] regulated entity must ensure that in all its dealings with customers and within the context of its authorisation it: without prejudice to the pursuit of its legitimate commercial aims, does not, through its policies, procedures, or working practices, prevent access to basic financial services'.

Guidelines on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purpose of money laundering and terrorist financing are available on my Department's website at <http://www.finance.gov.ie/sites/default/files/Criminaljustice2012.pdf>. Appendix 2 of these guidelines is a non-exhaustive and non-mandatory list of alternative documents that can be used to verify identity in circumstances where a prospective customer cannot, for justifiable reasons, meet the standard identification and verification requirements, or has experienced difficulties in the past when seeking to open accounts. I would advise this individual to examine this list to see how he can meet identification requirements and then approach the financial institution again.

If an individual is not happy with the way that a regulated financial institution has treated them, they can make a complaint to the institution. If they are not happy with the outcome of the complaint made they can refer the matter to the Financial Services Ombudsman (FSO). Further information on how to make a complaint to the FSO is available at [www.financialombudsman.ie](http://www.financialombudsman.ie). The FSO can investigate, mediate and adjudicate on complaints made about the conduct of regulated financial service providers involving a failure or refusal to provide a service.

## **Banking Sector**

76. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide details of all persons and companies he or his officials have met, or are planning to meet, regarding the sale of shares of Allied Irish Banks and Permanent TSB; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12494/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As the Deputy is aware, as part of our broader efforts to encourage investment in Ireland in the wake of the financial crisis, stakeholders across the Irish system, including the banks, NAMA, IBRC, the IDA, the NTMA as well as my officials and myself, meet with parties interested in investing in Ireland. This has included meetings with representatives of investment funds and private equity firms who may be inter-

ested in investing in Irish banks.

One key function of these meetings includes obtaining general market feedback and feedback on our banking investments directly from potential investors so we are better informed when making decisions concerning our banking investments.

The Deputy may be aware that Permanent TSB announced on 11 March 2015 its intention to raise €525 million of capital from private investors. The capital raising process will require the issuance of new equity and debt by Permanent TSB, taking advice from Deutsche Bank and Davy. In this regard, Permanent TSB has met in excess of 60 potential investors and will meet with many more potential investors before the capital raise process is completed.

For Permanent TSB, I am of the view that the best way to protect the value of the State's investment is to ensure the bank is well prepared, that it conducts a comprehensive and competitive exercise to raise the capital with appropriate legal and financial advice, and that the State has meaningful oversight and involvement in the process. Officials from my Shareholding Management Unit and our financial advisers, JP Morgan Cazenove, are well placed to fulfil this role. Due to the commercially sensitive nature of the capital raise process being undertaken by Permanent TSB it is not appropriate, at this time, to divulge the names of institutions in discussions with Permanent TSB who have also had meetings with me or my officials.

With regards to AIB, given the scale of the State's investment some €20.8 billion and the range of options available to recoup value from the bank, officials within my department are working with AIB on reconfiguring its capital structure. As we announced previously Goldman Sachs International has been appointed to provide financial advice to the Department in this regard. My officials and occasionally myself meet with investment banks/stockbrokers and investment funds/private equity investors who are, or may in the future be, interested in AIB either as a potential adviser to us or as an investor. There have been no meetings specifically regarding the sale of any AIB shares and any meetings have been of a general nature regarding the wider economy and the banking sector.

### Tax Code

77. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Finance the total amount raised in deposit interest retention tax in each of the years 2011 to 2014; the implications of attaching the universal social charge to deposit interest, including the amounts raised in the same years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12508/15]

93. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of exempting the first €100, €200 and €500 of interest from deposit interest retention tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12643/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 77 and 93 together.

The following table sets out the net yield from Deposit Interest Retention Tax (DIRT) collected from 2011 to 2014.

Year	€ million
2011	473.3
2012	580.6
2013	499.5



Year	€ million
2014 (provisional)	436.7

I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that DIRT on interest bearing deposits is declared and paid on a four-times yearly basis by financial institutions. The total value of DIRT due and paid is reported to Revenue at institutional level. Detailed figures are not required in these returns to identify the numbers of accounts on which DIRT was paid, the amount of interest earned or DIRT payment per account or the tax forgone resulting from DIRT exemptions.

Separately, under regulations, as provided for in Section 891B of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, certain financial institutions, such as banks and credit unions, are required to make automatic annual returns at account level electronically to Revenue. The primary purpose of this Section is to provide information for use in risk analysis by Revenue and therefore the requirement to report interest focuses on account holders in receipt of larger payments.

The information under S891B is provided only where the total payment of interest is greater than €635 in a year, regardless of deduction of DIRT, and in all instances of a first interest payment irrespective of threshold for accounts opened on or after 1 January 2008. The Deputy may also wish to note that under statutory instrument (S.I. No. 56 of 2015), signed on February 15th 2015, the annual reporting threshold was reduced from €635 to €300 and applies to returns in respect of the year 2014.

Therefore, I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the data are not available on Revenue records to provide a basis for compiling estimates of the cost of attaching Universal Social Charge to deposit interest or exempting the first €100, €200 and €500 of interest from DIRT.

### Revenue Documents

78. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide an explanation for the apparent discrepancy between an answer he provided to Parliamentary Question No. 91 of 12 January 2012 and to Parliamentary Question No. 295 of 17 September 2014, in which he advised that there were 14,319 Revenue Commissioners affidavits filed in 2010 (details supplied) yet he informed this Deputy that just 9,576 were filed; and if he will recheck and confirm the correct number of CA24 forms filed in each year from 2005 to 2014. [12515/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I have been advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the numbers to which the Deputy refers are different because different methods were used by them to compile the figures. The figures in the reply to Parliamentary Question No. 91 of 12 January 2012, are based on the number of Inland Revenue Affidavits filed in a year, and were based on historical manual records of Capital Acquisitions tax correspondence. The figures in reply to Parliamentary Question No. 295 of 17 September 2014, are based on the number of Inland Revenue Affidavits processed during a year.

Arising from the deployment of new technology in Revenue, in conjunction with the modernisation of CAT in 2010, figures are now recorded electronically when the forms CA24 are processed by Revenue rather than when they are received.

Revenue apologises for not clearly distinguishing the nature of activity reported for different years.

This table sets out the number of Inland Revenue Affidavits received by Revenue in the

years 2005 to 2009.

Year	Inland Revenue Affidavits Received *
2005	21,881
2006	22,225
2007	23,196
2008	23,748
2009	19,219

\* The figures for these years are extracted from manual records of items processed in Revenue's CAT unit, and on re-examination of the figures it would appear that they include in some instances beneficiaries as well as disponors, and also other forms including for example corrective affidavits.

This table sets out the number of Inland Revenue Affidavits processed by Revenue in the years 2010 to 2014.

Year	Inland Revenue Affidavits Processed
2010	9,576
2011	13,548
2012	12,946
2013	12,484
2014	15,089

### Credit Unions

79. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the efforts of the credit union sector to expand into mortgage lending; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12522/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** My role as Minister for Finance is to ensure that the legal framework for credit unions is appropriate for the effective operation and supervision of credit unions.

The Registrar of Credit Unions at the Central Bank is the independent regulator for credit unions. Within her independent regulatory discretion, the Registrar acts to support the prudential soundness of individual credit unions, to maintain sector stability and to protect the savings of credit union members.

Currently credit unions are not prohibited from providing mortgages to members. Mortgages are subject to the maturity limits contained in section 35(2) of the Credit Union Act 1997, which sets out the percentage of a credit union's loan book that can be outstanding for periods exceeding both five and ten years, as well as limits on the maximum outstanding liability to an individual member.

On 27 November 2014, the Central Bank issued a consultation paper - CP88 "Consultation on Regulations for Credit Union on commencement of the remaining sections of the 2012 Act". This consultation paper includes draft lending regulations. Under these draft lending regulations credit unions can continue to provide mortgages. Existing maturity limits that are currently contained in section 35 of the 1997 Act are included in the draft lending regulations. A maximum maturity limit of 25 years is also introduced in the draft regulations. The draft lending regulations also include a large exposure limit on the maximum exposure a credit union may have to a borrower or a group of borrowers who are connected.

Where a credit union is providing mortgages, it must ensure that it has the appropriate systems, controls and expertise to undertake this type of lending. Also, scale is an important factor in determining whether a credit union can put these processes in place and offer mortgages as a viable business line.

The Government recognises the important role of credit unions as a volunteer co-operative movement in this country and welcomes any initiatives that might enhance the business model while simultaneously ensuring the protection of members' savings.

### **IBRC Operations**

80. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if records were kept of the meeting or meetings he or officials of his Department held with the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation in respect of a sale (details supplied); if so, if he will include these records in his response; if not, the reason; if not, the questions he raised in respect of payment to directors of the company in view of the large debt that was being written down, and the answers he received; the questions he raised in respect of the number of tenders considered; the reason the bid was more advantageous to the State; the questions he raised in respect of those who were involved in the tender process in the various entities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12546/15]

81. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if the former Irish Bank Resolution Corporation extended a €10 million credit facility to an entity which was already heavily indebted to it (details supplied) at any point between 2010 and its sale in 2012; if he will confirm that all due diligence procedures were followed in advance of the forwarding of this line of credit; if this €10 million or outstanding portion thereof was specifically recovered through the sale of the entity concerned or if the money was written down entirely at that point; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12621/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 80 and 81 together.

As way of background on the transaction referred to in the question, following a meeting between officials from my Department and senior management of IBRC held on 31 May 2012 it was agreed that my Department would review this transaction to better understand the decisions taken by IBRC. This review took place, by way of a meeting between officials from my Department and senior management of IBRC, on 11 June 2012. Following this review, a further meeting was held on 25 July 2012, which I attended along with officials from my Department and senior management from IBRC. At this meeting, the transaction referred to in the question was discussed further, along with a number of other topics. A further meeting between the former Secretary General of the Department of Finance, John Moran, and the then CEO of IBRC took place in August 2012 at which this matter was further discussed.

The file notes, minutes and other records regarding these meetings are currently the subject of Freedom of Information requests and will be released in due course as part of these Freedom of Information requests should officials in my Department consider their full release to be appropriate. The Deciding Officer will make the materials released under these Freedom of Information requests available to you upon their release.

Until those decisions are made by the Deciding Officer, I can confirm that at the meeting which I attended on 25 July 2012, it was put to senior management of IBRC that officials in my Department had concerns with a number of decisions taken by IBRC in relation to the sale of

the company referred to in the question including the decision to allow the sale process to be led by advisors of the company referred to in the question, the decision to exclude trade buyers, the timing of exclusivity and the payment to shareholders. Senior management of IBRC confirmed to me at this meeting that the transaction involving the company referred to in the question was thoroughly assessed by the Board of IBRC prior to them approving it and that the transaction was managed in the best manner possible to achieve the best result for the State.

In relation to the Deputy's query on a €10 million credit facility extended to the company referred to in the question between 2010 and the sale of the company in 2012, I am advised that it would not have been typical for decisions around credit facilities to be disclosed or discussed with Department of Finance officials unless required under the Relationship Framework which governed interactions between the Bank and the Department of Finance as these activities typically would have been within the ordinary course of business for the Bank.

Officials in my Department have also contacted the Special Liquidators but they are unable to comment on individual cases as the information requested is confidential and it would not be appropriate for them to release such information.

This being the case, I am unable to comment further on this matter.

### **IBRC Operations**

82. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will confirm the recent media reports which state that the board of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation turned down a reportedly higher offer for an entity (details supplied) because one element of that proposal included a mandatory eight week due diligence exercise; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that had the board chosen this reported bid, the new framework agreement would have been in place once the said eight week period had expired; if he has considered that the sale of the entity was rushed in that respect; if he has invited any explanation as to what end such a rush was undertaken for; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12628/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As part of parliamentary question 97 which was answered on 12 March 2015, the Deputy is aware of the process which was undertaken to introduce a revised Relationship Framework for IBRC and the reasons behind this.

In relation to the sale of the company referred to in the question, it was after representations made by an unsuccessful bidder in the process and subsequent meetings between that party and officials in my Department that my officials met with IBRC and undertook a review of this transaction. Following this review, my officials were made aware that the transaction involving the sale of the company referred to in the question was run by the company referred to in the question along with its advisors. This review raised concerns with the quality of some of the decisions taken in respect of this transaction, including, among others, that a higher bid for the company referred to in the question was received after entering into an exclusivity agreement with the ultimate winning bidder.

In light of concerns stemming from the review of the transaction by officials in my Department, I subsequently met with IBRC's Chairman and CEO to discuss this transaction. The Chairman and CEO confirmed to me that the transaction process and its terms had been thoroughly assessed by the IBRC Board and that the transaction was managed in the best manner possible to achieve the best result for the State.

The file notes, minutes and other records regarding the review of this transaction by my officials are currently the subject of Freedom of Information requests and will be released in

due course as part of these Freedom of Information requests should the Deciding Officer consider their full release to be appropriate. The Deciding Officer will make the materials released under these Freedom of Information requests available to you upon their release.

### Tax Rebates

83. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance when refunds of deposit interest retention tax paid by first-time buyers will be paid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12629/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that Finance Act 2014 inserted a new section 266A into the Taxes Consolidation Act (TCA) 1997. That section provides for a repayment of Deposit Interest Retention Tax (DIRT) on certain savings held by a qualifying first time purchaser prior to the purchase of a home, where that purchase is made between 14 October 2014 and 31 December 2017.

A qualifying first-time purchaser is a person who, at the time of the purchase, has not previously purchased or built any other dwelling, either individually or jointly with any other person.

The section provides for repayment of DIRT paid in respect of interest earned by a first-time purchaser in the 48 months prior to the purchase of a dwelling for use as his/her place of residence. This repayment is limited to DIRT relating to deposits of up to 20% of the purchase price of the home.

Revenue is developing an online system to facilitate applications for these DIRT repayments. This is currently being finalised and Revenue will publish further details in the coming weeks.

### NAMA Expenditure

84. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Finance the amount that has been paid by the National Asset Management Agency in legal and other fees to consultants and advisers for each year from 2010 to 2014 and in 2015 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12630/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** A breakdown of the professional fees sought by the Deputy is set out by category of expense for each year from inception to end-2014. The figures for 2015 will be collated and reported in accordance with NAMA's scheduled financial reporting.

<b>Legal, Consultants and advisory</b>	<b>€'000</b>	<b>€'000</b>	<b>€'000</b>	<b>€'000</b>	<b>€'000</b>	<b>€'000</b>
	Actual 2010	Actual 2011	Actual 2012	Actual 2013	Actual 2014	Total
Portfolio Management fees	5,087	15,992	6,882	5,549	3,775	37,285
Legal fees	3,311	9,478	4,634	2,975	8,574	28,973



<b>Legal, Consultants and advisory</b>	<b>€'000</b>	<b>€'000</b>	<b>€'000</b>	<b>€'000</b>	<b>€'000</b>	<b>€'000</b>
Due diligence (further breakdown below)	29,605	44,505	4,086	-	-	78,196
Other internal audit fees	-	-	288	-	-	288
Tax fees	463	562	531	1,223	754	3,533
Cross operational organisational project	-	-	-	193	43	236
<b>Total</b>	<b>38,466</b>	<b>70,537</b>	<b>16,421</b>	<b>9,940</b>	<b>13,146</b>	<b>148,510</b>
Less due diligence costs recovered on loan acquisitions*	-29,605	-34,505	-	-	-	-64,110
<b>Due diligence breakdown</b>	<b>8,861</b>	<b>36,032</b>	<b>16,421</b>	<b>9,940</b>	<b>13,146</b>	<b>84,400</b>
Legal	7,062	7,053	85	-	-	14,200
Loan valuation	9,295	20,900	2,187	-	-	32,382
Property	4,419	7,607	513	-	-	12,539
Audit	8,829	8,945	1,301	-	-	19,075
<b>Total non-recurring due diligence costs</b>	<b>29,605</b>	<b>44,505</b>	<b>4,086</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>78,196*</b>

\* The difference between maximum amount recoverable of €64.11m and actual cost of €78.196m was expensed to NAMA's P&L.

### NAMA Staff Data

85. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Finance the staffing numbers at the National Asset Management Agency for each year from 2010 to 2014 and in 2015 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12631/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** Under section 42 of the National Asset Management Agency Act 2009, the NTMA assigns staff to NAMA. Accordingly, as the Deputy is aware, all NAMA staff are employees of the NTMA. I am advised that the number of staff assigned by the NTMA to NAMA is as follows: End 2010 - 100; End 2011 - 193; End 2012 - 224; End 2013 - 331; End 2014 - 369; End February 2015 - 363.

### NAMA Staff Remuneration

86. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff at the National Asset Management Agency who were paid in excess of €100,000 for each year from 2010 to 2014 and in 2015 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12632/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** Under section 42 of the National Asset Management Agency Act 2009, the NTMA assigns staff to NAMA. Accordingly, as the Deputy is aware, all NAMA staff are employees of the NTMA. I am advised that the number of staff assigned by the NTMA to NAMA that were earning over €100,000 at each year end for 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 are as follows: End 2010 - 51; End 2011 - 87; End 2012 - 92; End 2013 - 110; End 2014 - 112.

Details in relation to 2015 will be published in accordance with the NTMA's scheduled financial reporting.

### **Mortgage Lending**

87. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views that the Central Bank of Ireland should review the requirement that a property valuation supplied for the purposes of obtaining a mortgage must not be more than two months old at the time when the loan is being drawn down, on the basis that the vast majority of loan applications take three months to complete; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12633/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am informed by the Central Bank of Ireland that the basis of the new macro-prudential mortgage lending regulation (S.I. 47 of 2015) is dependent on the value of the property and therefore due consideration must be given to ensure the accuracy of the calculation of the 'Loan-to-Value' of the loan at the date of drawdown. The shorter the time differential between the date of valuation and the date of drawdown will ensure the accuracy of the regulation.

Given that the majority of housing loans are initially sanctioned on an 'approval in principle' basis and that it is possible for a material gap (6-10 months depending on individual banks) between the date the initial valuation is provided and the date of the loan drawdown, this amendment serves to bring consistency to the industry by seeking that the valuation at drawdown is dated within two months and is reflective of open market value.

### **NAMA Debtor Agreements**

88. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of borrowers who have entered arrangements with the National Asset Management Agency that will allow them to reduce their personal exposure on company borrowings if they meet agreed targets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12635/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As set out in detail in NAMA's 2010 Annual Report, the outcome of the review of some debtor business plans included possible incentivisation arrangements which would only be triggered if the debtors met very ambitious or 'stretch' financial targets which were set for them. Such arrangements include amendment to or release of personal guarantees where maximum value has been extracted from the work-out and realisation of debtor assets and therefore better-than-expected financial outcomes are achieved on behalf of the State. I am advised by NAMA that, in this context, it has approved amendments to or the release of personal guarantees in the case of 33 debtors which will only be triggered where a debtor meets the stretch financial targets which have been set for him/her.

### **NAMA Debtors**

89. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance for the remaining borrowers on the National Asset Management Agency's book, the number who have personal guarantees attaching to their loans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12636/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by NAMA that of the 178 remaining NAMA-managed debtor connections, which make up 89% of NAMA debt, 146 connections have personal guarantees in place. The remaining NAMA-managed connections comprise mainly Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs).

As regards the debtor connections managed on NAMA's behalf by AIB and Capita, I am advised that there is widespread personal recourse and cross collateralisation across the entire portfolio.

### NAMA Debtors

90. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of National Asset Management Agency borrowers who have connection management agreements in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12637/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised that NAMA is working on a consensual basis with 70% of its debtors by value. Consensual strategies include full restructure, partial restructure or connection management agreement (CMA), and support. Support is the most common consensual strategy requiring debtors to implement agreed milestones in relation to debt reduction without the need for either partial or full restructure. There are currently four CMAs in place across NAMA's loan book.

### Insurance Coverage

91. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to limitations being placed by insurance companies on compensation to businesses for losses arising from cyber attacks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12639/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** In my role as Minister for Finance I have responsibility for the development of the legal framework governing financial regulation. Neither I nor the Central Bank of Ireland, as regulator, interfere in the pricing or provision of insurance products. The provision of insurance cover and the price at which it is offered is a commercial matter for insurance companies and is based on an assessment of the risks they are accepting and adequate provisioning to meet these risks. These are considered on a case by case basis.

Article 25 of S.I. No. 359/1994 European Communities (Non-Life Insurance) Framework Regulations, 1994 expressly prevents the Central Bank from requiring the prior approval of the pricing, or terms and conditions of an insurance product. Consequently, I am not in a position to direct insurance companies to remove limitations on cover arising from certain losses.

Officials from my Department have consulted Insurance Ireland about this matter and they have informed us that this type of cover is provided for in a specialised market and arranged on an individual basis. They have also added that this issue is not one on which they have received queries previously. Insurance Ireland operates a free Insurance Information Service for those who have queries, complaints or difficulties in relation to obtaining insurance. Their service can be contacted at (01) 6761914 or by e-mail at [iis@insuranceireland.eu](mailto:iis@insuranceireland.eu).

*Question No. 92 withdrawn.*

*Question No. 93 answered with Question No. 77.*

### **Tax Code**

94. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of reducing Capital Gains Tax to 30%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12644/15]

95. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of reducing Capital Acquisition Tax to 30%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12645/15]

96. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of increasing all Capital Acquisition Tax thresholds by 10% and 20% respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12646/15]

97. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of increasing the Category B Capital Acquisitions Tax threshold to €40,000 and €50,000 respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12647/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 94 to 97, inclusive, together.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that a wide range of statistical information is available on the Commissioners' new, enhanced, Statistics webpage:

<http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/statistics/index.html>.

In relation to the Deputy's questions, detailed information on potential costs can be found in the post-Budget 2015 Ready Reckoner:

<http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/statistics/ready-reckoners.pdf>.

While the Ready Reckoner does not show all of the specific costings requested by the Deputy, other changes can be estimated broadly on a pro-rata basis with those displayed in the Reckoner.

This indicates that the potential estimated cost of reducing the current Capital Gains Tax rate from 33% to 30% would be of the order of €45 million.

The potential cost from reducing current Capital Acquisition Tax rate from 33% to 30% would be of the order of €33 million.

The potential cost of increasing all Capital Acquisition Tax thresholds by 10% would be of the order of €19 million, and by 20% would be of the order of €38 million.

The current threshold amount for category B is €30,150 and increasing this to €40,000 i.e., an increase of almost 33% would have a potential cost of €23 million while an increase to €50,000 would have a potential cost of €46 million.

All estimates are provisional and subject to revision. These estimates are based upon an assumption that there would be no behavioural impact of these changes. In addition, the costs shown from decreases in taxation on assets relating to property are subject to movements in the value of such assets.

In relation to the Capital Acquisition Tax costs shown above, it should be noted that these figures are tentative because some of the costs of increasing these reliefs would be offset by benefits not fully exceeding new threshold limits.

### Tobacco Smuggling

98. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the total fines imposed for smuggling and illegal selling of tobacco in 2014; the way this compares to 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12648/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the number of criminal convictions for smuggling and illegal selling of tobacco in the years in question, and the total values of those fines, are as set out in the following table.

-	2013 Number of Prosecutions	Total Fines	2014 Number of Prosecutions	Total Fines
Cigarette Smuggling	56	€75,750	57	€108,969
Illegal Selling of Cigarettes	45	€90,000	54	€118,250

### Public Relations Contracts Expenditure

99. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the amount paid by the National Treasury Management Agency and its group entities including the National Asset Management Agency for public relations services in the years 2012 to 2014; the amount paid out to individual firms for these services in each of the three years; the efforts that have been made by the National Treasury Management Agency and its group entities to reduce its spend on these services over the past three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12649/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The NTMA have advised me that they do not maintain an internal press office. Instead, its internal communications resources are supported by an external service provider (appointed following a public procurement process) currently Gordon MRM - in order to offer a full press office and communications service (including out-of-hours contacts for the media). This press office and communications service provides support across all the NTMA's business areas: Debt Management, Ireland Strategic Investment Fund, National Development Finance Agency, State Claims Agency and NewERA. It also provides support to NAMA and the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland.

These arrangements were initially put in place during 2010 in light of a significant increase in the volume of domestic and international media queries being received by the NTMA and associated bodies. In September 2012 the NTMA retendered for the provision of these services. Following the tender evaluation process the NTMA awarded a new contract to Gordon MRM in December 2012.

The initial contract, in place to end 2012 was based on an hourly rate for services provided. During the term of this contract a 20% reduction in the hourly rate was agreed with effect from June 2011 until the end of the contract. The new contract, which commenced in January 2013, is based on a fixed fee.

Costs over the period 2012 to 2014 (ex VAT) are as follows: 2012 - €223,973 (of which



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€142,653 was charged to NAMA); 2013 - €159,826 (of which €78,926 was charged to NAMA); 2014 - €165,059 (of which €79,270 was charged to NAMA)

In the light of the sovereign debt crisis the NTMA also engaged Powerscourt a London based communications consultancy - for international communications initiatives in the funding and debt management area. Total costs (ex VAT) incurred for the provision of the services provided by Powerscourt were as follows: 2012 - €10,257; 2013 - €12,103.

### **Tax Reliefs Application**

100. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons who have taken up the special assignee relief programme in each year since its inception; if he will provide a breakdown by nationality of persons who have taken up the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12650/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that they will shortly finalise a report for presentation to me in relation to the Special Assignee Relief Programme for 2012 and 2013, which I intend to publish in due course. I will draw the Deputy's attention to the report when available.

I am also informed by the Revenue Commissioners that a similar report will be prepared in relation to 2014. However, as the tax returns for those who availed of the relief in 2014 are not due for submission to Revenue until later this year, the 2014 report will not be finalised until early 2016 at the earliest.

I would point out that a review of the Special Assignee Relief Programme was published on Budget Day. This report contained some statistics in relation to the take-up of the scheme. The report can be found on the Department's website at: [http://www.finance.gov.ie/sites/default/files/Report\\_on\\_SARP\\_final.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.ie/sites/default/files/Report_on_SARP_final.pdf)

### **Stability and Growth Pact**

101. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the manner in which the expenditure rules under the fiscal treaty will impact on Ireland's budgetary decisions for 2016 and future years; the concessions in respect of these rules that have been provided to other countries; the leeway which is being sought by Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12651/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The expenditure rule referred to by the Deputy was introduced into the Stability & Growth Pact by the six-pack reforms adopted in 2011. The 'expenditure benchmark' as it is generally known was also referenced in the Fiscal Compact.

Budget 2016 will be the first budget that Ireland will produce whilst subject to the revised preventive arm of the Stability & Growth Pact. The rule under the preventive arm requires Ireland to be on an appropriate adjustment path to the Medium Term Budgetary Obligation (MTO) and compliance with this rule is assessed in two ways. The first assessment requires a minimum improvement in the structural balance of more than 0.5% of GDP per annum until a Member State reaches its (MTO), which in Ireland's case is a balanced budget in structural terms. Importantly, in an Irish context, this is dependent on the estimation of the output gap, something which has proven volatile for small economies, particularly with open labour markets.

The second assessment is the expenditure benchmark which links growth in expenditure to the potential growth rate of the economy. Additional expenditure above the benchmark has to be paid for through the introduction of new discretionary revenue measures. The benchmark also contains a feature that is designed to assist with achieving the minimum structural improvement.

Exchanges between my officials and the Commission has led to the proposal of more sensible population projections which will support estimates of potential output over the medium-term. This change is expected to assist with compliance with both of the above rules. Following the usual course of action for amending aspects of the harmonised methodology for estimating potential output, the relevant committee - the Output Gap Working Group - is considering a solution to the issue of population projections and the estimation of the level of structural unemployment to address concerns faced by Ireland and a number of other Member States.

At the moment, the reference rate used in the calculation of the expenditure benchmark is based on a ten year average of potential growth which was calculated in 2013 when both the outturn and outlook for our economy's growth potential was considerably weaker. What I raised at the recent Eurogroup meeting was the use of outdated estimates of potential growth in the calculation of this metric which could lead to sub-optimal fiscal decisions being made.

My officials are in ongoing technical discussions with the European Commission and other Member States to both improve estimates of potential output and to establish a more appropriate calculation of the reference rate. This work will take place through the appropriate working groups and official channels and as I do not want to prejudice these discussions, I will not be elaborating any further details at this time.

As far as I am aware, no Member States have been provided concessions in the application of the preventive arm of the SGP.

Finally, I would emphasise that I support the revised fiscal rules. What I will be seeking from the Commission and colleagues from other Member States is a more sensible application of the rules which will enhance the credibility of fiscal policy decision making.

### **Departmental Contracts Data**

102. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide a list, in tabular form, of all contracts and tenders awarded by his Department to a company (details supplied) since 1 January, 2004, including any such awarded singularly or as a joint bid or consortium including said company; if he will indicate which Department, agency or semi-State company was the contacting party in each case; the value in each case; the purpose of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13110/15]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** My Department and the agencies under its aegis have not awarded any contracts or tenders to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2004.

### **Coastal Erosion**

103. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if his attention has been drawn to the significant levels of coastal erosion which are occurring at a coastal location (details supplied) in County Donegal; if he acknowledges the suffering and

anxiety which this situation is causing the local coastal community; his plans to address this situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12542/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris):** Local flooding and coastal erosion issues are matters for Local Authorities to investigate and address in the first instance and Donegal County Council (DCC) may carry out flood mitigation and coastal protection works using its own resources.

I can assure the Deputy that the Government and I are cognisant that coastal erosion may in some instances give rise to a significant threat to infrastructure, properties and/or public safety, which can cause hardship and concern to those affected. The Government Decision of 11th February, 2014 allocated total funding of up to €19.6m for the repair of existing coastal protection and flood defences damaged in the severe weather in late 2013 and early 2014 based on submissions made by the relevant local authorities to the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. A total sum of €662,000 was allocated to DCC under the Government Decision. The local authorities submitted to the Office of Public Works (OPW) programmes of repair works setting out how they intended to spend their allocations. DCC's programme of works included for works in four locations in the Inishowen area but it did not include works at Ballyliffin and as a result there is no specific provision for works at Ballyliffin in the total sum of €662,000 allocated to it under the Government Decision. As it was not included in DCC's programme, any proposals for works in that location must be considered outside of the Government Decision.

The OPW operates a Minor Flood Mitigation Works and Coastal Protection Scheme. This administrative Scheme's eligibility criteria, including a requirement that any measures are cost beneficial, are published on the OPW website, [www.opw.ie](http://www.opw.ie). It is not available for repair of damaged infrastructure or for maintenance of existing flood defence or coastal protection assets. A Local Authority may apply to the OPW for support under the scheme having regard to those eligibility criteria. Application forms are available on OPW's website under Flood Risk Management and decisions are made having regard to the overall availability of funding for flood risk management.

### **Office of Public Works Projects**

104. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the contacts he or his officials have held with the rural and economic development division of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and with the Department for Social Protection to ensure that a proper consultation process is entered into between the Office of Public Works and the five property owners who have expressed an interest in providing premises to the Department of Social Protection to ensure the retention of that Department's offices in Ballybay, County Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12653/15]

105. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he took cognisance of the fact that the property owners in Ballybay in County Monaghan who offered their premises to the Department of Social Protection were willing to give an undertaking to carry out all upgrading works at their own expense when reaching a decision to disregard all five properties as being unsuitable; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12655/15]

106. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will clarify comments (details supplied) that it would not be financially sustainable based on prevailing rental levels in circumstances in which rental costs for proposed offices elsewhere are higher than they are in Ballybay, County Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the

matter. [12656/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 104 to 106, inclusive, together.

Location strategies for any given public services commences with an assessment by the service provider of their operational requirements.

As the Deputy is aware from replies to previous Parliamentary Questions on this matter, the Commissioners of Public Works assessed a number of premises in Ballybay in the context of a proposal by the owners of certain properties to upgrade their buildings to the required modern standard at their own cost, but this is not deemed a feasible option as none of the properties currently meet the changing operational or accommodation needs of the Department of Social Protection.

I am advised by the Commissioners that the proposed new location in Monaghan town will fully address these operational requirements, and the Department of Social Protection concur.

### **Public Sector Staff Remuneration**

107. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to commence talks with the public sector unions with a view to addressing the cutbacks imposed during the troika years; if these talks will also address the specific reductions in the salaries and allowances of new entrants into the public sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12403/15]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** The Haddington Road Agreement (HRA) underpinned by the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) Acts 2009-2013, forms the cornerstone of pay policy in the public service until 2016 when it is due to expire. The Agreement, which contains a number of measures directly affecting the pay of staff, is delivering and is making a significant contribution to the achievement of the Government's fiscal consolidation deficit target of below 3% of GDP for 2015. The ongoing recovery in the economy is in no small part due to the contribution of public servants to keeping the cost of the public service paybill at sustainable levels and the recovery has facilitated the reinvestment by the Government in 2015 of some €300m in frontline services mainly in Health, Education and An Garda.

The FEMPI Acts govern the €2.2bn direct reductions in public service remuneration and pensions. Notwithstanding our improving economy, because of the magnitude of these reductions, the economy could not sustain the immediate restoration of such reductions. I believe that public servants understand that position. However, I have indicated that, following receipt of the 1st Quarter Exchequer returns and engagement with my Government colleagues, it is my intention to engage with Public Service Unions regarding the gradual unwinding, in parallel and consistent with our improving economy, of the emergency measures implemented under the FEMPI Acts. This is consistent with the approach adopted in securing agreement on the HRA through engagement with those directly affected.

The legality of the Acts is predicated on there being a financial emergency. In fact, I am required to review these Acts annually. My next review of the Acts is due to be carried out, and a report laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas, before 30 June this year.

With regard to new entrants, the 10% reduced rates of pay were one of a number of measures introduced over the period since the fiscal crisis which directly affected the pay of staff.

The reductions in starting pay were introduced as part of the National Recovery Plan in order to reduce the Public Service Pay and Pensions Bill. However, this Government has since provided for an agreed process under the Haddington Road Agreement for the amalgamation of pay scales to address any imbalance in pay scales between those who entered the public service as new entrants after January 2011 with those applying to public servants before January 2011. The revised scales provide for assimilation of new entrant public servants to a single applicable scale to each grade and represent a significant redressing of any imbalance particularly in the context of the savings required under the Haddington Road Agreement.

Public servants, in common with all employees, will have seen benefits this year to their take home pay arising from the tax reductions the Government has been able to introduce following its prudent management of the economy. I have, however, made it clear that public service pay rates will continue to be frozen in 2015 the 7th consecutive year in which there will have been no pay increases for public servants and, as we know, there have been 2 or 3 actual cuts in wages over that period. It is now appropriate for the Government to plan for the development of a sustainable public service pay and pensions policy that will continue to support our ongoing economic recovery over the medium term. Having worked over the last number of years to restore the health of the public finances I am determined that any outcome of discussions with unions is consistent with our overall financial position.

### Legislative Process

108. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of pieces of legislation that were submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by his Department since 2011; his plans to allow pre-legislative scrutiny for any upcoming pieces of legislation from his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12418/15]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** In response to the Deputy's question the following table outlines the Bills initiated in my Department that have been subject to the pre-legislative scrutiny procedure in the Oireachtas:

#### Bills initiated by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Number	Name	Purpose	Subject to Pre-Legislative Scrutiny
No. 33 of 2013	Houses of the Oireachtas (Inquiries, Privileges and Procedures) Act 2013	To provide for the exercise by either House or both Houses of the Oireachtas (or by a Committee of either House or both Houses) of a power to conduct an inquiry into specified matters, to provide for matters relating to compellability, privilege and procedure in the Houses (and in Committees of either House or both Houses), and to provide for related matters.	Yes
No. 30 of 2014	Freedom of Information Act 2014	Reform of Freedom of Information	Yes



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Number	Name	Purpose	Subject to Pre-Legislative Scrutiny
Bill No. 59 of 2014	Registration of Lobbying Bill 2014	To provide for establishing and maintaining a register of persons who carry on lobbying activities; to provide for a code of conduct/to amend the Ethics in Public Office Act 1995; and to provide for related matters	Yes
Not Enacted yet Bill No. 75 of 2014	Houses of the Oireachtas (Appointments to Certain Offices) Bill 2014	To amend and extend the Staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Act 1959 and the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Act 2003 and to provide for related matters	Yes
No 14 of 2014	Protected Disclosures Act 2014	To make provision for and in connection with the protection of persons from the taking of action against them in respect of the making of certain disclosures in the public interest and for connected purposes.	Yes

The upcoming Public Sector Standards Bill (2015) will be subject to pre-legislative scrutiny following receipt of Government approval of the general scheme in the coming weeks.

### Departmental Contracts Data

109. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide a list, in tabular form, of all contracts and tenders awarded by his Department to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2004, including any such awarded singularly or as a joint bid or consortium including said company; if he will indicate which Department, agency or semi-State company was the contacting party in each case; the value in each case; the purpose of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12544/15]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** In response to the Deputy's question I can confirm that no contracts or tenders were awarded to the company named by my Department since its establishment.

### Flood Relief Schemes Status

110. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide an update with regard to the Skibbreen flood relief scheme in County Cork; the commencement and completion dates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12617/15]

111. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide an update with regard to the Clonakilty flood relief scheme in County Cork; the commencement and completion dates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12618/15]

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112. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide an update with regard to the Bandon flood relief scheme in County Cork; the commencement and completion dates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12619/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 110 to 112, inclusive, together.

The Bandon Flood Relief Scheme is currently at tender stage for procurement of a civil works contractor. The pre-qualification process to provide a short-list of contractors is completed and tender documents are expected to be issued shortly by the Office of Public Works (OPW) to the applicants who were selected to tender for the project.

The Skibbereen Flood Relief Scheme is being progressed by Cork County Council as the Contracting Authority for the project, with funding being provided by the OPW. The current position is that the Council has issued tender documents for the procurement of a civil works contractor to those applicants who were short-listed in the pre-qualification process. I understand the tenders are due back in mid April, after which they will be considered by the Council before a Contractor is appointed.

Both the Skibbereen and Bandon Schemes will shortly be submitted to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for Confirmation i.e. statutory approval under the Arterial Drainage Acts. This process includes an independent review of the Environmental Impact Statement for each Scheme. It is hoped that this process will be completed on both Schemes in time to allow Contractors to be appointed in the Autumn of this year. Once a contractor is appointed and construction gets underway, it is expected that it will take approximately two years to complete each Scheme.

In relation to the Clonakilty Flood Relief Scheme, a preferred scheme design option was presented at a statutory Public Exhibition which took place from 15th December 2014 to 20th January 2015. Members of the Public were invited to submit observations on the preferred option by 20th February 2015. All the observations received from concerned parties are currently being considered.

Subject to broad acceptance of the Clonakilty Scheme proposals by the public, detailed design of the Scheme will be undertaken. This will be followed by a procurement process for a civil works contractor and the formal Confirmation of the Scheme under the Arterial Drainage Acts. Again subject to successful completion of the tender and Confirmation processes, it is hoped that construction will start in early 2016. The construction programme is expected to take up to 24 months to complete.

The Government remains fully committed to the provision of flood relief schemes for the people of Bandon, Skibbereen and Clonakilty and the OPW has made provision for the cost of implementing these schemes in its financial profiles over the years 2015-2018.

### **Irish Language**

113. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to set out the process by which the Government will increase the recruitment level of Irish speakers in the public service to 10%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12624/15]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** As the Deputy is aware, in October 2013 the Government approved the introduction of a new approach to ensure that there are a sufficient number of civil servants who are able to perform their duties

through Irish. These new arrangements were put in place in the context of replacing the policy of awarding bonus marks for Irish language proficiency in civil service recruitment and promotion competitions which was not meeting the Government's objectives.

Under the new approach measures are being introduced to increase the cohort of functional bilinguals in the civil service in order to reflect a more competency-based approach to recruitment and, where appropriate, promotion competitions.

In future, in the context of workforce planning frameworks, Departments will be required to identify the posts/areas of work requiring functional bilinguals and to include these in their workforce action plans. Having regard to the implementation of the Gaeltacht Act 2012, Departments will be asked to pay particular attention to posts that are located in, or that are serving, Gaeltacht areas. This process will be central to ensuring that future recruitment and inter-departmental promotion competitions run by PAS make sufficient provision for appointments to posts requiring functional bilinguals. In the case of Departmental recruitment and promotion competitions, an assessment will be made of the requirement for functional bilinguals and, where necessary and appropriate, a sub-panel of functional bilinguals will be put in place.

The new arrangements replace the scheme of bonus marks for Irish, introduced nearly 40 years ago following the abolition of compulsory Irish for entry to the civil service. Under the new arrangements, where a post in a Government Department is identified as requiring proficiency in Irish, the intention is that it should be filled by a functional bilingual.

The new arrangements are part of the Executive Officer (EO) recruitment competition for which applications closed on 8th January 2015. The new arrangements have also been incorporated into the ongoing Clerical Officer (CO) recruitment competition.

It is intended that a sub-panel of Irish language functional bilinguals comprising up to 6% of the overall panel size, will be created in both competitions subject to a sufficient number of candidates meeting the required standard.

The operation of the new arrangements in these competitions will be reviewed and will be revised as necessary in the context of experience and progress in achieving the Government's objectives.

### **Public Sector Reform Implementation**

114. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to outline the manner in which he expects his proposed forum on public sector pay, expenditure and taxation issues to operate; when it will be convened; the remit it will be provided with; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12625/15]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** The wide-ranging reforms to the budgetary architecture, introduced by this Government, have been informed by the core principle that a more open and transparent process, allowing for clearer accountability and oversight, supports the efficient use of public funds to deliver effective services for citizens.

With Ireland set to exit the Excessive Deficit Procedure at the end of 2015, we will thereafter become subject to the preventive arm of the Stability and Growth Pact. In this fiscal context, the Government is now considering options, including a Spring Economic Statement and National Economic Dialogue, to further develop the whole-of-year budgetary cycle.

My Department is working with the Department of Finance on developing proposals for a National Economic Dialogue on the matters referred to by the Deputy. In relation to the timing and format of the dialogue I envisage that it will be held mid-year and carried out in an open and transparent manner that facilitates public discussion about fiscal policy options and priorities.

With a mid-year timing for the dialogue, this would allow the discussions at the dialogue to inform the work of Government and the Oireachtas in their considerations of the Budget later in the year.

### Scientific Research

115. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to outline his views on concerns that there is currently a drive for commercially realisable research in science in a limited set of prescribed areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12387/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Damien English):** The Government remains committed to the importance of science, technology and innovation (STI) given the key role that it plays in underpinning economic recovery and maintaining Ireland's competitiveness.

Ireland has successfully built up a strong science base as result of significant funding and an ambitious policy of building up capacity in our Higher Education Institutes and in our enterprise base over the last decade and a half. The Strategy for Science, Technology & Innovation (2006 to 2013) was a broad based strategy which covered funding for research and innovation across all disciplines and across the full continuum of research from basic to applied as well as commercialisation of research.

Economic and fiscal conditions in the intervening period informed the Government's decision to implement a range of policies directed at accelerating the economic and societal return on our STI investment. Research Prioritisation was one such key policy initiative and saw a concentration of the majority of competitive funding on areas which were deemed most likely to secure greater economic and societal impact, particularly in the form of jobs. The priority areas were identified, following rigorous analysis and intensive engagement with all key stakeholders by the Research Prioritisation Steering Group (a broad based group comprising membership from industry and academia) on the basis of existing strengths of the public research system, existing strengths of the enterprise base, opportunities that exist in terms of the global marketplace and those which are most likely to deliver economic and societal impact and employment.

While Research Prioritisation saw a greater emphasis on the economic and societal impact of research it did not represent a move away from funding basic research. Policy has been and will continue to support research across the full continuum from basic to applied, through to commercialisation of research. While the mandate of Science Foundation Ireland was expanded in 2013 to include applied as well as basic oriented research, SFI is still mandated to fund earlier stage research. However, all research supported by SFI must be in strategic areas of opportunity for the State in line with our research prioritisation agenda and it must have impact - this approach will continue to underpin policy into the future and will be a central pillar of the Government's Strategy.

Excellence in scientific research has been and will continue to be a cornerstone in the development of our science base in Ireland. In the context of our vision for the future, we must

have a strong and excellent research base particularly in areas where our strengths can match opportunities.

Equally important is the translation of research and commercialisation of ideas. Ireland is ranked third in the EU, according to the European Commission's "Indicator of Innovation Output", which measures the extent to which ideas from innovative sectors are able to reach the market, providing better jobs and making Europe more competitive. All of the national indicators show that our focus on commercialisation of research is having an impact. The number of technologies licensed to industry, which is one of the most relevant indicators of commercialisation performance in the research system, rose significantly from 12 in 2005 to 87 in 2012 and invention disclosures and spin outs also increased substantially during that period. We established Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI) in 2013 to make it even easier for companies to access and use ideas developed through publicly-funded research to develop new products and services and ultimately create jobs and exports.

A consultation process designed to inform the development of a broad based Strategy, which will be a successor to the Strategy for Science Technology & Innovation, is underway. Submissions received from various stakeholders will be considered in detail by my Department and the Interdepartmental Committee which has been tasked with developing proposals for the new Strategy. This Committee includes representatives from key Government Departments and the Higher Education Authority as well as the Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government and is expected to complete its work by the Summer.

### Scientific Research

116. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to set out his views on the current level of investment in long-term fundamental science research; if he will ensure that funding for this area of research is being provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12388/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Damien English):** Prior to a Government policy decision to make a significant investment in science, technology and innovation, research funding in Ireland was at very low levels. However, from 2000, an ambitious policy was adopted - investing in people, infrastructure and associated facilities to build the science base across many areas of scientific research in both our higher education institutions and other public research organisations; and direct support to the enterprise sector to help individual companies to build their capacity for research and development. As a result significant steps have been made in establishing a strong and excellent public research base particularly in areas where our strengths can match opportunities.

Building on this success, this Government introduced a number of policy initiatives targeted at accelerating the economic and societal return on our investment in this area. In reaching its conclusions on foot of rigorous analysis and intensive engagement with all key stakeholders, the Research Prioritisation Steering Group – a broad based group comprising membership from industry and academia - identified 14 priority areas around which the majority of competitive funding should be targeted. The areas were identified on the basis of existing strengths of the public research system, existing strengths of the enterprise base, opportunities that exist in terms of the global marketplace and those which are most likely to deliver economic and societal impact and employment.

Evidence, from both the EU and internationally, shows that this strategy is paying off. Globally, we are ranked:



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- 11th in the Global Innovation Index 2014, out of 142 countries.
- 15th in the IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook for 2014, up two places from 2013.
- 1st in the world for inward investment and quality, as per the IBM Global Location Trends Report of 2013.
- 1st in Europe and 2nd in the world for the number of investment jobs per capita, as per the same report.
- 3rd in the new EU 'Indicator of Innovation Output', and
- 9th in the European Commission's 2014 Innovation Union Scoreboard.

Excellence in scientific research has been and will continue to be a cornerstone in the development of our science base in Ireland and this has been complemented in recent years by a sharper focus on the relevance and impact of research. While Research Prioritisation saw a greater emphasis on the economic and societal impact of research it did not represent a move away from funding basic research. Policy has been and will continue to be to support research across the full continuum from basic to applied, through to commercialisation of research. Ireland has been listed among the top 20 countries in global rankings for the quality of our scientific research and we have excelled in certain scientific disciplines. For example, Ireland is ranked:

- 1st in immunology,
- 1st in animal and dairy,
- 3rd in nanotechnology and
- 4th in computer science.

While the mandate of Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) was expanded in 2013 to include applied as well as basic oriented research, SFI is still mandated to fund earlier stage research. However, all research supported by SFI must be in strategic areas of opportunity for the State in line with our research prioritisation agenda and it must have impact. Impact is measured broadly across a range of areas including the economy and society, health and well-being, capacity and skills, natural capital and the built environment. This has manifested itself in the establishment of 12 large scale research centres in areas of relevance to the economy and society.

In the context of our ongoing fiscal constraints and the many competing demands for investment of public funds, the Government will continue to support excellent and impactful research across the continuum from basic to applied in strategic areas of opportunity for the State. This approach will underpin the successor to the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation which is currently being formulated by an Interdepartmental Committee which includes key Government Departments and the HEA as well as the Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government.

## **Employment Rights**

117. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to set out the definition for commencement of employment under the Unfair Dismissals Acts; if he will provide the information that an employer must when offering a subsequent contract, to the original temporary contract of employment, to an existing employee under the Terms of Em-

ployment (Information) Act; and under this same legislation, the information an employer must provide to an employee where a contract of employment is extended. [12405/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Gerald Nash):** A range of employment rights legislation is pertinent to the scenarios outlined by the Deputy in his question. These include, inter alia, the Unfair Dismissals Acts 1977 to 2007, the Terms of Employment (Information) Act 1994 and the Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act 2003. In addition, legal principles established under case law may be of relevance to aspects of the issues raised by the Deputy.

The Deputy will understand that I cannot provide legal advice in relation to the employment law rights applying to any particular situation. Independent legal advice should be sought if an individual has concerns about a specific employment situation.

With regard to the provision of general information on employment rights legislation, the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) is mandated to secure compliance with this legislation. Under the current reform programme NERA's Information Unit has been restructured and expanded to form a new Workplace Relations Customer Service Section. This Section provides information in relation to employment, equality and industrial relations rights and obligations. It can be contacted at Lo-call: 1890 80 80 90. The website [www.workplacelrelations.ie](http://www.workplacelrelations.ie) also provides extensive information on employment rights.

### Legislative Process

118. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to detail tranches of legislation that were submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by his Department since 2011; his plans to allow pre-legislative scrutiny for any upcoming legislation from his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12416/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The table below sets out the legislation submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by my Department since 2011. In addition I expect to publish the Scheme of a Consumer Rights Bill for public consultation in April 2015 and propose to submit it for pre-legislative scrutiny.

#### Legislation submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny since 2011

Name of legislation	Details
Workplace Relations Bill	The Workplace Relations Bill 2014 was published on 30th July, 2014. The policy document 'Legislating for a World Class Workplace Relations Service' upon which the Draft Scheme of the Workplace Relations Bill was drafted was referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation for scrutiny in July, 2012. I also appeared before this Oireachtas Committee in July, 2012 to discuss the proposed Workplace Relations legislation.
Industrial Relations (Amendment) Bill 2014	The Industrial Relations (Amendment) Bill 2014 was submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny on 22nd September 2014.

Name of legislation	Details
National Minimum Wage (Low Pay Commission) Bill 2015	The National Minimum Wage (Low Pay Commission) Bill 2015 was submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny 4th February 2015.
The County Enterprise Boards (Dissolution) Act, 2014	The County Enterprise Boards (Dissolution) Act, 2014, enacted on 15th April, 2014 was subject to the Oireachtas pre legislative scrutiny procedure.
Hallmarking (Amendment) Bill	The Heads of Bill and the RIA were sent to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation for pre-legislative scrutiny on 10 October 2014, in accordance with Dáil Standing Order 123A and Seanad Standing Order 113A, requesting the Committee to consider whether pre-legislative scrutiny was necessary. At its meeting on 2nd December the Committee decided that, having reviewed the documentation provided by the Department as well as a research paper prepared by the Library and Research Service of the Houses of the Oireachtas, it would not be undertaking Pre-Legislative Scrutiny. The Bill is currently being drafted by the Office of the Parliamentary Council.
Companies (Accounting) Bill	The Heads of Bill and the RIA were sent to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation for pre-legislative scrutiny under letter dated 13th March 2015 in accordance with Dáil Standing Order 123A and Seanad Standing Order 113A, requesting the Committee to consider whether pre-legislative scrutiny was necessary. A decision of the Committee is awaited.
Commission Regulation (EU)	
COM (2013) 798 - Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on Seafarers amending Directives 2008/94/EC, 2009/38/EC, 2002/14/EC, 98/59/EC and 2001/23/EC	The Commission proposal went to the Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation on 10 December 2013 as part of the Oireachtas scrutiny process
COM (2014) 452 - Proposal for a Council Directive implementing the European Agreement concluded by the European Barge Union (EBU), the European Skippers Organisation (ESO) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time in inland waterway transport	The Commission proposal was brought before the Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation on 30 September 2014, 7 October 2014 and 11 November 2014, as part of the Oireachtas scrutiny process

In addition, in respect of the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) (Exclusion of Workers in the Fishing and Shipping Sectors) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 357 of 2014), a draft of the Regulations was laid before each House of the Oireachtas for a Resolution of each House to be passed (known as a Positive-Resolution process).

### **Job Creation**

119. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide the details of a jobs announcement (details supplied); the timing of the job creation; the interactions that have been had between any State enterprise agency and the promoter; if his attention has been drawn to these interactions and to the announcement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12423/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The company referred to, which announced the Global Sustainability Initiative for Facilitating Investment in Africa, is neither an IDA Ireland nor Enterprise Ireland client company and neither agency were involved in this announcement. Nevertheless, I welcome the announcement and IDA Ireland has agreed to help attract companies into the proposed technology hub, the “Global Sustainability Centre,” within the Castlebar facility.

### **IDA Portfolio**

120. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his plans for the land bank in Haynestown, Dundalk, County Louth owned by the Industrial Development Agency ; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12524/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I have been informed by IDA Ireland that the Agency’s lands in Mullagharlin/Haynestown currently have valid planning permission in place for an Advance Biopharmaceutical and Knowledge Industry Campus which will support biopharmaceutical administration, research and support activities. The site has been masterplanned to include two facilities which will consist of a medium to large scale bio pharma manufacturing facility and small to medium scale bio pharma manufacturing facility. The planning permission is valid until 2018.

The promotion of this site forms part of IDA Ireland’s global marketing strategy to potential IDA/FDI clients across a number of industry sectors with options for site availability with planning permission or as a greenfield site.

IDA Ireland recently published its new strategy for the 5 year period 2015 to 2019. In that Strategy the Agency set itself a target of winning 900 investments over the 5 year period and of increasing the level of investments won into in each region by between 30% and 40% during the lifetime of the Strategy.

As a Government, we are determined to ensure that every region in the country will benefit from recovery and last month we announced details of the Action Plan for Jobs-Regional initiative which will seek to maximise the strengths and assets of each region to support enterprise growth and job creation. The objective is that six Regional Action Plans will be launched by July, with two remaining Strategies in development at that stage.

Additionally the Government will provide up to €250 million over five years in additional capital funding to support regional enterprise development. This includes the roll out of a five

year, €150 million property investment programme by IDA Ireland to attract foreign direct investment into the regions. This programme will build on the recent investment by the Agency in a number of advance manufacturing facilities in regional locations. A further sum of up to €100 million will be available to Enterprise Ireland to support enterprises in the regions to start-up, grow and export, thereby creating more jobs in regional locations.

### **Small and Medium Enterprises Supports**

121. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the role his Department or any organisation under the remit of his Department, is playing in plans for a campus for indigenous small and medium sized enterprises as part of a project (details supplied) in County Cork; the level of funding that is being committed to this aspect of the project; the type of small and medium sized enterprises it is hoped to have on the campus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12543/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Irish Maritime Energy Research Cluster (IMERC) promotes Ireland as a world-class renowned research and development location that will unlock Ireland's Maritime and Energy potential.

Enterprise Ireland (EI) is represented on the Board of IMERC. EI has engaged, and continues to engage with IMERC on assisting it in implementing its strategic plan.

To-date, EI has not made a financial contribution to the IMERC initiative for a new Campus for indigenous small and medium enterprises. However, EI may be able to assist individual such companies.

I understand that Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) has no plans for a campus for indigenous small and medium sized enterprises in Haulbowline, Co Cork.

### **EU Funding**

122. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his plans to implement the Employment and Social Innovation Programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12548/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Gerald Nash):** The Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) is an EU funding instrument, managed by the European Commission, which supports the development of innovative social policies and promotes labour mobility, as well as facilitating access to microcredits and encouraging social entrepreneurship.

EaSI brings three EU programmes, which were previously managed separately, together under one umbrella. They are:

-PROGRESS – which supports the modernisation of employment and social policies

-EURES – which supports job mobility (the Department of Social Protection has responsibility with regard to EURES programme)

-Progress Microfinance – which aims to increase the availability of microcredit – loans below €25,000 – for setting up or developing a small business.



The role of my Department in relation to the EaSI programme is to monitor its operation to bring funding opportunities to the attention of appropriate Irish bodies through information dissemination of the EaSI work programmes and on calls for proposals/tenders.

Ireland is represented on the EaSI Committee by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Member) and the Department of Social Protection (Alternate).

As part of its role in the management of this funding instrument, the European Commission disperses funds directly to successful applicants.

### **Job Creation Data**

123. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the total number of manufacturing and service jobs created in the past four years to date; the total number of persons now employed in both sectors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12567/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The data available relates to manufacturing and services sectors jobs in companies which are supported by the enterprise agencies.

There were 38,705 jobs created (i.e. gross job gains) in agency-assisted client companies in 2014, up from 35,411 jobs in 2011, 35,165 jobs in 2012, and 37,412 in 2013. In terms of the net change (i.e. when job losses are subtracted from job gains), there were +15,648 net jobs created by agency-assisted client companies in 2014, up from +6,271 in 2011, 8,853 in 2012, and +14,336 jobs in 2013.

Focusing on *gross* jobs gains and breaking down by sector, for the year 2014 there were some 17,222 jobs created in the manufacturing sector, while 18,544 jobs were created in internationally traded and financial services sectors, with an additional 2,939 jobs in other sectors outside of manufacturing and services. The corresponding data for 2011 were 16,977 jobs created in the manufacturing sector, 16,199 jobs in services, with an additional 2,235 jobs in other sectors. In 2012 there were 15,384 jobs created in manufacturing, 17,018 in services and 2,763 jobs created in other sectors. Finally, in 2013 there were 16,548 jobs created in manufacturing, 17,404 in services, and 3,460 jobs created in other sectors.

Turning to *net* jobs created, i.e. gross gains minus gross losses, and breaking the figures out by sector, as requested, in 2014 there were +5,504 net jobs created in manufacturing, +9,488 in services and +656 net jobs created in other sectors. The corresponding data for 2011 were +473 net jobs created in manufacturing, +6,204 net jobs created in services, and a total of -406 net job losses in other sectors. In 2012 there were +2,151 net jobs created in manufacturing, +6,218 net jobs created in services and +484 net jobs created in other sectors. Finally, in 2013 there were +4,297 net jobs created in manufacturing, +8,961 net jobs created in services, and +1,078 net jobs created in other sectors.

The total number of persons employed by agency-assisted client companies in 2014 (in both permanent and temporary contracts) amounts to 362,415, with 193,072 engaged in the manufacturing sector, 141,011 in services, and an additional 28,332 in other sectors. This is up from a total of 323,654 persons employed in 2011, of whom 181,138 were engaged in manufacturing, 116,351 in services and a further 26,165 in other sectors.

### **Foreign Direct Investment**

124. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the major considerations of foreign companies contemplating investment here; if skills, services such as information and communications technology, road or rail transport or other considerations are paramount; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12568/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** IDA Ireland has informed me that the vast majority of its client feedback shows that one of the key considerations for potential and existing clients when it comes to making investment location decisions is the availability of talent at a competitive price. Other factors which also affect investor decisions include Ireland's relative cost competitiveness, good infrastructure, corporate tax regime and available direct firm level financial supports.

IDA Ireland constantly monitors competitor locations and the value propositions they offer potential mobile investment. Competitor locations differ depending on the sector of the mobile investment. Within Europe, Ireland's FDI performance positions us in absolute terms inside the top ten European locations for investment projects with the UK, Germany and France as the top locations

Ireland's attractiveness as a potential location for inward investment is not reliant solely on my Department. It requires a cross-Governmental effort. Within our first year in office, this Government launched the Action Plan for Jobs to co-ordinate the delivery of job creation policy across all 16 Government Departments to further Ireland's potential and build on current job-creation levels. We are now on our fourth annual plan in a very successful multi-year process and we look forward to continuing the success of previous years.

### **EU Funding**

125. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which European Union grant support continues to be made available to indigenous Irish companies in both the manufacturing and services sectors in respect of innovation and technology in the past four years and in 2015 to date; the extent to which such support is expected to continue in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12570/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** EU framework programmes for research and innovation provide Ireland with valuable mechanisms for firms – indigenous and multinational - to further their innovativeness in products, services and processes. These programmes are also a critical source of non-Exchequer funding for this important economic activity.

The current EU framework programme for research and innovation is Horizon 2020 (H2020). It has a budget of close to €80bn. and runs over the period 2014-2020.

The fact that Industrial Leadership is one of the 3 pillars on which H2020 is built is indicative of the importance the EU attaches to speeding up development of the technologies and innovations that will underpin tomorrow's businesses.

H2020 stimulates SME involvement right across the whole programme, with a particular focus on close-to-market support. At least €8.7bn in EU support will make its way to SMEs who participate in EU collaborative research and innovation projects during the lifetime of H2020. Irish companies who successfully compete for funding from this source will boost their innovative capability.

Ireland has set itself an ambitious target of €1.25bn over the lifetime of H2020. Our strategy

to achieve our H2020 target is being driven by the H2020 High Level Group, chaired by my Department.

The H2020 national support system is based in Enterprise Ireland. Through a national office and a network of national contact points in the relevant programme areas of H2020, information and support is provided to enterprise and researchers to facilitate their engagement with the opportunities available under H2020.

Under the predecessor framework programme to H2020 – FP7 – which ran from 2007 to 2013 – Irish companies and academics won over €620m. This funding provided a considerable increase in their innovative capability.

### **Action Plan for Jobs**

126. **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 the manufacturing and services sectors, with particular reference to the need to remain competitive vis-a-vis European and non-European competitors; if particular costs have been identified as being a disincentive in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12571/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The National Competitiveness Council (NCC) will shortly publish its annual Costs of Doing Business in Ireland 2015 report which was conducted as part of the Action Plan for Jobs 2015. This report will provide benchmarks of key business costs across a range of indicators and will identify areas where Irish enterprise costs are out of line with key competitors. The report will concentrate on costs that are largely domestically determined such as labour, property, energy, water, waste, communications and business services, and considers both price levels, and changes in those levels (i.e. price inflation). I understand that the report is currently being finalised by the Council: once it has been completed, I will be in a better position to comment in greater detail. Thereafter, the Council will identify a range of recommendations designed to address the issues identified. These recommendations will be included in the Council's annual Competitiveness Challenge report which is due to be completed in Q4 2015.

In the meantime, addressing Ireland's international cost competitiveness continues to be a key economic priority for Government. The Government's Action Plan for Jobs, which is co-ordinated and developed by my Department since 2012, sets out a comprehensive set of measures to improve our competitiveness performance, with a specific focus on improving cost competitiveness. Cost-focused actions in the 2015 Plan include measures addressing legal costs, energy efficiency, commercial rates, and regulated charges.

As a result of a range of APJ initiatives over recent years, substantial progress has been made in terms of improving Ireland's competitiveness in recent years and we have climbed to 15th in the IMD competitiveness rankings.

### **Small and Medium Enterprises Supports**

127. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which lack of working capital continues to be identified by indigenous small enterprises in the manufacturing and services sectors as an obstacle to expansion; the degree to which these issues have been brought to the attention of the relevant authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12572/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Since this Government came to Office in March 2011, it has worked across its various Departments and Agencies to ensure that all enterprises have access to appropriate finance for both working capital and investment. The SME State Bodies Group, chaired by the Department of Finance and with members from all relevant ‘access to finance’ Departments and Agencies was established and works to deliver on this agenda for all SMEs, primarily through its work under the Action Plan for Jobs process.

My Department put in place 2 novel credit schemes: the Microenterprise Loan Fund and the Credit Guarantee Scheme to support viable enterprises, from all sectors, who have been refused bank credit. Both Schemes have been the subject of review and appropriate improvements to both Schemes are in train. My Department also provides a range of equity and venture capital finance through its Agency, Enterprise Ireland.

The Minister for Finance has established the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI). The SBCI will ensure access to flexible funding for Irish SMEs by facilitating the provision of:

-Flexible products with longer maturity and capital repayment flexibility, subject to credit approval:

-Lower cost funding to financial institutions which is passed on to SMEs; and

-Market access for new entrants to the SME lending market, creating real competition.

Given the extent of supports available I am happy to direct the Deputy to the supporting SMEs Online Tool, which is a cross-Government initiative to help enterprises, entrepreneurs and start-ups to navigate the range of Government business supports for which they may be eligible. The Tool is available at: [www.actionplanforjobs.ie](http://www.actionplanforjobs.ie).

In order to inform the work on access to finance for SMEs, the Department of Finance produces a Credit Demand Survey every 6 months, the last one being for the period April 2014 – September 2014. This Survey covers the entire SME sector and is broken down by size into: micro, small and medium enterprises, and does not produce data at sectoral level.

This latest Survey has found that improved trading conditions mean that far fewer companies are seeking credit in order to survive day to day financial pressures. Only just under half (48%) of those SMEs seeking finance between April and September 2014 did so for working capital needs, compared to 61% in the previous period. Improved turnover and profit have led to a greater proportion of SMEs suggesting they fund working capital through internal funding/retained earnings (68%). It also appears from this Survey that banks are currently more likely to approve funding for working capital (71%) than for growth (64%). Decline rates for growth stand at 17%, with the decline rate for working capital at just 13%. Any SME who has been refused bank credit or has issues with the terms and conditions offered can appeal these decisions to the Government’s Credit Review Office.

### **Job Creation Data**

128. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the total number of jobs created throughout County Kildare in each of the last ten years and in 2015 to date; the number of these which are in the manufacturing and services sectors; the indications for the future in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12573/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The data available relates to jobs in companies supported by the enterprise agencies.

There were 1,621 gross jobs created in 2014 in County Kildare in agency-assisted client companies. When job losses are subtracted from the gross figure, 847 net jobs were created in County Kildare in 2014. The number of gross jobs created in County Kildare have varied from 2,625 in 2005 to 651 in 2007, while the net change has varied from +1,780 jobs in 2005 to -1,609 jobs in 2009. The total number employed in agency-assisted companies in County Kildare amounts to 17,910 in 2014, of which 13,187 are in manufacturing, and 3,840 in services, and 883 in other sectors.

Over the period 2005-2014, there have been some 12,958 gross jobs created cumulatively in County Kildare by agency-assisted client companies, with +864 cumulative net jobs created.

Turning to a sectoral split of the data, for 2014 there were 1,299 gross job gains and +797 net jobs created (netting out job losses) in the manufacturing sector in County Kildare. The corresponding 2014 figures for the services sector are 280 gross jobs (manufacturing) and +25 net jobs (services).

Breaking down the cumulative data (2005-2014) by sector, there were 8,145 gross jobs created in manufacturing, 3,908 in services, and a further 905 in other sectors. Furthermore, there was a cumulative net change of -1,059 jobs in manufacturing, +1,501 in services, and +422 in other sectors.

### IDA Portfolio

129. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if her attention has been drawn to any case where Ireland is in breach of the Directive on Services in the Internal Market and if so, if he will provide the details of all such breaches; if enforcement proceedings have commenced against Ireland over any such breaches; the fines possible; the immediate steps he proposes to take within his Departmental powers to address this breach; if these steps will include new legislation or amendments to legislation presently before the Houses of the Oireachtas; the correspondence, he has had with representatives of the professions in question, and the action necessary from them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12615/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** EU infringement proceedings are currently underway in connection with one alleged breach of the Services Directive. This relates to Article 24 of the Directive and the prohibition on commercial communications by barristers. The substance of this case is being dealt with by my colleague the Minister for Justice and Equality to whom I note the Deputy has also posed a similar question.

### Jobs Protection

130. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the steps he has taken to protect public jobs in rural Ireland (details supplied) which are within the discretion of the Government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12663/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Policy responsibility for public sector jobs is a matter for the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Brendan Howlin, T.D., and I have no policy remit in relation to this matter.



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The specific situation referred to by the Deputy relates to the Department of Social Protection and is also outside my remit.

From the point of view of improving the spread of jobs created by the enterprise sector across the regions, the Government recently announced details of the Action Plan for Jobs: Regional initiative which will seek to build on the strengths and assets of each region to maximise enterprise growth and job creation. My objective is that six Regional Action Plans, including one for the Border region, will be launched by July, with two remaining Strategies in development at that stage.

The Action Plan for Jobs: Regional initiative will provide up to €250 million in additional funding over five years to support regional enterprise development. This includes the roll out of a five year, €150 million property investment programme by IDA Ireland to attract foreign direct investment into the regions.

In addition, up to €100 million will be available from Enterprise Ireland through three new competitive calls which will be announced over the coming months. Tangible jobs impact, enterprise start-up and scaling are amongst the criteria against which applications will be measured. Innovative collaborations among different regional agencies or stakeholders will also be favourably weighted.

The context of this exercise is the national target of sustainable full employment by 2018. This will require a net increase in employment of 160,000. The aim will be to achieve a balanced share of this growth in jobs across all regions.

### **Departmental Contracts Data**

131. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide a list, in tabular form, of all contracts and tenders awarded by his Department to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2004, including any such awarded singularly or as a joint bid or consortium including said company; if he will indicate which Department, agency or semi-State company was the contacting party in each case; the value in each case; the purpose of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13113/15]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In the absence of a complete list of such business interests via joint bid or consortia etc. being available, it is not possible to give a definitive response to the Deputy's question. However, I am not aware of any contracts entered into or tenders awarded by my Department to the named company, singularly, as a joint bid or consortium during this period.

The awarding of contracts by any of the Agencies operating under the aegis of my Department is a matter for the Agencies themselves and their individual Accounting Officers to account for and not a matter for which I or my Department has any direct decision-making authority.

I have asked all Agencies under the aegis of my Department to advise me of any such contracts entered into or tenders awarded to the named company and I will communicate that information to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

### **Direct Payment Scheme Eligibility**

132. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Ma-

rine his views that to ensure compliance with Regulation 27 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, he should have considered the appropriate assessment process prior to making significant reference area reductions on the Cloghaun, Kilbeg, Kilnagappagh, Gortnaglev, Derrybrien West and Keelderry commonages, located in the Slieve Aughty special protection area (details supplied) in County Galway, in view of the precautionary principle, and with specific reference to Regulation 27 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12510/15]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Under the provisions of the governing EU Regulations, in particular, Regulation EU No 1307/2013, my Department is only entitled to make payments under the Basic Payment Scheme, and the Greening Payment on land that meets the requirements of the Regulations. The determinations referred to were carried out to ensure that the regulatory requirements would continue to be adhered to in the processing of applications under the Direct Payment Schemes. The determinations made do not impact on the designated habitats in any way. As a significant element of the exclusions relate to the lack of any agricultural activity being carried out by claimants on the land they are declaring for payment purposes, it is open to the claimants to restore this land to an eligible status for payment purposes by commencing an agricultural activity on the land in question. It is also noted that payment can be made under the GLAS Scheme on those areas which are not currently eligible for payment under the Basic Payment and Greening Payment Schemes.

### Legislative Process

133. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of pieces of legislation that were submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by his Department since 2011; his plans to allow pre-legislative scrutiny for any upcoming pieces of legislation from his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12406/15]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department has submitted one piece of legislation for pre-legislative scrutiny since 2011, namely the Horse Racing Ireland Bill which is currently being drafted in the Office of the Parliamentary Council. It will submit future proposed legislation for pre-legislative scrutiny in accordance with the Pre-legislative Consideration Standing Order introduced in November 2013.

### Grassland Sheep Scheme Payments

134. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason payment under the grassland scheme has not issued to persons (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12429/15]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under 2014 Grassland Sheep Scheme was received from the persons named on 23 April 2014. Processing of the Grassland Sheep Scheme application has recently been completed with payment due to issue directly to the nominated bank account of the persons named shortly.

### Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

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135. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a payment under the disadvantaged areas scheme for 2014 will issue in respect a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12457/15]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under 2014 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 7 April 2014. Processing of the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme application was completed on time with payment issuing at the earliest possible date, directly to the nominated bank account of the person named on 24 September 2014.

#### **Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments**

136. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a payment under the disadvantaged area scheme for 2014 will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12458/15]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under 2014 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 25 April 2014. Processing of the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme application was completed on time with payment issuing at the earliest possible date, directly to the nominated bank account of the person named on 24 September 2014.

#### **Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments**

137. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a payment under the disadvantaged areas scheme for 2014 will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12459/15]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under 2014 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 27 March 2014. Processing of the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme application was completed on time with payment issuing at the earliest possible date, directly to the nominated bank account of the person named on 24 September 2014.

#### **Land Parcel Identification System**

138. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 283 of 10 March 2014, the specific criteria used by his Department's inspectors in making a percentage reduction on a land parcel, where it is determined that parts of the said parcel are not subject to an agricultural activity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12460/15]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** EU Regulations governing the Direct Payments Scheme and other area-based schemes require my Department to ensure that all eligibility requirements are complied with. In conducting inspections my Department's officers must ensure that in the first instance the land declared for aid is eligible and secondly that an agricultural activity is being carried out on all of this land.

Where an inspecting officer identifies that part(s) of a parcel is not subject to an agricultural activity, the officer will exclude such areas as being ineligible. These areas can include areas

under buildings, cattle pens, concreted and gravel areas, areas of farm roadways, areas that are fenced to exclude animals and areas that are inaccessible. Inaccessible areas can include areas that animals cannot access, areas that are too wet which animals chose not to enter and areas under dense scrub.

Where areas are identified, which animals can and do access and which have grazable ground cover present, but the total area is not available for grazing due to outcropping rock, areas of scattered scrub, etc., the inspecting officer is required to apply a percentage reduction to exclude the area not available for grazing, where it is not practical to measure each individual area involved.

### **Agriculture Schemes Eligibility**

139. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a person (details supplied) in County Kerry will be accepted as a new entrant for allocations from the national reserve; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12469/15]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Department records indicate that the person named above has been farming since 2001. In accordance with relevant EU Regulations to be eligible under the New Entrant priority category of the National Reserve an applicant must meet the following conditions:

- S/he is participating in the Basic Payment Scheme in the year in which s/he applies to the National Reserve;
- S/he must have commenced the present agricultural activity in the 2013 calendar year or any later year;
- S/he did not have any agricultural activity in his/her own name and at his/her own risk in the five years preceding the start of the present agricultural activity;
- S/he must submit an application for the Basic Payment Scheme not later than two years after the calendar year in which they commenced their agricultural activity;
- S/he has successfully completed a recognised course of education in agriculture giving rise to an award at FETAC level 6 or its equivalent. Alternatively s/he must commit to commencing such a course by 30th September 2016;
- S/he has a gross off-farm income that does not exceed €40,000 in one of the tax years 2013 or 2014.

As the named person commenced his farming activities in 2001 he, unfortunately, falls outside the scope of the New Entrant category of the National Reserve. The individual may, however, be eligible to apply for an allocation of entitlements under the Scottish Derogation, where he can show that he has never previously held entitlements and can provide verifiable evidence that in 2013 he was involved in dairy, beef, sheep or arable production. The Scottish Derogation will be open for applications in early April of this year and the Terms and Conditions of same will be available at that time.

For further information, the individual in question can contact my Department directly at 0761 064 438 or CAPDirectPayments@agriculture.gov.ie and my staff will be glad to provide assistance.

### **Land Parcel Identification System**

140. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 285 of 10 March 2015, the reason, in accordance with Regulation 27 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, his Department did not consider the appropriate assessment process in advance of making significant reference area reductions on the Cloghaun, Kilbeg, Kilnagappagh, Gortnagley, Derrybrien west and Keelderry commonages, located in the Slieve Aughty special protection area in County Galway, especially in view of the precautionary principle; his views on the matter with specific reference to Regulation 27 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12471/15]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Under the provisions of the governing EU Regulations, in particular, Regulation EU No 1307/2013, my Department is only entitled to make payments under the Basic Payment Scheme, and the Greening Payment on land that meets the requirements of the Regulations. The determinations referred to were carried out to ensure that the regulatory requirements would continue to be adhered to in the processing of applications under the Direct Payment Schemes. The determinations made do not impact on the designated habitats in any way. As a significant element of the exclusions relate to the lack of any agricultural activity being carried out by claimants on the land they are declaring for payment purposes, it is open to the claimants to restore this land to an eligible status for payment purposes by commencing an agricultural activity on the land in question. It is also noted that payment can be made under the GLAS Scheme on those areas which are not currently eligible for payment under the Basic Payment and Greening Payment Schemes.

### **Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments**

141. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will examine an application under the disadvantaged areas grant for 2014 in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry, as there is an undue delay in payment and it is required to make that person's farm business viable in 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12476/15]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under the 2014 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 17 April 2014. Processing of the application was recently finalised with payment due to issue directly to the nominated bank account of the person named shortly.

### **Land Parcel Identification System**

142. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views that by failing to inform commonage land owners of the presence of his Department's inspectors on their lands, his Department has not accorded these owners the right to refuse inspectors permission to enter onto their lands; his further views that this is non-discriminatory pursuant to the European Union direct payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12499/15]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** In general, the inspections of commonages are undertaken as part of a ground eligibility inspection where



the applicant selected for inspection has claimed commonage land or as part of a LPIS Review. If a commonage is being inspected as part of ground eligibility inspection, the applicant is informed in advance in the normal manner.

In addition to carrying out eligibility inspections, my Department is also obliged to carry out assessments of the ortho-imagery held in the Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS) database. The objective of this review is to ensure that all ineligible land and features are excluded from the land declared by applicants under the various Direct Payment Schemes. The process is normally carried out by visually assessing the latest ortho-images to identify ineligible areas and features in the land parcels declared by farmers. In some cases, however, it is necessary to carry out a verification check on the parcel or parcels under assessment. Such verification visits are not notified in advance to commonage claimants but all claimants are informed of the findings of the verification checks.

### Single Payment Scheme Payments

143. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide a breakdown of the single payment to special protection areas for the years 2008 to 2014, inclusive, in tabular form and by county. [12500/15]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The amounts by county, paid to all beneficiaries under the Single Payment Scheme (SPS) and Disadvantaged Areas Scheme (DAS), who declared at least one Natura parcel for the period from 2008 to 2014 are outlined in the following tabular statement:

-	SPS 2008 (€)	DAS 2008 (€)	SPS 2009 (€)	DAS 2009 (€)	SPS 2010 (€)	DAS 2010 (€)
Carlow	8,997,367.75	962,861.66	9,137,755.51	837,321.14	8,895,312.91	825,124.10
Cavan	5,632,338.01	2,845,652.58	5,917,414.82	2,465,048.25	5,924,092.20	2,458,912.87
Clare	19,678,924.73	6,107,877.12	19,967,820.59	5,262,188.91	19,875,788.27	5,232,539.03
Cork	35,758,029.10	5,824,771.89	35,942,823.99	4,995,508.80	35,858,366.60	4,988,524.98
Donegal	19,484,459.50	9,874,773.18	19,977,746.79	8,511,644.37	20,168,424.60	8,441,786.76
Dublin	1,056,137.13	114,269.08	1,048,187.07	95,695.23	1,038,225.39	90,492.63
Galway	30,078,880.94	12,748,001.69	30,457,996.03	11,172,777.74	30,154,792.38	11,065,572.05
Kerry	32,264,570.67	12,134,410.03	32,935,497.69	10,276,041.54	32,604,277.94	10,239,379.08
Kildare	5,008,882.05	179,321.14	5,015,158.11	156,717.39	5,097,058.54	157,308.17
Kilkenny	14,533,124.63	1,073,512.32	14,825,148.52	918,806.47	14,657,314.40	909,054.81
Laois	11,953,630.09	1,492,831.32	12,184,830.80	1,308,707.57	11,986,017.84	1,303,586.04
Leitrim	4,453,075.52	2,112,310.54	4,530,172.81	1,788,243.62	4,478,782.80	1,764,720.01
Limerick	12,682,610.36	3,121,663.12	12,965,550.29	2,750,500.34	12,925,860.31	2,749,872.99
Longford	2,109,287.24	548,162.50	2,158,351.05	485,334.68	2,202,019.94	481,744.32
Louth	2,740,007.61	499,431.18	2,783,047.43	439,707.28	2,753,545.50	424,330.77
Mayo	24,064,163.98	12,547,180.61	24,758,107.72	11,010,277.93	24,699,702.43	10,928,091.92
Meath	9,811,032.80	366,924.21	9,747,794.86	319,702.94	9,846,263.00	319,862.78
Monaghan	612,617.71	224,698.29	634,771.06	205,603.44	662,880.80	207,319.34
Offaly	6,260,233.24	1,171,580.68	6,325,255.14	1,032,774.06	6,134,827.68	1,043,217.26
Roscommon	9,923,714.44	2,863,454.53	10,037,038.57	2,565,361.09	10,004,690.02	2,574,846.33
Sligo	8,296,675.40	3,440,265.81	8,441,936.54	3,007,060.84	8,447,371.66	3,022,350.32
Tipperary	25,740,684.10	3,487,204.37	26,179,767.47	2,976,006.98	25,811,304.93	2,985,595.28
Waterford	13,989,641.27	1,289,951.07	14,083,309.15	1,091,842.44	13,882,129.64	1,083,920.67
Westmeath	6,608,505.65	1,033,009.81	6,627,435.96	892,746.92	6,743,904.59	911,533.50

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-	SPS 2008 (€)	DAS 2008 (€)	SPS 2009 (€)	DAS 2009 (€)	SPS 2010 (€)	DAS 2010 (€)
Wexford	14,822,046.01	832,137.03	14,842,350.40	722,589.45	14,724,779.97	726,558.16
Wicklow	7,560,015.33	1,400,026.06	7,576,810.73	1,112,126.66	7,519,265.13	1,117,604.65

-	SPS 2011 (€)	DAS 2011 (€)	SPS 2012 (€)	DAS 2012 (€)	SPS 2013 (€)	DAS 2013 (€)
Carlow	8,982,636.10	825,654.97	8,755,681.88	736,043.40	8,545,498.73	686,984.23
Cavan	5,918,744.24	2,465,099.46	5,818,877.05	2,310,409.82	5,734,266.86	2,172,826.48
Clare	19,951,932.23	5,284,588.15	19,406,691.95	5,030,205.59	19,092,316.63	4,588,473.95
Cork	36,249,702.05	5,030,891.27	35,200,173.11	4,604,069.94	34,424,120.67	4,288,857.83
Donegal	20,308,965.94	8,618,169.60	20,160,974.98	8,060,296.54	19,907,643.05	7,833,934.05
Dublin	1,041,933.97	99,327.65	1,036,787.01	88,867.72	1,028,845.21	82,203.19
Galway	30,214,062.86	11,206,110.21	29,549,338.61	10,349,534.74	29,057,306.52	9,834,993.20
Kerry	32,691,385.80	10,343,235.72	32,200,104.00	9,867,286.73	31,514,404.07	9,271,463.98
Kildare	5,090,075.07	161,200.49	4,833,816.46	120,712.24	4,793,165.21	110,524.55
Kilkenny	14,633,560.65	903,617.15	14,347,053.65	795,469.72	14,049,245.03	732,118.35
Laois	11,862,303.60	1,308,377.07	11,551,370.45	1,202,541.62	11,354,563.78	1,090,516.48
Leitrim	4,558,498.61	1,822,980.26	4,470,471.76	1,724,203.47	4,385,150.47	1,696,256.88
Limerick	12,916,488.58	2,780,329.42	12,604,442.90	2,565,289.29	12,300,191.98	2,321,463.31
Longford	2,222,325.77	486,770.15	2,159,604.33	476,012.62	2,120,644.35	434,946.45
Louth	2,879,275.82	432,726.43	2,622,191.35	405,959.23	2,525,330.86	385,361.95
Mayo	24,922,318.76	11,127,046.84	24,663,030.20	10,541,457.71	24,282,977.44	10,148,860.99
Meath	10,005,571.12	338,979.89	9,742,906.27	277,926.44	9,445,937.40	247,527.91
Monaghan	668,420.59	211,899.62	668,222.15	190,552.53	645,222.15	171,006.70
Offaly	6,240,272.23	1,060,093.33	6,139,577.60	986,919.73	6,155,640.05	898,591.47
Roscommon	10,061,475.74	2,588,463.00	9,902,461.92	2,513,487.53	9,683,890.15	2,317,706.70
Sligo	8,429,694.99	3,029,636.23	8,282,015.58	2,877,644.82	8,202,803.28	2,717,310.88
Tipperary	25,874,481.77	3,001,594.51	25,126,423.11	2,760,385.40	24,740,260.35	2,561,636.69
Waterford	13,921,300.41	1,101,513.98	13,666,703.53	917,657.89	13,261,678.30	860,480.14
Westmeath	6,753,556.18	919,675.76	6,600,838.97	853,321.70	6,374,169.97	766,700.64
Wexford	14,909,084.14	723,995.61	14,503,017.46	612,028.64	14,013,714.45	569,115.29
Wicklow	7,551,097.22	1,127,701.77	7,347,063.34	1,042,848.25	7,193,706.62	989,157.81

-	SPS 2014 (€)	DAS 2014 (€)
Carlow	8,501,475.62	678,548.45
Cavan	5,526,398.52	2,153,499.04
Clare	18,452,610.46	4,560,428.62
Cork	33,662,224.57	4,218,379.64
Donegal	19,354,618.86	7,495,359.09
Dublin	1,009,206.94	71,225.15
Galway	28,039,858.34	9,508,269.05
Kerry	30,503,438.08	9,216,625.75
Kildare	4,748,136.03	111,370.50
Kilkenny	13,760,204.18	727,122.35
Laois	11,078,771.06	1,082,605.95
Leitrim	4,258,038.56	1,669,158.80
Limerick	11,918,016.10	2,314,329.32
Longford	2,044,268.06	415,847.96

-	SPS 2014 (€)	DAS 2014 (€)
Louth	2,471,512.70	372,673.00
Mayo	23,412,532.19	9,863,899.09
Meath	9,277,142.55	248,172.18
Monaghan	578,025.23	170,470.60
Offaly	5,970,201.95	888,655.28
Roscommon	9,349,801.92	2,284,983.02
Sligo	7,922,508.17	2,663,794.31
Tipperary	24,353,410.26	2,572,624.41
Waterford	13,134,486.70	850,830.87
Westmeath	6,265,551.05	750,144.12
Wexford	13,390,670.24	563,581.09
Wicklow	6,986,350.19	969,158.46

### Single Payment Scheme Eligibility

144. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the single payments or other entitlements of farmers in special protection areas have been adversely impacted upon or if the farmers have been penalised because of the designation of their lands. [12501/15]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Payments under the Single Payment Scheme were made to applicants, who held payment entitlements under that Scheme. In order to benefit from payment under that Scheme, an applicant had to declare an eligible hectare for each payment entitlement held. An eligible hectare must have all of the ineligible areas and features excluded and must have an agricultural activity carried out on it. The same provisions apply to all land declared for payment under the Scheme irrespective of whether the land is designated or not. Therefore, a farmer who declares designated land, which is eligible for payment and on which he or she is carrying out an agricultural activity, will receive payment under the Basic Payment Scheme in the normal fashion. The Basic Payment Scheme replaced the Single Payment Scheme in 2015.

### Single Payment Scheme Eligibility

145. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason the value of entitlements has been reduced in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12502/15]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** As of the 2014 Scheme Year, no modulation was applied to payments received under the Single Payment Scheme. However, as the national ceiling available to Ireland was reduced proportionately, a linear reduction was applied to the value of all Single Payment entitlements so as to bring their total value into line with the national ceiling that was available for the 2014 Scheme Year.

The person named held 93.53 entitlements at the start of the 2014 Scheme year and a linear reduction of €13.94 was applied to each of these entitlements reducing their net unit value from €132.87 to €118.93. Also, the person named transferred 17.50 entitlements by way of sale for the 2014 Scheme Year leaving him with a balance of 76.03 entitlements at a net unit value of €118.93 each for the 2014 Scheme Year.

### Single Payment Scheme Eligibility

146. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide details of the Scottish derogation in relation to entitlements from the national reserve; if the derogation will be available for farmers who previously held entitlements but had to give them up due to exceptional circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12503/15]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The “Scottish Derogation” allows for the allocation of payment entitlements to persons who never held Single Payment Scheme entitlements, either owned or leased, but who can produce verifiable evidence that they actively farmed in 2013. The Scottish Derogation will be open for applications in early April of this year and the Terms and Conditions of same, including eligibility conditions, will be available at that time.

### Disadvantaged Areas Scheme

147. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a payment in 2014 under the disadvantaged areas scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry has been reduced, compared to the payment in 2013; if an overpayment will be explained; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12505/15]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under the 2014 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 12 May 2014. A review of the land parcels declared by the person named under the scheme revealed that some of the land parcels contained ineligible features. The person named was informed of these findings in writing on 29 October 2014. The area reductions resulted in an over-declaration penalty of between 3% and 20% of the determined area. The resulting reduced payment issued directly to the nominated bank account of the person named on 6 November 2014.

### Departmental Contracts Data

148. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide a list, in tabular form, of all contracts and tenders awarded by his Department to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2004, including any such awarded singularly or as a joint bid or consortium including said company; if he will indicate which Department, agency or semi-State company was the contacting party in each case; the value in each case; the purpose of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13105/15]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department has not awarded any contracts to the company named since 1 January 2004.

The awarding of contracts to any company by the State Bodies under my Department’s aegis is an operational matter for the State Bodies themselves.

### Legislative Process

149. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Defence the number of pieces of leg-

islation that were submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by his Department since 2011; his plans to allow pre-legislative scrutiny for any upcoming pieces of legislation from his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12410/15]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney):** To date, one piece of legislation has been submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by my Department since 2011. I referred the general scheme of the Defence Forces (Forensic Evidence) Bill 2015 to the Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality on 12 March 2015.

Other than in exceptional circumstances, the Heads of Bills prepared by the Department will be submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny.

### **Defence Forces Properties**

150. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence the current number of office holders residing in military quarters in The Curragh, County Kildare; the extent to which their housing requirements are being met by the local authority or are likely to be met in the near future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12586/15]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Currently there are twenty nine overholders in married quarters in or near the Curragh Camp.

Four of the properties referred to above are located outside the C amp itself and are being offered for sale to the occupants. The remaining properties are located within the Camp and it is not possible to offer these for sale as the properties are required to be retained in Department of Defence ownership for future military use.

In advancing the long standing policy of withdrawing from the provision of married quarters accommodation the Department assists in whatever way it can in order to resolve overholding cases. The Department initiated discussions with Kildare County Council to determine whether there was a possibility of a joint initiative to provide solutions to the overholding issues in the Curragh. The Council provide s accommodation for those who meet the criteria for social housing. They have indicated that their policy now is to lease suitable properties to meet the social housing requirement in the Kildare area. In light of this, the Department has supplied supporting documentation to assist such applications when requested.

### **Defence Forces Properties**

151. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Defence the role of his Department in the development of a certain project (details supplied) in County Cork; the role of the Naval Service in the development of the project; the impact, if any, of the project on the operations of the Naval Service; the ownership of the land parcels in question; the amount of funding allocated by his Department and other public bodies to the project thus far; the funding that is required to deliver the project; the role of any other constituent bodies involved in the project; the role of ocean yacht racing facilities in the project, including information on whether such facilities will be municipal in nature or, if not, the selection criteria and tendering arrangements that will apply in the selection of those who may have use of the facility; the next steps in the process, including the timeline for its delivery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12597/15]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Haulbowline Island Master Plan was commissioned by Cork County Council in November 2014. The creation of a Master Plan for



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the Island was considered necessary in order to identify a vision for the sustainable development of the remediated Island, linking industrial development and tourism potential alongside the activities in the Naval Base. It was also to ensure that the necessary remediation infrastructural works can, where possible, complement future development plans for the Island and thereby provide economies.

As you may be aware, ownership of Haulbowline Island has been temporarily transferred to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to facilitate the completion of the remedial works. Accordingly, funding for the remedial works has been included in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Vote for 2015. The Department of Defence has received no funding in respect of the remedial work or the development of the draft Master Plan.

The Master Plan is still at the drafting stage and it is not possible to provide definitive answers regarding the ultimate impact of the Master Plan on the operations of the Naval Service. The position of the Naval Service as the priority user of Haulbowline has been stressed by the Department of Defence during the development of the Plan. The Department has facilitated consideration of the development of those parts of the island not required now or in the future for Naval Service operations and support while focussing on ensuring that the Plan is supportive of the Naval Service.

Regarding any specific developments on the Island, I repeat that as the Plan is still at the drafting stage it would be premature to comment on the likelihood of the inclusion or implementation of any particular recommendation.

I understand that the drafting of the Masterplan for Haulbowline is expected to be completed in the coming weeks.

### **Departmental Contracts Data**

152. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Defence if he will provide a list in tabular form of all contracts and tenders awarded by his Department to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2004, including any such awarded singularly or as a joint bid or consortium including said company; if he will indicate which Department, agency or semi-State company was the contacting party in each case; the value in each case; the purpose of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13109/15]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The information sought is being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Garda Transport Provision**

153. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the appointment of gardaí to stations in County Kildare who will use bicycles and Segways to patrol; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12377/15]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have requested the information sought by the Deputy from the Garda Commissioner and I will arrange for the information to be forwarded to the Deputy upon receipt.

### **Legislative Process**

154. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Bills that were submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by her Department since 2011; her plans to allow pre-legislative scrutiny for any upcoming legislation from her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12417/15]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Since 2011 some 16 pieces of draft legislation have been submitted by my Department for pre-legislative scrutiny in the Oireachtas. A tabular list of same is attached below for ease of reference. As the Deputy will be aware, under Dáil Standing Order 123 A and prior to its presentation or introduction to the Dáil, the General Scheme or draft Heads of a Bill shall, (save in exceptional circumstances), be given by a member of Government or a Minister of State to the Committee empowered under Standing Order 82A for their consideration. It is my intention, in accordance with these Dáil Standing Orders to continue to abide with this practice into the future.

<b>BILL</b>
Criminal Justice (Withholding Information on Crimes Against Children and Vulnerable Adults) Bill
National Vetting Bureau Bill
Personal Insolvency Bill
Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Bill (Previously Mental Capacity Bill)
Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Bill
Criminal Justice (Corruption) Bill
Mediation Bill
Gambling Control Bill
Children and Family Relationships Bill
Criminal Justice (Community Sanctions) Bill (Previously Probation Service Bill)
Garda Síochána (Policing Authority And Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (previously the Policing Authority Bill & Garda Síochána (Amendment) Bill)
Criminal Procedure Bill
Hague Convention (Choice Of Court) Bill
Amendment of the Constitution (Marriage Equality Referendum) Bill
Táille Éireann Bill
Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill

### **Garda Operations**

155. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the action that is being taken to prevent and to prosecute persons for the cloning of vehicle licence plates. [12462/15]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have sought a report from the Garda Síochána in relation to the matter raised by the Deputy and I will be in contact directly when the information is available.

### **Garda Operations**

156. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if victims of burglary who have cash stolen from their homes are entitled to recoup that monetary amount if it is subsequently partially or wholly recovered by the Garda; if in cases where the recovered

cash is being held as evidence, an equivalent amount can be returned to the victim, so that the victim is not financially disadvantaged; if it is usual or acceptable to have a victim waiting for over two years for the return of stolen and subsequently recovered cash; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12483/15]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Deputy will appreciate that the procedures applicable in the situation to which he refers are an operational matter for An Garda Síochána. I have requested a report from the Garda authorities in relation to this matter and I will contact the Deputy directly when the report is to hand.

### Legislative Measures

157. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if she will commit to the enactment of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Bill 2013 during the lifetime of this Government, as set out in the programme for Government 2011; the timeframe for the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which Ireland signed eight years ago (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12498/15]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Deputy will understand that it is not possible for me to predict the outcome of the legislative process with regard to this, or any other Bill. However, I can say that my Department is currently preparing amendments for the Dáil Committee Stage of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Bill to respond to issues raised in submissions to my Department and to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality. The aim is to strengthen the safeguards contained in this legislation so that persons with capacity difficulties can exercise decision-making autonomy to the greatest extent possible. My intention is that we will proceed to Dáil Committee Stage in the next two months with Report and Final Stages before the summer recess. My aim is that the Bill will be enacted this year. The enactment of the Bill will be a key step forward in enabling Ireland to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

The Government intends to proceed with ratification as quickly as possible, taking into account the need to ensure that all necessary legislative and administrative requirements under the Convention are met. As the Deputy is aware, Ireland has a dualist legal system and therefore does not become party to treaties until it is first in a position to comply with the obligations imposed by them, including the amendment of domestic law as necessary. A team has been charged with examining all outstanding obstacles to ratification, and has nearly completed the first phase of its work, which includes identifying all areas which will need attention to make ratification possible. An Interdepartmental Committee is in place, and met recently to review issues and the action and timeframe required to tackle them. A key task involves examining how the important issue of reasonable accommodation can be achieved in a meaningful way within our Constitutional framework as interpreted by the Supreme Court. Progress towards ratification continues to be made.

### Garda Operations

158. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality how much revenue has been raised by speed checks up to 20 March 2015 at the Clare side of the Limerick Tunnel; how many traffic accidents took place in the Limerick Tunnel since it opened; if the speed checks comply with policing of traffic black spots; and if she will make a statement on

the matter. [12513/15]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have sought a report from the Garda Síochána in relation to the matter raised by the Deputy and I will be in contact directly when the information is available.

### Residency Permits

159. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current residency status in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 22; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12575/15]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that the person referred to by the Deputy was granted permission to travel to and reside in the State on the 19th January 2009 as the subject of an application for Family Reunification.

Once granted Family Reunification, the person is required to register their permission with the Garda National Immigration Bureau in line with the permission granted to the Refugee.

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

### Naturalisation Applications

160. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the residency status and the eligibility to apply for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare, who applied for naturalisation four years ago; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12576/15]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that a valid application for a certificate of naturalisation has been received from the person referred to by the Deputy, who currently has permission to reside in the State until 31 December, 2015.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process. Processing of the application is ongoing and the case will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

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

## Family Reunification Applications

161. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current residency status in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 7; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12577/15]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that the person referred to by the Deputy was granted permission to remain and reside in the State on the 5th March 2012 as the subject of an application for Family Reunification.

Once granted Family Reunification, the person is required to register their permission with the Garda National Immigration Bureau in line with the permission granted to the Refugee.

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

## Drugs in Prisons

162. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if it is possible to register the name of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 7 who is interested in offering counselling services to drug addicts in prison; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12578/15]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have been advised by the Irish Prison Service that Merchants Quay Ireland is the current contract holder for the provision of addiction counselling services to the Irish Prison Service. The provision of addiction counselling services is subject to the normal public procurement process.

## Naturalisation Applications

163. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when an application for naturalisation might be favourably considered in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare, in view of the circumstances; if that person's application is now eligible for consideration; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12581/15]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that a valid application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy. My predecessor decided to defer a final decision on this application until November 2014. The person concerned was notified of this decision and the reasons for it in a letter issued on 09 May, 2013.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process. I am informed that processing of this application is well advanced and the applicant will be informed of my decision in due course.



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

### **Legal Services Regulation**

164. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if her attention has been drawn to any case where Ireland is in breach of the Directive on Services in the Internal Market; if she will provide the details of all such breaches; if enforcement proceedings have commenced against Ireland over any such breaches; the immediate steps she proposes to take to address such breaches; if these steps will include new legislation or amendments to legislation presently before the Houses of the Oireachtas; the correspondence, if any, she has had with representatives of the professions in question; any future action that is required from them; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12612/15]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The European Commission has expressed a concern that Ireland's current legal services advertising regime may be in breach of Article 24 of Directive 2006/123/EC ('the Services Directive'). In general terms, while the Directive permits certain restrictions on legal services advertising that are informed by the public interest, the Commission has found that some of the current restrictions being applied in this jurisdiction may be disproportionate. A letter of Formal Notice to that effect issued in October 2014.

My Department is engaged in ongoing correspondence and consultations with the Commission with a view to finding an appropriate balance between the exigencies of the Services Directive and those of Government policy including as part of the ongoing reform of the legal services sector. It is, therefore, anticipated that advertising provisions meeting those concerns arising in relation to the Services Directive will be put forward by way of amendment to the Legal Services Regulation Bill when it comes before the Seanad. Section 151 of the Bill enables the new Legal Services Regulatory Authority to make regulations in relation to the advertising of legal services by solicitors and barristers. Detailed work on the revised advertising provisions continues on this basis at my Department in consultation with the Commission and with the assistance of the Offices of the Attorney General and Parliamentary Counsel. In light of these developments I am confident that this matter can be satisfactorily resolved.

The Legal Services Regulation Bill is due to resume Dáil Report Stage on 21st April 2015.

### **Garda Stations**

165. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if she will confirm that a full service will be maintained in relation to opening hours at the Garda station in Boyle in County Roscommon; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12620/15]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** Decisions in relation to the allocation of resources, including station opening hours, are a matter for the Garda Commissioner in the context of her operational requirements and I have no direct function in the matter.

I have been informed by the Garda authorities that local Garda management have reviewed

the hours at which Boyle Garda station is currently open to the public in the context of providing an enhanced policing service to the newly enlarged District of Castlerea. These arrangements are designed to free up Garda personnel for outdoor policing duties who would otherwise be engaged in keeping the station open to the public.

I have been assured that Boyle Garda station will remain a fully functioning station with Garda members providing a twenty four hour service, seven days a week. There will be no reduction in the number of Garda personnel assigned to the station and the same level of resources and Garda patrols will continue to be deployed to the area.

In addition, I have been further informed that the new times at which the station is open to the public will continue to be reviewed to ensure that the revised arrangements are delivering an enhanced policing service. The new public opening hours for Boyle Garda station will take effect from Monday, 6th April 2015 and are as set out in the following table.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
12.00 – 17.00	12.00 – 17.00	12.00 – 17.00	15.00 – 17.00		11.00 -13.00	11.00 – 13.00
20.00 – 22.00	20.00 – 22.00	20.00 – 22.00	20.00 – 23.00	21.00 – 23.00		

I have been informed by the Garda authorities that they are satisfied that a comprehensive policing service will continue to be delivered in the area concerned and that the proposed structures will ensure the delivery of an effective and efficient policing service to the community.

### Legal Services Regulation

166. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the action she is taking to deal with the very high cost of enforcing business contracts as measured by the World Bank, Doing Business Survey 2014; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12640/15]

167. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality her views on the divergence in the cost of legal services, compared to accountancy services since 2008, which have seen the cost of legal services increase over this period; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12641/15]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 166 and 167 together.

The Legal Services Regulation Bill 2011, which is to resume Report Stage in the Dáil on 21st April, gives legislative expression to the commitment in the Programme for Government to “*establish independent regulation of the legal professions to improve access and competition, make legal costs more transparent and ensure adequate procedures for addressing consumer complaints*”. Having been a sectoral objective under the EU/IMF/ECB Troika Programme, the Bill is now the subject of a Country Specific Recommendation under the EU Semester Process as well as being an objective of the *Action Plan for Jobs*, the *Medium Term Economic Strategy 2014-2020* and the *National Reform Plan*. The Legal Services Regulation Bill is, therefore, a key component of the Government’s strategy to bring greater transparency to legal costs and to reduce their burden on consumers and enterprise - including by reference to the competitiveness indicators raised by the Deputy which would appear to be those also cited by the National Competitiveness Council in its “Costs of Doing Business in Ireland 2014” report.

While the fees of the discrete group of 18 solicitors firms covered by the annual CSO survey (it does not cover barristers' services) concerned had remained relatively constant during the recent recession compared to those of accountants, they had demonstrated a reduction late in 2013. I understand that subsequent updates of this CSO survey to the third quarter of 2014 have confirmed the reduction in solicitors' fees among this group as an ongoing competitive trend. In relation to the longer time and higher cost involved in enforcing a business contract in Ireland as highlighted by the World Bank, I would anticipate that this will be ameliorated by the more transparent legal costs regime being introduced under the Legal Services Regulation Bill in tandem with the use of more efficient and timely enforcement and alternative dispute resolution approaches.

As a targeted structural reform, the Legal Services Regulation Bill is given continued validation by the concern also expressed in National Competitiveness Council's report that "looking to the future, further structural or policy induced changes are necessary to ensure that prices do not escalate and erode competitiveness as the Irish economy returns to stronger rates of growth". The Bill makes extensive provision, in Part 10, for a new and enhanced legal costs regime that will bring greater transparency to how legal costs are charged by legal practitioners, along with a better balance between the interests of legal practitioners and those of their clients. Legal practitioners, whether solicitors or barristers, will be obliged to provide more detailed information about legal costs from the outset of their dealings with clients. This will be in the form of a Notice written in clear language which must be provided when a legal practitioner takes instructions. Among other things, the Notice must, as set out in section 117 of the Bill, disclose the costs that are involved, or, where this is not reasonably practicable, the basis upon which such costs are to be calculated. A cooling-off period is to be allowed for the consideration of costs by the client. When there are any significant developments in a case which give rise to further costs, the Bill provides that a client must be duly updated and given the option of whether or not to proceed with the case in question. In addition, the Bill sets out that it will not be permissible for legal practitioners to set fees as a specified percentage or proportion of damages payable to a client from contentious business and that it will no longer be permissible for barristers to charge junior counsel fees as a specified percentage or proportion of Senior Counsel fees.

An aggrieved client also has the option of applying for the taxation of disputed legal costs by the Office of the Taxing-Master. Under the Legal Services Regulation Bill the current functions of the Taxing-Master will be taken over by the new Office of the Legal Costs Adjudicator. The Bill sets out, for the first time in legislation, a series of Legal Costs Principles. These are contained in Schedule One and enumerate the various matters that may be taken into account in the adjudication of disputed legal costs. The Bill also provides for the establishment of a public Register of Determinations which will disclose the outcomes and reasons for decisions made by the Legal Costs Adjudicator. The Bill seeks to achieve greater flexibility in the legal-services market, more competition and improved access to justice and will pave the way for the introduction of new business structures for legal practitioners including in partnership with non-legal service providers. These combined measures will enable those availing of legal services, be they private consumers or enterprise, to identify costs more clearly, including in competition with other possible legal service providers.

### **Firearms and Ammunition Security**

168. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of stolen licensed guns that were recovered by An Garda Síochána following serious crime in the past 12 months; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12658/15]

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170. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of licensed guns that were reported as stolen in the past 12 months, excluding guns which are marked as damaged; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12660/15]

171. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if An Garda Síochána have included toy guns and fake guns in their statistics of the number of stolen guns; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12661/15]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 168, 170 and 171 together.

I have asked the Garda Commissioner for a report on these matters and will write to the Deputy when it becomes available.

### **Firearms Licences**

169. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gun licence applications that have been refused since 2011; the number of those decisions that were overturned on appeal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12659/15]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have asked the Garda Commissioner for a report on these matters and will write to the Deputy when it becomes available.

*Questions Nos. 170 and 171 answered with Question No. 168.*

### **Departmental Contracts Data**

172. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if she will provide a list, in tabular form, of all contracts and tenders awarded by her Department to a company (details supplied) since 1 January, 2004, including any such awarded singularly or as a joint bid or consortium including said company; if she will indicate which Department, agency or semi-State company was the contacting party in each case; the value in each case; the purpose of each contract; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13114/15]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I wish to advise the Deputy that no contracts or tenders were awarded by my Department to the company named by the Deputy, either singularly or as a joint bid or consortium, during the period to which she refers.

I further wish to advise the Deputy that it was not possible to obtain the necessary information from An Garda Síochána, the Garda Inspectorate and Forensic Science Ireland in the time allowed. As soon as these details become available, they will be forwarded directly to the Deputy.

### **Child Protection**

173. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs his views on the finding in the most recent Measuring the Pressure report from the Child and Family Agency, that there were 12 children listed on the child protection notification system, and 17 children in

County Donegal awaiting allocation of a social worker (details supplied), despite the fact that these children had met the threshold of significant harm, requiring a formal child protection plan to ensure their safety; if he will provide the most recent area breakdown on the number of children on the system that are waiting to be allocated a social worker; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12368/15]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly):** Statutory responsibility for the promotion of child welfare and protection rests with the Child and Family Agency, which is the appropriate body to receive reports of concerns relating to all forms of child abuse.

In accordance with Children First National Guidance and the Agency's standard business processes and policies and procedures for carrying out initial assessments of child abuse and neglect, a child's name is placed on the Child Protection Notification System in the following circumstances:

- Where the outcome of an initial assessment is that a child is at risk of significant harm, requiring a child protection conference to be convened;
- Where the decision of the child protection conference is that a child protection plan is required to ensure that the necessary safeguards are in place;
- Where a review child protection conference - held at a minimum of 6 monthly intervals, confirms that the child remains at ongoing risk of significant harm necessitating a child protection plan.

Each referral received by the Agency is assessed and dealt with on an individual basis by the relevant social work team. Preliminary screening is aimed at establishing the appropriateness of the referral to the Child and Family Agency services and if necessary is followed by an initial assessment of the nature and degree of any harm, and an assessment of the child's needs.

The most recent set of validated data from Tusla indicates that at the end of September, 2014 there were 1,393 children listed as "active" on the Child Protection Notification System. Of these, 1,358 had an allocated social worker and 35 had not been allocated a social worker. With regard to Donegal, a total of 80 children were listed as active on the system, 17 of whom did not have an allocated social worker. This is an issue of concern and I have asked Tusla for further information in relation to this matter.

Tusla has assured me that emergency cases are dealt with immediately. Where a child on the Child Protection Notification System has not yet been allocated a social worker, a risk management and assurance plan is required to ensure that known risks are adequately managed.

### **Mental Health Services Provision**

174. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if he will provide, in tabular form, the number of children on waiting lists to access counselling in the years 2012 to 2014 and in 2015 to date; the length of time these children are on the waiting list; the number of sessions of counselling that each child received; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12393/15]

175. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if he will provide, in tabular form, the number of children on waiting lists, to access counselling specifically relating to sexual abuse, in the years 2012 to 2014 and in 2015 to date; the length of time these children are on the waiting list; the number of sessions of counselling that each child



received; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12394/15]

176. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the average waiting time to access counselling for children in the years 2012 to 2014 and in 2015 to date. [12395/15]

177. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if he will provide, in tabular form, the number of counsellors available to children; and their area of speciality in the years 2012 to 2014 and in 2015 to date. [12396/15]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 174 to 177, inclusive, together.

Tusla, along with other agencies, provides counselling and support to children and families availing of the Agency's services including children who have been abused sexually. I am advised by Tusla that it does not collect data on waiting times for children to access counselling services.

Where children have suffered sexual abuse, therapy services are available in a variety of settings. There are specialist sexual abuse Centres at Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin and Temple Street Children's University Hospital. Therapy services are also provided by HSE community based psychologists and HSE Child And Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) for children who have moderate to severe mental health problems. If a child is taken into care as a result of sexual abuse the allocated social worker will provide counselling and support.

In addition, the Assessment, Consultation & Therapy Service (CTS) is a national specialised clinical service which has been developed in order to provide multidisciplinary consultation, assessment and focused interventions to young people who have high risk behaviours associated with complex clinical needs. ACTS also supports other professionals in their ongoing work with young people and their families.

This includes:

- on-site therapeutic services to young people in secure settings in Ireland (Special Care and the Children Detention Schools)

- support when young people return to community settings to help them to re-engage with mainstream services as appropriate

- assessment, consultation and/or intervention services in the community for children at significant risk of placement in secure settings.

I have asked Tusla to provide any available data in respect of other specific matters raised by the Deputy.

### **Legislative Process**

178. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of pieces of legislation that were submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by his Department since 2011; his plans to allow pre-legislative scrutiny for any upcoming pieces of legislation from his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12408/15]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly):** Two pieces of legislation have been subjected to pre-legislative scrutiny by the Minister for Children and Youth

Affairs since 2011. These are the Children First Bill 2014 which is currently before the Houses of the Oireachtas and the Child Care Act (Amendment)/Aftercare Bill which is currently being drafted.

The Minister intends to submit the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill for pre-legislative scrutiny following Government approval of the Heads and the General Scheme.

### **After-School Support Services**

179. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if he will provide an update on after-school care in Dublin mid west (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12482/15]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly):** The objective of the After-School Childcare (ASCC) programme is to support low-income and unemployed people to take up a job, increase their days of employment or take up a place on a Department of Social Protection employment programme.

The programme, which provides after-school care for primary school children of eligible parents for a period of 52 weeks, contributes €40 per week for an after-school place or €80 per week in situations where a pick-up service is provided to take the child from school to the childcare provider. The programme also provides a full day-care rate of €105 per week, for a maximum of 10 weeks, to cater for school holiday periods. In all cases, the maximum fee payable by parents is €15 per week per child.

The funding allocation for the programme in 2015 is €1.32 million, which is expected to provide between 300 to 500 places nationally, depending on the mix between after-school and after-school with pick-up places.

Figures on the uptake of the programme are collated based on the supports provided to qualifying parents in each County or City Childcare Committee area. Since the commencement of the ASCC programme, 24 parents with 31 children availed of support in the South County Dublin Childcare Committee area.

### **Departmental Contracts Data**

180. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if he will provide a list in tabular form of all contracts and tenders awarded by his Department to a company (details supplied) since 1 January 2004, including any such awarded singularly or as a joint bid or consortium including said company; if he will indicate which Department, agency or semi-State company was the contacting party in each case; the value in each case; the purpose of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13107/15]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy James Reilly):** The Deputy might note that my Department did not award any contract or tender to the company in question.

### **Autism Support Services**

181. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a waiting list for an appointment with a paediatrician in respect of a child (details supplied) in Dublin

13; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12497/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** As the particular issue raised by the Deputy relates to an individual case, this is a service matter for the Health Service Executive. Accordingly, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

### **Hospital Appointment Status**

182. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the case of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly; and when the person will receive an appointment in Cappagh Hospital in Dublin 11. [12367/15]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

### **Nursing Homes Support Scheme Applications**

183. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when a payment under the nursing home support scheme will be issued to a person (details supplied) in County Galway; the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12371/15]

**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. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

### **Dental Services Waiting Lists**

184. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding dental treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12372/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

### **Services for People with Disabilities**

185. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide support in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 11. [12386/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** Each Local Health Office Area in the Health Service Executive (HSE) has a dedicated Disability Manager to coordinate the delivery of services to people with disabilities. It is open to an individual and their family to pursue this matter with the Disability Manager for their area who can be contacted at Ground Floor, Unit 4 & 5, Nexus Building, Block 6A, Blanchardstown, Corporate Park, Dublin 15, telephone 01-8975185.

As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to him. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, he can contact my Private Office and they will follow the matter up with them.

### Counselling Services

186. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide, in tabular form, the number of persons on waiting lists to access counselling in the years 2012 to 2014 and in 2015 to date; the length of time these persons are on the waiting list; the number of sessions of counselling that each person received; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12397/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** The Counselling in Primary Care (CIPC) Service is a national service provided under the governance framework of the National Counselling Service (NCS) within the HSE Mental Health Division. It is being funded from the Programme for Government investment in Mental Health, to increase the access to counselling and psychotherapy and supplement existing services provided by Primary Care. Since 2012, this Government has provided funding totalling €7.5 million to develop the CIPC service. The service provides short term counselling for adults with non-complex psychological problems aged 18 and over and who hold a valid medical card. Referral into the service is by the person's GP or other member of the Primary Care Team. The establishment of the CIPC initiative is aimed at providing a more immediate response to wider community for persons in need of counselling and advice.

In relation to the specific issues raised by the Deputy as these are service issues the question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. If you have not received a response within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

### Counselling Services

187. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide, in tabular form, the number of persons on waiting lists, to access counselling specifically relating to sexual abuse, in the years 2012 to 2014 and in 2015 to date; the length of time these persons are on the waiting list; the number of sessions of counselling that each person received; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12398/15]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** As the information sought is not readily available in my Department I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

### Legislative Process

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188. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the number of pieces of legislation that were submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by his Department since 2011; his plans to allow pre-legislative scrutiny for any upcoming pieces of legislation from his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12415/15]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** To date, the following Bills have been referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children for pre-legislative scrutiny.

Protection of Life During Pregnancy Bill 2013;

Public Health (Standardised Packaging of Tobacco) Bill 2014;

Health (General Practitioner Service) Bill;

Public Health (Alcohol) Bill.

I also expect to refer the following Bills to the Joint Oireachtas Committee for pre-legislative scrutiny.

Health Information Bill;

Health Act 2007 (Amendment) Bill;

Health Reform Bill;

Health (Transport Support) Bill;

Human Tissue Bill;

Patient Safety Licensing Bill;

Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill;

National Paediatric Hospital Development Board (Amendment) Bill;

New Children's Hospital Establishment Bill;

Nursing Home Support Scheme (Amendment) Bill;

Public Health (Retail Licensing of Tobacco Products) Bill;

Assisted Human Reproduction Bill.

### **Medical Card Data**

189. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in County Waterford, who hold a full medical card; and the number of persons who hold a discretionary medical card. [12422/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** 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. If the Deputy has not received



a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

### **Medical Card Applications**

190. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the progress to date in determining an application for a medical card in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12424/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** 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.

If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

### **Health Services Staff**

191. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if a matter regarding the substitution of a person in County Kerry on long-term sick leave will be dealt with as a matter of urgency (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12454/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** As this is a service issue this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. If you have not received a response within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

### **Hospital Appointment Status**

192. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on the case of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly; when that person will receive an appointment for a magnetic resonance imaging, MRI, scan at the Midland Regional Hospital in Tullamore in County Offaly. [12470/15]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

### **Hospital Records**

193. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Health the current location of the medical records, including the birth registers and the maternity theatre registers, and the type of records held, on site and off site, relating to maternity and obstetric services provided at St. Munchin's Regional Maternity Hospital in County Limerick in each of the years 1960 to 1985 under arrangements pursuant to maternity services legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12475/15]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

### **Nursing Homes Support Scheme Data**

194. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the placement list for the nursing home support scheme; the timeframe for awarding places; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12484/15]

197. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons currently awaiting placement under the fair deal scheme; the average waiting time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12506/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 194 and 197 together.

As of the 19 of March 2015 (latest figures available) there were 1,399 people on the national placement list for the Nursing Homes Support Scheme with an average wait time of 11 weeks. The budget for the Scheme in 2015 is €948.8m which reflects an increase of €10m from the 2014 position. The additional €10m was allocated to the Scheme as part of a wider initiative to alleviate the problem of delayed discharges in acute hospitals and has resulted in 300 extra approvals under the Scheme.

### **Air Ambulance Service Operations**

195. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Health the number of missions the emergency aeromedical service has carried out since its launch to date; the number in counties Roscommon, Leitrim and Galway; when the service will be made permanent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12486/15]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The Emergency Aeromedical Support (EAS) Service Establishment Group was set up to examine how best to provide a dedicated EAS service. The Group has completed its work and its report is currently under consideration. Pending a decision, the Department of Defence has agreed that the Air Corps will further extend aeromedical support to the EAS, to June 2015.

I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to your statistical queries. If you have not received a reply from them within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

### **Hospital Appointment Status**

196. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Donegal will receive an appointment in Sligo Regional Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12491/15]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and my officials will follow the matter up.

*Question No. 197 answered with Question No. 194.*

### Medical Card Applications

198. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will examine an application for a medical card in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Kerry, as all relevant details have been submitted to the Primary Care Reimbursement Service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12545/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** 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.

If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

### Disease Management

199. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will prioritise the prevention, treatment and aftercare for meningitis and septicaemia patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12547/15]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Meningococcal disease is a serious disease the incidence of which is falling in Ireland. Ireland's introduction of Meningococcal C and Pneumococcal vaccine programmes have reduced the burden of these diseases and Meningococcal B vaccine is currently being used to control outbreaks of Meningococcal B disease.

In order to harmonise the approach to the management of meningitis in Ireland, HPSC in 2012 produced the guidance document "*Guidelines for the early clinical and public health management of bacterial meningitis (including meningococcal disease)*" (available at <http://www.hpsc.ie/A-Z/VaccinePreventable/BacterialMeningitis/Guidance/File,12977,en.pdf>) which gives clear and straightforward guidance on the management to reduce mortality and morbidity, during the pre-admission and continuing care phases; Investigation of suspected cases; Development of effective Case definitions; Public health action after a single case and

## Management of clusters of meningitis.

The key recommendations in the guidelines include:

- A presumptive diagnosis of bacterial meningitis is a medical emergency and immediate referral to hospital is required. Health care providers should ensure that all patients with an acute systemic febrile illness, particularly children, can be reassessed without delay if their condition deteriorates.

- Doctors should be encouraged to review the situation within 4-6 hours if early meningococcal disease cannot be ruled out at the first assessment (safety net approach). All GPs should carry benzylpenicillin in their surgeries and emergency bags, and should be ready to administer it without delay to patients with a systemic febrile illness and a petechial or purpuric rash. Ceftriaxone or cefotaxime are suitable alternatives if available.

- The development of signs suggestive of acute sepsis and/or meningitis is a medical emergency and mandates prompt intervention. Treatment should not be delayed while awaiting results of diagnostic tests.

- In patients with meningococcal infection, treatment to eradicate nasopharyngeal carriage is required. The department of public health (medical officer of health) should be notified immediately so that the appropriate public health response can be determined.

### **Public Health Management**

The public health response to meningococcal disease includes: identification of close contacts, arranging appropriate chemoprophylaxis and provision of appropriate information.

Clinicians and laboratories are legally required to notify all cases of suspected bacterial meningitis, invasive meningococcal or Hib disease to the local public health department immediately without waiting for microbiological confirmation and notify all cases of pneumococcal meningitis upon microbiological confirmation.

Departments of public health should undertake enhanced surveillance on all cases and implement prompt public health interventions as appropriate.

The main reason for giving chemoprophylaxis is to eliminate meningococci from any carrier who may be in the network of contacts of each index case. This reduces the risk to other susceptible individuals, protecting them from acquiring the meningococcal strain from the carrier and possibly developing the disease.

Vaccination can also be used to control outbreaks and clusters in appropriate circumstances.

The objective of public health management of outbreaks is to interrupt the transmission of disease and prevent further cases occurring.

### **Primary Care Centre Provision**

200. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on the establishment of primary care centres in Celbridge, Leixlip and Kilcock in County Kildare; when these centres will be operational; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12562/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** The devel-

opment of primary care is central to the Government's objective to deliver a high quality, integrated and cost effective health care system. Supporting infrastructure, procured through a combination of public and private investment, will facilitate the delivery of multi-disciplinary primary health care.

The Kilcock primary care centre is one of the locations included in primary care centre PPP project. Considerable progress has been made in progressing this project. Planning permission has been awarded. The pre-selected bidders submitted their tender documentation in early February. These tenders are being assessed and evaluated. Construction is scheduled to begin in early 2016 and it is expected that the Kilcock primary care centre will be delivered by early 2017.

Your question in relation to the status of the Celbridge and Leixlip locations has been referred to the HSE for update and direct reply. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office who will follow up.

### **Medical Card Eligibility**

201. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the reason a medical card has not been approved in the case of persons (details supplied) in County Kildare, whose means have been assessed by the Department of Social Protection, which assessment has already taken into account the earnings of both persons and awarded a reduced level of payment on the basis of income which should also be acceptable as a means test; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12585/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** 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. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

### **Local Drugs Task Forces Funding**

202. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the amount of State funding allocated to the national drugs strategy since 1997; more precisely, the local drug task force structures in County Dublin, and surrounding counties, with a breakdown by area task force and associated funding per year. [12590/15]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Responsibility for leading and co-ordinating national policy on drug and substance misuse has been reassigned between Government Departments on a number of occasions since 1997. Responsibility for this very important policy area was assumed by my Department on 1 May 2011.

The table below sets out funding allocated for community based drugs projects from the Drugs Initiative to Local Drug and Alcohol Task Forces since 2010. Comparable information



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for the period prior to 2010 is not immediately available. I will arrange for this information to be collated by my Department and to furnish this to the Deputy as soon as possible.

<b>LDATEs</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
Ballyfermot	1,533,826	1,492,413	1,569,489	1,522,404	461,150	255,446
Ballymun	1,243,552	1,209,976	1,180,695	1,145,274	632,817	422,958
Blanchard-stown	1,184,200	1,152,227	1,124,343	1,090,613	179,305	179,305
Bray	1,656,849	1,612,114	1,573,101	1,525,908	573,860	573,860
Canal Communities	1,645,413	1,600,987	1,562,243	1,515,376	338,605	338,605
Clondalkin	1,495,408	1,455,032	1,421,577	1,428,930	388,114	388,114
Cork	1,662,621	1,617,730	1,578,581	1,531,224	411,988	411,988
Dublin 12	1,180,005	1,148,145	1,120,360	1,086,749	74,013	70,997
Dublin North East	1,294,199	1,259,256	1,228,782	988,234	422,251	422,251
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	975,475	949,137	926,167	898,382	94,676	94,676
Finglas Cabra	986,452	959,818	936,590	908,492	263,277	263,277
North Inner City	2,495,777	2,428,391	2,369,624	2,298,535	576,956	494,856
South Inner City	2,276,911	2,215,434	2,161,821	2,096,966	255,720	176,043
Tallaght	1,316,913	1,281,356	1,250,347	1,262,837	452,712	341,438
Total	20,947,601	20,382,016	20,003,720	19,299,924	5,125,444	4,433,814

The figures for 2014 and 2015 respectively reflect the fact that €13.82m in funding relating to Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force projects transferred from my Department to the HSE on 1 January 2014, with a further €692,000 transferring on 1 January 2015.

### **Local Drugs Task Forces Funding**

203. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the number of positions of employment currently funded across all local and regional drug task forces. [12591/15]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** It is assumed that the Deputy is referring to staff employed to support the day-to-day operation of Local and Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Forces.

Drug and Alcohol Task Force co-ordinators are, in the main, employed by the Health Service Executive (HSE). However, the HSE also allocates funding to Drug and Alcohol Task Forces for other support workers, including the posts of development worker and administrator.

In the circumstances, I have asked the HSE to collate the information requested and to respond to the Deputy directly. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

## Drug Treatment Programmes

204. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the current registered number of addicts accessing services in County Dublin and combined regional areas. [12592/15]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The HSE maintains the Central Treatment List, which is a register of all clients in receipt of methadone maintenance treatment for problem opiate use in Ireland. As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

## National Drugs Strategy Implementation

205. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if the Government will provide a commitment to review drug policy over the past two decades, as it moves towards reviewing and implementing the national drugs strategy from 2017 to 2022, to include a national consultation process with key players, and the form this review will take. [12593/15]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The Government has consistently monitored the effectiveness of drugs policy over the past twenty years in order to ensure that the approach to tackling problem drug use in Ireland continues to be relevant and appropriate. As part of the process of developing a new drugs strategy in 2001, a review was undertaken in order to examine the progress and impact of the drugs policy at the time and to make recommendations for a new strategy. A Mid-term Review of the National Drugs Strategy was undertaken in 2005, which led to an increased focus on rehabilitation. This was followed by a review of the National Drugs Strategy in 2007, which informed the development of the current National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016.

Periodic reviews of progress across the five pillars of the Strategy are carried out through the Oversight Forum on Drugs, which I chair. A progress report is prepared each year and these are available on my Department's website. The 2014 report is being finalised and will be published shortly.

My Department is beginning work on the development of a new National Drugs Strategy for the period after 2016. The development of the new Strategy will involve an assessment of the extent to which the present Strategy has provided an effective policy response to the drug problem in the current context. The process will include a comprehensive consultation with key stakeholders and the public on the current national drugs policy and future priorities. It will also take account of evidence-based research, information and data sources on the extent and nature of problem drug use in Ireland. As Minister with lead responsibility for drugs policy, I intend to play an active role in the development of the new Strategy and I look forward to engaging with all interested parties in this work.

## Departmental Contracts

206. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the name of the company that was paid to supply methadone; the amount the company has been paid by the State in the past 17 years; and the savings this has secured to the State in the past 17 years. [12594/15]

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**Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days he should contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

### **Hospital Consultants Recruitment**

207. **Deputy Gabrielle McFadden** asked the Minister for Health the time frame, if any, for a second palliative care consultant for the midlands region to take up the post in the Midlands Regional Hospital in Mullingar in County Westmeath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12599/15]

**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. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

### **Medical Card Applications**

208. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the progress to date in determining an application for a medical card in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12622/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** 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. If the Deputy has not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days, please contact my Private Office who will follow up the matter with them.

### **Departmental Contracts Data**

209. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a list, in tabular form, of all contracts and tenders awarded by his Department to a company (details supplied) since 1 January, 2004, including any such awarded singularly or as a joint bid or consortium including said company; if he will indicate which Department, agency or semi-State company was the contacting party in each case; the value in each case; the purpose of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13112/15]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** There is no record in the Department of any payments being made to the company in question. If the Deputy wishes to provide specific details of further companies to check, please provide details to my Private Office and I will ensure a prompt response.

Contracts awarded by other bodies under the aegis of the Department is an operational matter for the body concerned and the Deputy should contact the relevant Director/CEO/Registrar directly. I have requested the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy in respect of contracts awarded to the named company. If you have not received a reply from the HSE within 15 working days please contact my Private Office and they will follow up the matter with them.

### **Passport Applications Data**

210. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of passport applications that have been made, by year, where the applicant is seeking to record a different gender on the passport, than that which is on the applicant's birth certificate; the number of passports that have been issued, by year, where a different gender is recorded than the gender recorded on the applicant's birth certificate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12363/15]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** In 2014 the Passport Service issued 25 passports to applicants who changed their gender. In 2013 the Passport Service issued 18 passports to applicants in this category.

Section 11 of the Passport Act, 2008 provides the framework relating to the processing of passport applications from citizens seeking a gender change on their passport. It allows for a citizen— who has undergone, or is undergoing, treatment or procedures or both to alter the applicant's sexual characteristics and physical appearance to those of the opposite sex, to apply to the Passport Service to have a passport issued to the applicant in their new name, and if appropriate, to have the new sex of the applicant entered on the passport. The applicant must provide medical evidence from a registered medical practitioner to confirm the medical treatment and in the case where a new name is being used, they must provide evidence of usage of the new name.

### **Passport Applications Data**

211. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of passport applications made in the Irish language from 2004 to 2014, inclusive; and the total number of passport applications in those years. [12364/15]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Passport Service provides application forms and information notes in both Irish and English. However the Passport Service does not record in which language applications completed in a format which allows the production of the statistical reports sought by the Deputy.

### **Legislative Process**

212. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of pieces of legislation that were submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by his Department since 2011; his plans to allow pre-legislative scrutiny for any upcoming pieces of legislation from his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12414/15]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The requirement to have all bills submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny was introduced as part of Dáil Reform in late 2013.

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My Department is currently working on the preparation of a general scheme of a bill to enable Ireland to ratify the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection Cultural Property in the event of Armed Conflict and to accede to its 1999 Protocol, and I expect that this draft scheme will be submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny in due course.

### **Emigrant Support Services**

213. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the extent to which he has been able to verify the claim that undocumented Irish in the United States of America can obtain a visa from that country's embassy in Dublin, to facilitate their unrestricted return to the United States of America, after a visit here for family reasons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12588/15]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Achieving relief for undocumented Irish migrants in the US is a priority for the Government in our contacts with the United States.

Throughout his recent visit to the US and in a series of high level contacts with the US Administration, with Congress and at State level, the Taoiseach raised the issue of immigration reform and the plight of the undocumented Irish, stressing that almost every family in Ireland is related to or knows somebody who is caught up in this deeply distressing situation.

During his meeting with President Obama on 17 March the Taoiseach commended him on his executive action announced late last year. This action is currently the subject of legal proceedings in the US federal courts.

The Taoiseach emphasised the need to allow the undocumented to come out of the shadows and be free to travel home for family events. He also highlighted the issue of those amongst the Irish undocumented who might be eligible for visas, but who would be required to return to Ireland for their issuance and hence would require waivers for their prior period of undocumented residence. The Taoiseach also pointed to the need for a legal pathway to allow for future Irish immigration to the US for those who wish to make a contribution there, expressing the hope that a political way forward could be found on this issue which would encourage progress on a comprehensive legislative package by Congress.

The Government has had many contacts in recent years with the US to promote immigration reform and to press for any viable opportunities which would be of potential value to the Irish undocumented. As part of this ongoing process, and on my instructions, a letter was sent from my Department to the US Embassy in Dublin on 24 February in regard to immigration reform and particularly raising the issue of visa waivers. The US Embassy has indicated that it hopes to respond in due course.

My Department will continue to follow up on all of the issues raised in recent contacts with the US Administration, with Congress and with the US Embassy in Ireland.

### **Departmental Contracts Data**

214. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will provide a list, in tabular form, of all contracts and tenders awarded by his Department to a company (details supplied) since 1 January, 2004, including any such awarded singularly or as a joint bid or consortium including said company; if he will indicate which Department, agency



or semi-State company was the contacting party in each case; the value in each case; the purpose of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13111/15]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** No contracts have been awarded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to the company referred to since 1 January 2004.

### Skills Shortages

215. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which any skills shortage might exist in the workplace at present; if an evaluation has been done to identify those skills in most demand, and the ability to respond to any shortage now and in the future, with particular reference to the improving economic situation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12563/15]

216. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the extent to which it remains possible to identify in advance the full extent of the skills requirement in the modern workplace, with particular reference to the urgent need to meet any such requirements and to plan accordingly; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12565/15]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 215 and 216 together. My Department has a number of strategies and initiatives in place to ensure that education and training meets the skills requirements of the workplace. SOLAS, with the assistance of relevant experts such as the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), employers and local and national organisations, have published a five year strategy for the further education and training sector which provides us with a strategic roadmap for this crucial element of the education and training system. The strategy includes a vision of a flexible, quality-driven, labour market-relevant, integrated and responsive sector that supports learner progression, transitions into employment and personal development. The Higher Education system is equally being transformed through structural change arising from the Higher Education strategy. The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN), which is funded by my Department, advises the Government on current and future skills needs of the economy. It has a central role in ensuring that labour market needs for skilled workers are anticipated and met. The expert group's membership is broad and specifically includes representation from enterprise. Its research provides an input to the development of course curricula and informs the selection of new targeted programmes designed to tackle the skills shortages in particular elements of the economy, such as Momentum, Springboard and the ICT skills conversion programme. As part of the Action Plan for Jobs 2015, my Department has committed to review the National Skills Strategy. The review will provide an opportunity to determine the volume, type and mix of skills required to meet the Government's goal of full employment by 2018 and the challenges to be addressed to achieve this. Direct engagement between employers and education and training providers is also critical to ensuring that programmes are aligned to changing skills needs. As well as the actions that are being implemented across the education and training system as part of the Further Education and Training and Higher Education reform programmes to enhance links with enterprise and prepare learners for the different roles they will have over their working lives work is also underway in the context of the Skills Strategy review to develop the regional and national infrastructure for engagement between education providers, employers and other enterprise stakeholders, in communicating and addressing skills needs.

### Institutes of Technology

217. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the projected cost of the proposed merger between Waterford Institute of Technology and Carlow Institute of Technology; if parallel management structures will be retained at each institute after the merger; the projected cost of retaining parallel management structures at each institution; the amount that has been spent to date by each college on due diligence on the proposed merger; the amount the State will contribute to the cost of the proposed merger; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12384/15]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** The Government is committed to delivering a wide ranging reform programme in higher education to enhance the quality of research, teaching and engagement. Restructuring the system and in particular the establishment of Technological Universities forms a key part of the reform programme. The process and criteria to attain this new status were published in early 2012. Carlow Institute of Technology and Waterford Institute of Technology have not progressed to the stage of the preparation of a detailed plan for merger and more importantly how they intend to meet the robust performance criteria for designation as a Technological University. A detailed plan must set out the existing position of the proposed consortium in relation to each of the technological university criteria (rather than the position of each individual institution) and the capacity of the consortium, based on its developmental trajectory, to meet these criteria within a reasonable timeframe. Therefore the estimated costs of the project have not been developed. I understand the costs to-date for due diligence stand at €42,742. The Deputy will be aware that Mr. Michael Kelly is leading a process of consultation with regional stakeholders, the governing bodies, staff and students in Carlow Institute of Technology and Waterford Institute of Technology in order to develop a shared vision for a technological university in the South East. I am pleased to report that Mr. Michael Kelly has met with the Governing Bodies of both institutions and has held a series of meetings with a variety of stakeholders. Mr. Kelly has not yet submitted a report but I expect to receive this report in the coming weeks.

### **Institutes of Technology**

218. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will provide an update regarding the proposed construction of a new campus for Waterford Institute of Technology at Carriganore in County Waterford; the estimated cost of the building project; the amount the Government has committed to the project; the way the shortfall will be made up; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12385/15]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** No application has been received relating to the construction of a new campus at Carriganore from Waterford Institute of Technology.

### **Scientific Research**

219. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if her attention has been drawn to the concerns of a substantial number of science academics that the current science policies of the Government are negatively affecting research and science education; if she will meet with academics to discuss their concerns first-hand, with a view to making changes to current policies; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12389/15]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** The Strategy for Science, Technology & Innovation (2006 to 2013) was a broad based strategy which covered funding for

research and innovation across all disciplines and across the full continuum of research from basic to applied, as well as commercialisation of research. The Government remains committed to the importance of research given the key role that it plays in underpinning economic recovery and maintaining Ireland's competitiveness, and also in recognition of the vital role of research-informed teaching in our higher education institutions. The formulation of the new Strategy provides a clear opportunity for Ireland to develop a new whole-of-Government strategy for research and innovation that can build on the progress made to date and is timely as Ireland moves into a new phase of economic growth and societal development. Excellence in research will continue to be a cornerstone of our strategy and we must continue to have a strong and excellent research base. The strength of our research base is an important factor in the quality and relevance of teaching in our higher education system and a critical function of the new Strategy will be the further improvement of the linkages between the research and innovation performers within the Irish research system. The open letter from "Irish Scientists for Basic Research" is a welcome part of the consultation process designed to inform the development of the new Strategy. This letter and other submissions received will be considered by the Interdepartmental Committee, which has been tasked with developing proposals for this new Strategy. I am represented on this Committee by officials from my Department and they are closely engaged with the process. The Committee expects to complete its work by Summer 2015. The issue of future funding for all areas of research will be considered in the context of the completion of this work.

### **School Curriculum**

220. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her plans to promote the teaching of sign language in schools; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12390/15]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan):** The Department, through its Post-Primary Languages Initiative, has developed a specification for a short course in Irish Sign Language (ISL) which will be available as part of the new Junior Cycle.

In this short course the emphasis is on developing communication skills in ISL at level A1 (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). This short course develops students' ability to understand ISL in live and in recorded situations, to produce the language and to interact with other signers in a simple way and on familiar topics.

Students will be actively involved in monitoring their own progress and derive enjoyment and confidence from communicating in a new language. They also develop awareness and skills in relation to language learning through comparing and contrasting patterns in ISL and in other languages they know. They become better language learners through identifying and developing their own language learning strategies.

In a multicultural society it is important that young people have opportunity to learn about other cultures, appreciate similarities and differences and learn to observe, reflect and suspend judgement when discovering the new culture and reflecting back on their own. This course offers opportunities to do this.

Finally, there are increasing opportunities to learn languages and to discover different cultures using digital tools. In this short course, students will learn how to use these tools to support language learning. By taking part in this course students may have their accomplishments in their new language formally recorded and benchmarked against the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

[http://languagesinitiative.ie/images/ISL/MFL\\_Gen\\_Spec\\_ISL\\_28\\_May\\_\\_Short\\_Course.pdf](http://languagesinitiative.ie/images/ISL/MFL_Gen_Spec_ISL_28_May__Short_Course.pdf).

### Legislative Process

221. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of items of legislation that have been submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by her Department since 2011; her plans to allow pre-legislative scrutiny for any upcoming legislation from her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12411/15]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** I can confirm to the Deputy that the following three Bills have been submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by my Department: the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill; the Technological Universities Bill; and the Retention of Certain Records Bill.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Government decided that most legislative proposals should be referred for pre-legislative scrutiny, and I would intend to follow that Government decision as appropriate.

### Teidlíochtaí Mháithreachais

222. D’fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna cén uair a athraíodh na rialacha maidir le saoire mháithreachais do mhúinteoirí bunscoile; go mór mhór do dhaoine a mbíonn páistí acu i rith Mhí Iúil agus Lúnasa; ar aontaigh Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann leis na socruithe nua; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [12425/15]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** Roimh an 1 Bealtaine 2013 d’fhéadfadh múinteoirí a bhí ar shaoire mháithreachais leas a bhaint as uasmhéid de 30 lá breise neamhláithreachta íoctha in ionad tréimhsí ina mbíodh an scoil dúnta le linn na tréimhse céanna den 26 seachtaine de shaoire mháithreachais. Cuireadh deireadh leis seo i mBuiséad 2013 nuair a chinn an Rialtas nach bhféadfaí na laethanta breise íoctha seo a dhlisteanú a thuilleadh.

Níor cuireadh isteach ar theidlíocht reachtúil múinteoirí ar 26 seachtaine de shaoire mháithreachais íoctha agus 16 seachtaine roghnacha de shaoire mháithreachais gan phá mar gheall ar an gcinneadh seo.

In Imlitir 0009/2013 de chuid mo Roinne clúdaítear na Teidlíochtaí um Chosaint Mháithreachais do Mhúinteoirí Cláraithe i mBunscoileanna agus Iarbhunscoileanna Aitheanta agus eisíodh é seo ar an 5 Feabhra 2013.

### School Patronage

223. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the patronage determination process will commence for the new primary school in the Goatstown-Stillorgan area of County Dublin; the timeframe for this process; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12432/15]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** On 5 February 2015, I announced that seven new primary schools will commence between 2015 and 2016.

Four of those schools will start this September. Therefore, resources are being concentrated on a patronage determination process for these particular schools.

A patronage determination process for the three schools opening in 2016, which includes the one to which the Deputy refers, will be carried out later this year.

### **School Accommodation**

224. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will examine a submission by a school (details supplied) in County Kerry for additional accommodation space and for continuing the replacement of deteriorating prefabricated buildings. [12433/15]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan):** The school referred to by the Deputy submitted an application for additional accommodation in 2014.

The application concerned was assessed and I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the school was approved funding, on a devolved basis, in December 2014 last for the provision of 3 general classrooms, 1 resource room and ancillary accommodation to replace existing prefabs. Funding was also provided for the associated prefab removal costs.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

225. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a new school building will be provided in respect of a school (details supplied) in Dublin 13; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12464/15]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan):** The major building project referred to by the Deputy is currently at Stage 2A of Architectural Planning. The ETB and its Design Team are finalising the Stage 2A report for presentation to my Department.

Upon completion of stage 2A and subject to no issues arising, this project will then be authorised to proceed to Stage 2B - Detailed Design Stage which includes applications for Planning Permission, Fire Safety Certification, Disability Access Certification and the preparation of tender documents.

Due to competing demands on the Department's capital budget imposed by the need to prioritise the limited funding available for the provision of additional school accommodation to meet increasing demographic requirements it was not possible to include this project in the 5 year construction programme announced in March 2012.

School building projects, including the project referred to by the Deputy, which were previously initiated but not included in the current five year construction programme will continue to be progressed to final planning stages in anticipation of the possibility of further funds being available to the Department in the future.

### **Residential Institutions Redress Scheme**

226. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will provide an explanation for the inordinate delays regarding the operation of the Caranua scheme and the stress being caused to applicants by waiting periods of nine to ten months before they are



contacted. [12472/15]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** Caranua, the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board, is an independent statutory body established pursuant to the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Act 2012 to oversee the use of the cash contributions of up to €110 million, pledged by the religious congregations, to support the needs of survivors of institutional child abuse. As the Deputy will be aware Caranua commenced accepting applications on 6th January 2014, and I understand that by 31st December 2014, Caranua had made payments of some €9m to 1,062 applicants.

The management of applications is a matter solely for Caranua and I have no role in that process. I understand however that as part of the applications process there are extensive levels of communications between Caranua and applicants. Significant numbers of calls are received via its Freephone line and each applicant is assigned an Application Advisor who is responsible for guiding an applicant through the applications process, helping them to identify the full range of needs they have and providing them with any supporting information that may be needed to complete the application. The Advisors actively manage each application maintaining contact throughout the process. I am advised by Caranua that there are no applicants awaiting contact for periods as long as 9 or 10 months.

### **Residential Institutions Redress Scheme**

227. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the criteria used in respect of determining hardship in the context of the Caranua handbook, in view of the fact that this is an area which applicants believe is being too harshly monitored and that these criteria could be employed to provide necessary relief for those who are continuing to suffer as a result of abuse they experienced. [12473/15]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** Section 9 of the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Act 2012 provides that the Board’s criteria for making decisions on applications, can include criteria consistent with the Act for the purpose of the relief of hardship where it is shown to the satisfaction of the Board that exceptional circumstances exist such that the standard criteria can be disregarded. It is a matter for the Board of Caranua to determine its criteria for making decisions in accordance with the Act and I have no role in that process.

I understand that the Caranua information booklet ‘Applying for Services: information and guidelines for making an application’ states that “in cases of extreme hardship and other exceptional circumstances” the criteria for applying for services may be set aside. Caranua has advised that in light of the fact that this area deals with exceptional circumstances it is not appropriate to put in place strict criteria to define these since it would remove the element of discretion that this provision is designed to provide for.

I would also point out that any former resident can appeal a decision made by Caranua on their application to the independent appeals officer appointed pursuant to section 21 of the 2012 Act.

### **Residential Institutions Statutory Fund**

228. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills her plans to amend the residential institutions statutory fund in order that the partners and children of the survivors of residential abuse can gain some of the assistance outlined in respect of the Caranua fund, in

view of the fact that they are also suffering and that their needs are often a huge source of stress to the abuse victim. [12474/15]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** The Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Act 2012 provides that those former residents who received awards from the Residential Institutions Redress Board or equivalent Court awards or settlements are eligible to apply to Caranua. This approach was taken having regard to the maximum funds available of €110 million and a potential pool of some 15,000 applicants.

As the Deputy may be aware, a commitment was given during the passage of the 2012 Act to review the operation of the Fund two years after its establishment in the event of applications not resulting in a significant expenditure of the Fund. Following its establishment in March 2013, Caranua began to accept applications in January 2014. Accordingly it would be my intention to consider the question of a review of the operation of the Fund later this year by which time a clearer picture should have emerged regarding the uptake of the funding available.

### **Educational Projects**

229. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the role she envisages certain third level institutions will play in a project (details supplied) in County Cork; the funds that have been committed towards the project by these institutions and her Department or any body under its aegis; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12541/15]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** Information is being compiled in relation to the project referred to by the Deputy and will be forwarded as soon as possible.

### **Special Educational Needs Service Provision**

230. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will account for the under-provision of spaces for children with special needs in the east Offaly/west Kildare area; her plans to address this; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12549/15]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan):** My Department’s policies focus on ensuring that all children can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in school settings through the primary and post primary school network.

A range of placement options for pupils with special educational needs is provided, in order to ensure that all pupils can receive a school placement. Many pupils with special educational needs will be able to attend a local mainstream school, whereas for pupils who have needs which require more specialist interventions, special class and special school placements are provided for.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from primary and post primary schools for special educational needs supports, including the establishment of special classes in various geographical areas as required. The NCSE operates within my Department’s criteria in allocating such support.

Details of the number of special classes in each county are available on the NCSE website [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie). The NCSE is also currently considering applications by schools to establish new

special classes for the coming 2015/16 school year.

As this question refers to provision in the East Offaly/West Kildare area, I will arrange for the matter raised by the Deputy to be forwarded to the NCSE for their attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **School Staffing**

231. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will reverse her Department's decision to place a permanent teacher at a school (details supplied) in County Cavan onto the panel, in circumstances where the school has in excess of 25 hours allocated for resource and learning support, and has now lost two permanent teachers in one year. [12657/15]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan):** The staffing and redeployment arrangements for primary schools for the 2015/16 school year are set out in Department Circular 0005/2015 which is available on my Department's website at [www.education.gov.ie](http://www.education.gov.ie). The core function of the redeployment arrangements is to facilitate the redeployment of all surplus permanent teachers with effect from 1 September, 2015 to other schools that have vacancies. The redeployment of all surplus permanent teachers is key to the Department's ability to manage within its payroll budget and ceiling on teacher numbers.

There is no change to the mainstream classroom staffing of the school referred to by the Deputy for the 2015/16 school year. However, the school has had a reduction in its GAM/EAL (learning/language support) allocation to 15 hours.

Where schools do not have sufficient GAM/EAL hours to create a full-time post, a process is in place for such schools to enter into cluster arrangements with neighbouring schools. This has been the case in St. Patrick's National School for a number of years. Following the school led process for clustering GAM/EAL hours, a Department led clustering process is initiated for any remaining hours in schools that have not been clustered. My Department has notified the school of such a cluster arrangement and that it will continue to be a base school for a shared GAM/EAL post for the 2015/16 school year. As a consequence there is no redeployment panel implication.

### **Non-Principal Private Residence Charge Administration**

232. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is aware that many persons who reside outside the country and own homes here were unaware of the introduction of the non-principal private residence tax, and yet they are now facing interest and penalties for not paying the original tax; his views that this is fair; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12540/15]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly):** The Local Government (Charges) Act 2009, as amended, provides the legislative basis for the Non-Principal Private Residence Charge. The NPPR Charge, which has since been discontinued, applied in the years 2009 to 2013 to any residential property in which the owner did not reside as their normal place of residence. It is a matter for an owner, whether resident in Ireland or elsewhere, to determine if he or she has a liability and, if so, to declare that liability and pay the Charge and any late payment fees applicable.

My Department undertook an initial media campaign when the NPPR Charge was first

introduced in 2009. Nationwide advertising has also taken place in each year since the introduction of the Charge under the auspices of the local authorities to ensure general awareness of the Charge and the liability dates. In addition, local authorities have undertaken their own advertising campaigns locally. The NPPR Project Board, in conjunction with individual local authorities, undertook a media campaign in 2014 aimed at reminding non-compliant owners that additional late payment penalties applied after 31 August 2014. The extensive radio and print media campaign reminded non-compliant owners of their obligations to come forward to regularise their affairs and to take advantage of this once-off grace period. While it is a necessary principle of law that all citizens are required to be aware of relevant legal obligations and duties in respect of such charges, as is the case in other jurisdictions, it remains my view that reasonable efforts have been made to ensure that property owners have been aware of the Charge and liability dates.

Local authorities have responsibility under section 9 of the 2009 Act to operate and collect the Charge. Under section 77 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, my Department issued guidance to local authorities concerning matters relating to arrears of the NPPR Charge and late payment fees to ensure that a consistent national approach is adopted. The guidelines, which are available at <http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/LocalGovernment/Administration/FileDownload,37899,en.pdf> encourage local authorities to take a proactive approach to ensure that any outstanding NPPR liabilities are discharged in the most equitable, efficient and economically beneficial manner. It is expected, in the majority of cases, that local authorities will collect the full NPPR Charge liability from owners. In some cases, this may be by means of arrangement by instalment. The Act places the Charge under the care and management of the local authorities and application in particular circumstances is a matter for the relevant local authority. All non-compliant owners should log on to [www.nppr.ie](http://www.nppr.ie) or, alternatively, contact their local authority to discuss any matters they wish to clarify and to make their outstanding payments.

### **Local Authority Funding**

233. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is aware that his Department set aside an allocation of €1 million in additional funding for Sligo County Council in 2014, conditional on a realistic financial plan being agreed between his Department and the council by the end of 2014; that the Department decided to provide only €250,000 of the €1 million to the council, and that in the absence of a detailed plan being agreed before the end of 2014, no further payment was made to the council; if there are ongoing negotiations between his Department and the council in respect of the remaining €750,000; if the decision not to pay the €750,000 to the council is final or if will his Department will reconsider the matter, if a realistic financial plan is submitted to it; if consideration will be given to adding the €750,000 to the extra €1 million allocation set aside for 2015, if a realistic and achievable financial plan is agreed to; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12365/15]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly):** Sligo County Council's financial position is of serious concern to me. While it is a matter for individual local authorities to manage their own day-to-day finances in a prudent and sustainable manner, my Department is in regular consultation with the Council in relation to its financial position, including in relation to the agreement of a long term financial plan.

I have set aside an allocation of **€1million** in additional funding for 2015 for Sligo County Council to assist it to take the steps necessary to move to a more sustainable financial position.

Sligo County Council received an additional €250,000 in 2014 for these purposes but, as the long term financial plan was not finalised last year, I was not in a position to pay the remaining €750,000 that had been set aside in 2014. The payment of additional funding for 2015 remains fully conditional on a realistic and achievable financial plan, which charts a path to long term financial sustainability, being agreed between my Department and the Council; this process is on-going.

### **Local Authority Housing Maintenance**

234. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of housing voids in Dublin City Council; the number back into use by the council in 2014 and in 2015 to date; the average length of time for repairs to be carried out; the amount of money drawn down by the council from his Department to bring voids into use; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12373/15]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly):** Statistics on local authority housing stock, including information on vacant stock and the average time taken to re-let available dwellings, are published annually by the Local Government Management Agency. The most recent statistics are in respect of 2013 and are available at the following link: <http://www.lgma.ie/en/service-indicators-local-authorities-2013>. In 2014, Dublin City Council returned 467 vacant properties to productive use with funding support from my Department at a cost of €6,163,464.

Funding made available under Budget 2015 will see 1,000 vacant units nationally being returned to productive use this year and will be allocated on an equitable and evidence-based system, based on the priorities submitted by local authorities, the degree of local housing need, the current numbers of vacant units, the length of time properties have been vacant and the cost effectiveness of the proposal. Proposals for works under this initiative received from local authorities are currently under consideration and details of allocations will issue shortly.

### **Private Residential Tenancies Board Remit**

235. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to introduce legislation to provide certainty and security in the residential rental market; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12379/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey):** The Residential Tenancies Act 2004 regulates the landlord-tenant relationship in the sector and sets out the rights and obligations of landlords and tenants including in relation to rent, security of tenure and the termination of tenancies. The Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) was established as an independent statutory body under the Act to operate a national tenancy registration system and to resolve disputes between landlords and tenants.

The Residential Tenancies (Amendment)(No. 2) Bill 2012 is currently before the Oireachtas and will amend the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 to provide, inter alia, for:

- the inclusion of the Approved Housing Body (AHB) sector within the remit of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004;
- the introduction of a new procedure to deal with non-payment of rent;



- the introduction of a tenancy deposit protection scheme.

Security of tenure under the 2004 Act is based on rolling four-year tenancy cycles. Where a tenant has been in occupation of a dwelling for a continuous period of 6 months and no notice of termination has been served in respect of that tenancy before the expiry of the period of 6 months, the tenancy is established for the remainder of the four year period. This is referred to in the Act as a 'Part 4' tenancy. Landlords and tenants may not contract out of any of the provisions of Part 4 of the Residential Tenancies Act and no lease, tenancy agreement, contract or other agreement may operate to vary or modify the provisions of Part 4 of the Act.

Where a Part 4 tenancy lasts for four years without a notice of termination being served by the landlord or the tenant, a further Part 4 tenancy comes into being and this will continue on at the expiration of each further four year period unless the tenancy is validly terminated by either the landlord or the tenant on one of the grounds under the Act. A landlord may not serve a notice of termination except in very clearly defined circumstances such as a failure by the tenant to comply with his or her obligations in relation to the tenancy.

The main cause of rising rents is a lack of supply in the market and the implementation of the range of actions under the Government's Construction 2020 Strategy will support increased housing supply. New house completions in 2014 amounted to 11,016 units nationally, up 33% on the 2013 figure. In the third quarter of 2014, planning permissions were granted for 2,144 dwellings, compared with 1,409 units for the same period in 2013 - an increase of 52%.

The Government's Social Housing Strategy 2020 sets out clear, measurable actions and targets to increase the supply of social housing, reform delivery arrangements and meet the housing needs of all households on the housing list. The total targeted provision under the Social Housing Strategy of 110,000 social housing units includes the delivery of 35,000 units and a further 75,000 solutions through the HAP and RAS schemes.

At the same time, I realise that the time-lag in terms of ramping up supply to match demand is fuelling a marked increase in rents, especially in Dublin and the major cities. This is leading to difficulties, particularly for lower-income households. I am monitoring the rental market closely and considering policy options in relation to achieving greater rent certainty. My overriding objective in relation to rents is to achieve stability and sustainability in the market for the benefit of tenants, landlords and society as a whole.

### **Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme**

236. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will re-establish the inner city partnership; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12380/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan):** My Department's Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) is the largest social inclusion intervention of its kind in the State and is being implemented on a transitional basis until the end of March 2015, pending the roll out of the new Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) on 1 April 2015.

In accordance with the Public Spending Code, legal advice, good practice internationally and in order to ensure the optimum delivery of services to clients, SICAP is subject to a public procurement process, which is in its final stages. Tenderers have now been informed of the outcome of their tender and Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) are in the process of issuing contracts to the successful tenderers.

The primary focus of my Department is to ensure that the front-line services being supported, particularly those focused on the needs of the most socially deprived communities, are protected, given the need to ensure best value for the scarce resources available. I am confident that the new programme will continue to provide key supports to those most in need in our communities.

I am satisfied that the procurement process was in line with good practice, conforming to EU norms, and I look forward to the commencement and roll out of SICAP on 1 April.

Since the cessation of the contract with Dublin Inner City Partnership for the delivery of the LCDP, my Department, in conjunction with Pobal, has ensured that LCDP services, for the communities in the inner city area, have been maintained in a co-ordinated manner. SICAP will be overseen and managed by the new Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) in each Local Authority area. The configuration of delivery bodies/delivery arrangements for the Dublin Inner City area for local and community programmes is a matter for the LCDC of Dublin City Council to consider in consultation with the relevant stakeholders, commensurate with service needs.

### **Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme Funding**

237. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is aware that the budget for community groups in Dublin's inner city has fallen in 2015 by 38% for the period April to December 2014; the steps he will take to address this anomaly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12381/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan):** My Department's Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) is the largest social inclusion intervention of its kind in the State and is being implemented on a transitional basis until the end of March 2015, pending the roll out of the new Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) on 1 April 2015.

In accordance with the Public Spending Code, legal advice, good practice internationally and in order to ensure the optimum delivery of services to clients, SICAP is subject to a public procurement process, which is in its final stages. Tenderers have now been informed of the outcome of their tender and Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) are in the process of establishing contracts with the successful tenderers.

Following contract signature, Pobal will publish a Contract Award Notice in the Official Journal of the EU (<http://ted.europa.eu/>) and on the eTenders website ([www.etenders.gov.ie](http://www.etenders.gov.ie)) announcing the results of the procurement process. Such notice is likely to be published in early April 2015.

Within the constraints of the prevailing budgetary situation, I have been particularly conscious of the need to prioritise funding for the Local and Community Development Programme, until March 2015, and for its successor, the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme, from April 2015. My aim is to ensure that resources are allocated in the fairest way possible and to make the maximum contribution to tackling disadvantage, job creation and economic recovery.

My Department's intention is, over time, to use the available knowledge of population levels and disadvantage to ensure that available resources are targeted at areas of greatest need. As a tool to assist with this, a Resource Allocation Model, or RAM, has been developed which allows relative disadvantage to be measured across all census areas. In order to achieve the ob-

jective of moving towards allocating resources according to this model, my Department has in recent years worked to ensure that funding is protected for those areas which the RAM shows have greatest needs. This principle was used in deciding on funding allocations for SICAP and I am satisfied that the funding allocated to Dublin Inner City under SICAP is a fair allocation of resources for the area concerned.

The funding reduction referred to has to be seen in the context of a number of specific factors which applied to the Dublin Inner City funding arrangements under the current Programme. In particular, the Community Development Programme funding model was not based on population and deprivation levels, as is proposed for SICAP; instead providing funding for two staff, on average, and overheads in each project. In addition, the fact that there was no Local Development Company in the Inner City inevitably gave rise to a higher number of separate structures and associated costs relative to other areas, creating scope for efficiency savings to be made in the new arrangements under SICAP.

My Department has continued to ensure that LCDP services, for the communities in the Dublin Central area, have been maintained in a coordinated manner through LCDP interim funding arrangements until 31 March 2015.

In terms of the transition thereafter, funding of some €0.6 million, separate to and outside of SICAP, is being provided to certain Dublin Central groups (former Community Development Projects), pending agreement with Dublin City Council and the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) on an optimum delivery mechanism for the services in the area. This funding is entirely separate to the €0.63 million which is being provided to the Dublin Central area under SICAP. The groups in question are:

- An Siol
- Cabra
- Lourdes Youth and Community
- Nascadh
- North Wall Women's Centre
- Robert Emmet
- South Inner City Community Development Association
- Community After Schools Project.

### **Local Authority Housing Provision**

238. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason he plans to spend €75,000 per unit to refurbish 70 temporary units of accommodation in O'Devaney Gardens in Dublin 7, when the O'Devaney Gardens site has been proposed over the past ten years for a major programme of regeneration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12382/15]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly):** The proposed refurbishment of 64 family units in two blocks at O'Devaney Gardens is one of a number of initiatives my Department has brought forward in order to address the need for emergency accommodation for homeless families in the Dublin region. The latest figures avail-

able to my Department indicate 371 homeless families in emergency accommodation in the Dublin region, many of which are accommodated in commercial hotels and B&Bs. The refurbishment cost-per-unit at O'Deveney Gardens is more economically advantageous compared to the accommodation costs for families in hotels and B&Bs, and the refurbished apartments would be a more suitable and stable environment for families with children pending the provision of longer-term accommodation. I understand the proposed refurbishment proposal will be considered by the elected members of Dublin City Council at their April meeting.

While this was a specific initiative to tackle emergency and short-term homelessness, this proposal has been specifically tailored to ensure that, while addressing the pressing need to address homelessness, the overall regeneration potential of this valuable site, which is capable of delivering a significant number of new social housing units, is not compromised. It is a matter for Dublin City Council to advance plans for the regeneration of the overall site.

### **Irish Water Establishment**

239. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will immediately dissolve Irish Water and return moneys and responsibility to local authorities for local water supplies and maintenance. [12399/15]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly):** The Government has embarked on a programme of ambitious reform of the water sector, as the traditional water services system was in need of fundamental change. Our public water infrastructure is deficient and inadequate as a consequence of decades of under-investment and the lack of a truly national approach that could maximise the impact of investment.

An Independent Assessment published in 2012 reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of the delivery of water services through the then 34 local authorities and concluded that there was a fragmentation of leadership and co-ordination, difficulty in attaining economies of scale, difficulty in delivering projects of national importance and an aging and poor quality network. The report concluded that the best way of ensuring increasing efficiency and effectiveness of operations and capital investment and accessing new finances for the water sector was to establish Irish Water as a public utility.

This was implemented through the Water Services Act 2013, which provided for the establishment of Irish Water, and the Water Services (No. 2) Act 2013 which provided for the transfer of responsibility for water services provision from the local authorities to Irish Water. The transfer of responsibility took effect on 1 January 2014.

The Independent Assessment also pointed to the particular strengths of the local authority system in relation to locally based teams. This positive aspect is preserved through the Service Level Agreements (SLAs) put in place between Irish Water and local authorities which garner the knowledge and expertise of local authority staff combined with the network and utility management experience available to Irish Water to provide for a more consistent and efficient service for customers.

Since its establishment, Irish Water has implemented key management and systems changes to provide for a more strategic approach to managing water services assets and underpinning priority investment. Capital investment in core infrastructure in the 2014 – 2016 period will be substantially more than in 2013. **This year, investment will increase by 26% on 2014, rising from €340 million to €430 million.**

Irish Water, like other utilities, will have the capacity to fund investment without adding to

the Government Debt. It would not be possible to fund the same level of investment if the responsibility for water services had remained with local authorities. The independent regulation of the sector by the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) will ensure that operational efficiency is achieved across the sector, in Irish Water's central services and in the Service Level Agreements. This will take account of international benchmarks and will be focused on ensuring that customers are only charged for an efficient service. The Water Services (No. 2) Act 2013 provided the CER with statutory responsibility for protecting the interests of customers.

The Act provides that Irish Water shall charge each customer for the provision of services provided by it in accordance with a water charge plan to be approved by the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER). A new water charging regime was announced by the Government on 19 November 2014, which is designed to make water charges more affordable for customers. The charges structure was revised with a view to making it simpler and fairer, providing more clarity and certainty to households. The Water Services Act 2014 provides that the capped annual charges will be €160 for single adult households and €260 for all other households until the end of 2018. The overall cost for those who register with Irish Water, net of the €100 water conservation grant, is either €1.15 a week for single adult households or €3 a week for all others. Water supply will not be reduced under any circumstance.

### **Proposed Legislation**

240. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of Bills that were submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by his Department since 2011; his plans to allow pre-legislative scrutiny for any upcoming legislation from his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12412/15]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly):** A total of 7 pieces of legislation, proposed or published, by my Department have been subject to the pre-legislative scrutiny procedure in the Oireachtas. As part of the Government's Political Reform Programme pre-legislative scrutiny was introduced to the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2011 and formalised in parliamentary procedure in November 2013. It is my intention to subject all legislation prepared in my Department to pre-legislative scrutiny in accordance with these procedures.

### **Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas**

241. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if the findings of the report of the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas have been costed; if he will consider selecting an area (details supplied) in County Kerry to pilot the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12430/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan):** Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ) are defined as functional rather than administrative geographic areas that reflect the spatial patterns of local economic activities and development processes, i.e. they are the sub-county zones within which most people live and work. Research surrounding this element of the CEDRA report identified potential REDZ in all areas of Ireland and recommended the implementation of a pilot initiative that supports the formulation of a localised strategic approach to the development of REDZ. The recommendation envisages full participation by communities at a local level in order to foster a sense of ownership of the REDZ development process.



My Department is currently working on the development of a set of criteria to support the delivery of this pilot initiative which I expect to be launching in the coming weeks. Participation in the REDZ pilot initiative will be open to all REDZ areas outlined in the CEDRA report (the report can be found at [www.ruralireland.ie](http://www.ruralireland.ie)), with a number chosen in the context of the criteria which will be published in due course.

### **Private Residential Tenancies Board**

242. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide details on the operation and financing of the proposed deposit retention scheme that is to be provided for in the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Bill 2012; his plans that the custodial model proposed will be self-financing; and the factors that would mitigate against the scheme being self-financing. [12451/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey):** Deposit retention and rent arrears are the main categories of dispute from applicant parties for dispute resolution according to the annual report of the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) for 2013. The Programme for Government includes a commitment to establish a tenancy deposit protection scheme.

On foot of this commitment the PRTB commissioned research on such a scheme and reported back to my Department with recommendations in that regard. The subsequent report, prepared by Indecon International Economic Consultants, assessed a number of different options for delivery of a scheme ranging from one where all elements are delivered by the PRTB to one where all elements are outsourced to a private operator. The report examined each option in terms of both insurance and custodial type schemes.

All of the options presented in the report were considered and Government approval was ultimately secured for the establishment of a tenancy deposit scheme based on a custodial model to be operated by the PRTB. In a custodial scheme, tenancy deposits are transferred to the scheme for the duration of the tenancy. They are then repaid by the scheme operator following agreement between the landlord and tenant or following the outcome of a dispute resolution process in cases where there is no agreement. It is my intention to introduce the legislative amendments in relation to the scheme at Committee Stage of the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2012 in the Seanad.

The model proposed will generate an income stream from the deposit fund, which will be used to finance the scheme. The scheme will also have cost implications for the PRTB, especially in the initial establishment phase. There have been many changes since Indecon conducted the cost-benefit analysis in 2012 including in relation to interest rates and average rents. The true costs associated with the scheme will only become clear through the procurement process. The management of costs will be crucial to the financial viability of the scheme and my Department is working closely with the PRTB in this regard.

### **Waste Management**

243. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide details of the proposed full producer responsibility initiative scheme for waste tyres; if there will be significant costs associated with the new obligation for retailers and producers and additional costs for consumers; and the measures being put in place to ensure the new obligation will not lead to commercial activity migrating to other jurisdictions

with less costly compliance schemes. [12453/15]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly):** The Producer Responsibility Initiative scheme which I recently announced for tyres will comprise the following main features:

- A single compliance scheme for end-of-life tyres to be operated by Repak,
- The ending of the option to “self-comply” under the Regulations,
- Formalisation of the existing recycling charge into a visible environmental management charge,
  - The level of this visible environmental charge would be set by my Department and reviewed in two years,
  - As part of the detailed design of the scheme, consideration by my Department, in consultation with the tyres and waste industry, as to whether the funding model is predicated upon a front-loaded or back-loaded model,
  - A full audit and registration and reporting component (‘black box’) with a role for the WEEE Register Society, and
  - An underpinning of the new regime, including enforcement and compliance measures, by a robust legislative base, including fixed penalty notices for certain breaches.

After almost a year of discussions with representatives of all sectors of the tyre industry in Ireland, my decision to introduce a full producer responsibility initiative in this waste stream is the appropriate response to the very serious problems which have been identified in the sector. This will require an overhaul of existing structures, but I believe that this can be achieved without distorting the tyres market in Ireland, without encouraging customers to buy tyres outside of the jurisdiction and without widespread job losses. Moreover, I believe that such a scheme could be provided for without introducing any new costs, but rather by effectively formalising the existing charge that is already applied to almost all tyre purchases.

My Department is continuing to work with industry to agree on the finer details of how the Producer Responsibility Initiative for Tyres will work. In order to bring additional focus to this work and the concerns which industry have raised, the Tyres Working Group, the industry stakeholder group working with my Department, recently decided to establish five sub-groups to examine and develop an approach and solutions on certain key issues, including some of the issues raised in the Deputy’s question.

These five sub-groups are as follows;

- distance sellers and treatment of information,
- registration and reporting,
- transitional arrangements,
- the financial model, and
- enforcement.

Finally, it is the intention of the Tyres Working Group to keep the wider tyre sector informed of both the progress and decisions made on an on-going basis.

## Constitutional Amendments

244. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reasons the Government could not proceed with a referendum to insert a clause into the Constitution to prohibit the privatisation of water at any point in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12465/15]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly):** Article 10(2) of the Constitution states that all land and all mines, minerals and waters which belonged to Saorstát Éireann immediately before the coming into operation of the Constitution belong to the State to the same extent as they then belonged to Saorstát Éireann.

With specific regard to Irish Water, the Water Services Act 2013 provides for the establishment of Irish Water as a subsidiary of Bord Gáis Éireann (now Ervia), conforming to the conditions contained in the Act and registered under the Companies Acts. Section 5 of the Act provides that one share in Irish Water shall be issued to Bord Gáis Éireann (now Ervia) with the remaining shares allocated equally between the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government and the Minister for Finance. Accordingly, Irish Water is in full State ownership. Subsection 5(6) of the Act, as amended by Section 46 of the Water Services (No. 2) Act 2013, prohibits each of the three shareholders from disposing of their shareholding in Irish Water and thus places a statutory prohibition on the privatisation of Irish Water.

There are no plans to amend the Constitution with regard to Irish Water. The Water Services Act 2014 includes a provision whereby any future proposal for legislation that would involve a change in the State ownership of Irish Water must be put to a plebiscite of the people. This ensures that any proposed privatisation by a future Government could not proceed without the support of the Irish people.

## Pyrite Remediation Programme

245. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason a letter from the Pyrite Remediation Board, stating that a house is scheduled for remediation due to severe damage, would not suffice as proof that it suffered significant pyritic damage to claim an exemption from the local property tax from the Revenue Commissioners. [12481/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey):** Section 10A of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended) provides for a temporary exemption of at least three consecutive years from the charge to Local Property Tax (LPT) for residential properties that have been certified as having “significant pyritic damage”.

To avail of the exemption, the Finance (Local Property Tax) (Pyrite Exemption) Regulations 2013 require that a liable person be in a position to demonstrate ‘significant pyritic damage’ to his/her property, i.e. the property must-

(a) have a Damage Condition Rating of 2 or a Damage Condition Rating of 1 (with progression) established on foot of a Building Condition Assessment carried out by a competent person under and in accordance with I.S. 398 -1:2013 Reactive pyrite in sub-floor hardcore material – Part 1: Testing and Categorisation, and

(b) have sub-floor hardcore material classified, by the appropriate competent person(s), as

susceptible to significant or limited expansion, established on foot of testing the sub-floor hard-core material.

The legislation in this area is consistent with the recommendation set out in the Report of the Pyrite Panel (July 2012) which recommended that an exemption from the LPT should be provided for dwellings where damage from pyritic heave has been proven by testing.

Nevertheless, having regard to the above requirements and, more specifically, to the costs associated with testing, my Department is engaging with the Department of Finance to explore possible alternatives to the requirement for testing. In this context, I understand that my colleague, the Minister for Finance, has initiated a review of the operation of the LPT. I understand that the review will primarily have regard to recent residential property price developments, the overall yield from LPT and the desirability of achieving relative stability in LPT payments. The review will also address a number of issues which have arisen in relation to the efficient and effective administration of the LPT, among which is likely to be the matter of the operation of the pyrite exemption provisions.

### **Motor Tax Collection**

246. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding commercial motor tax designation on scheduled commercial vehicles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12496/15]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly):** Motor tax is based on the construction and use of a vehicle. In order to qualify for the commercial rate of motor tax, a vehicle must be constructed or adapted for use as a goods vehicle and used solely for the conveyance of goods in the course of trade or business.

Licensing authorities have an obligation under Article 3 of the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing)(Amendment) Regulations 1992 to be satisfied that a vehicle is correctly taxed and it is thus open to a motor tax office to seek supporting documentation when commercial motor tax is being applied for. Such documentation may include a certificate of commercial insurance or evidence of registration for VAT purposes or, at the discretion of the licensing authority concerned, any other appropriate documentation that would indicate that the applicant is in trade or business. It is up to the individual concerned to provide whatever evidence is required by the licensing authority in order for it to be satisfied that the applicant is entitled to the commercial rate of motor tax, which is effectively a concessionary rate.

### **Housing Adaptation Grant Data**

247. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide, in tabular form by county, the number of persons awaiting assistance under the housing aid for older persons scheme and the mobility aids grant scheme; the total amount required by each local authority in respect of approvals made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12504/15]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly):** Exchequer funding of over €37 million was provided by my Department to local authorities in 2014 for the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability. Combined with an additional 20% contribution by individual local authorities, there was an

overall spend last year of €46.3 million in this area. I am pleased to confirm that the 2015 amount will increase by some 10% to give a combined spend of €50.5 million. Once individual allocations are made to local authorities, the detailed administration of the schemes thereafter, including the assessment, approval and payment of grants to applicants, is the responsibility of individual local authorities.

Information on the requirements of local authorities regarding these grant schemes is obtained when required, particularly in the context of the estimates process. However, my Department does not hold information on an on-going basis on the number of persons by county awaiting grant assistance.

### **Seaweed Harvesting**

248. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on whether moving the administration and issue of seaweed harvesting licences to local authorities or other municipal entities would unduly fragment the accountability and responsibilities of private enterprise engaged in this activity, and that the preference should be to keep a national focus in the development of our seaweed industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12516/15]

249. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the State's legal position on historical seaweed rights being asserted by certain landowners along the foreshore and the extent of these rights; the consequent restriction or impact on the State's ability to issue licences for seaweed harvesting to third parties along these sections of foreshore; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12517/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 248 and 249 together.

I have no statutory role in the promotion or development of the seaweed industry. Under the Foreshore Act 1933, I am responsible for regulating only the harvesting of wild seaweed. The harvesting of cultivated seaweed is a matter for the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

The regulation of wild seaweed harvesting is currently under consideration in the context of the proposed Maritime Area and Foreshore (Amendment) Bill. Any regulatory regime must seek to balance existing rights and commercial potential while ensuring sustainability of the resource and compliance with the State's obligations under EU environmental law. In that regard, the interaction between the Foreshore Act 1933 and traditional rights to harvest seaweed that may exist in certain places is under consideration by my Department in the context of advice from the Office of the Attorney General.

### **Departmental Records**

250. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason there were no minutes of meetings held between his Department and Bord Gáis Energy on dates (details supplied); the subject of these meetings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12519/15]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly):** The Government decided on 17 April 2012 to establish Irish Water as an independent state



owned company within the Bord Gáis Group (now Ervia). This was communicated to Bord Gáis Éireann (BGE) by letter, in which it was indicated that achieving the transition of water services would require a collaborative approach with stakeholders, particularly recognising that Irish Water has significant interdependencies with the local government sector both through Service Level Agreements and through local authorities' other statutory functions. The letter pointed out that an implementation plan for the establishment of Irish Water was being developed by a steering group overseen by my Department and that it would be important that BGE be involved in the finalisation of this plan, so that it had a clear understanding on the milestones that it would have to deliver upon.

It was against this background that a series of meetings were held with BGE representatives in the period April to August 2012. In parallel, the Department was meeting with other stakeholders and was developing the overall implementation plan with the support of PWC. This plan was ultimately approved by Government in October 2012 and published in December 2012. It set out 77 high level milestones required to deliver on the commitments under the Programme for Government and the Troika Programme of Financial Support for Ireland, to establish Irish Water, introduce economic regulation and commence domestic charging based on a national metering programme.

Within this framework, BGE developed a detailed Programme Initiation Document, which is available in the Oireachtas Library, that details the required inputs across all of the areas to set up the utility and deliver on the metering programme within the agreed timescales. This document was provided to the Department in August 2012 and informed the finalisation of the overarching implementation plan. Various meetings were held as this documentation was being developed. Many of these were simply briefing/progress monitoring meetings which did not require minutes as the outcomes were being reflected in the evolving strategy documents. Records were kept, where appropriate, of any decisions or key progress issues. All key decisions were subject to Ministerial or Government approval, as required.

### **Voluntary Sector Funding**

251. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the future of funding for the scheme to support national organisations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12538/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan):** The funding Scheme to Support National Organisations (SSNO) in the community and voluntary sector aims to provide multi-annual funding to national organisations towards core costs associated with the provision of services. Applications for a new round of funding, which commenced on 1 July 2014, were subject to an appraisal process. 55 applications were approved for funding for the two-year period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2016. A number of previously funded organisations were not approved for funding on this occasion.

Pobal were asked to undertake the management of the scheme and, in that context, put in place a dedicated team to deal with any inquiries from applicants and to provide detailed feedback. Furthermore, an appeals process was put in place, on foot of which Pobal submitted a report, which is currently being considered.

On 18 July 2014, it was announced that bridging funding of €1.4million would be allocated for a twelve month period to a number of previously funded health, disability and other organisations that were not approved for funding under the new scheme, pending the carrying out of

a review of the public funding of national organisations in the health and disability sector. This bridging funding in 2014/2015 will enable organisations to plan for their future, whether with or without State support, such as that provided under the SSNO. Details of the bridging funding provided are set out in the table below.

It should be noted that the review process is well underway and is being advanced in consultation with the Department of Health. The review is designed to rationalise the funding of these organisations to ensure efficiency in the use of public money and avoidance of duplication, while providing appropriate support to organisations working in the sector. The Health Service Executive and Pobal are also participating in the review. All organisations in receipt of bridging funding have been contacted to make submissions as part of the review process. I intend to complete and publish the outcome of the review in the coming months.

<b>Bridge Funding Provided – 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015</b>	-
Arthritis Ireland	53,882
Asperger Syndrome Association of Ireland Ltd	41,448
Asthma Society of Ireland	41,448
Breaking Through Limited	58,028
Chronic Pain Ireland Limited	37,304
Dyslexia Association of Ireland	62,172
Genetic and Inherited Disorders Organisation Ltd	16,580
GROW in Ireland	16,580
Huntington's Disease Association of Ireland Limited	19,066
Irish Deaf Society The National Association of the Deaf Limited	62,172
Irish Heart Foundation	41,448
Irish Mountain Rescue Association	58,028
Irish National Council of Attention Deficit Disorder Support (INCADDS)	33,158
Irish Stammering Association	24,868
Migraine Association of Ireland Ltd	29,014
Motor Neuron disease Association	24,868
MOVE Ireland	41,448
Muintir na Tíre	70,462
Muscular Dystrophy Ireland	37,304
National Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Ireland Limited	37,304
National Association for Youth Drama Ltd	29,014
New Communities Partnership (NCP) Ltd	74,606
Peter Bradley Foundation Limited	41,448
Post Polio Support Group Limited	24,868
Safe Ireland	74,606
Show Racism The Red Card Limited	29,014
Suas Educational Development	37,304

<b>Bridge Funding Provided – 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015</b>	-
The Alzheimer Society of Ireland	62,172
The Carers Association Limited	62,172
The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland	49,738
The Neurological Alliance of Ireland	49,738
The Union of Voluntary Organisations of People with Disabilities	45,592

### Leader Programmes Funding

252. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a breakdown of Leader programme funding awarded by county in each of the past seven years and in 2015 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12561/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Ann Phelan):** LEADER funding for the 2007-2013 programming period was not allocated based on county boundaries but to individual Local Action Groups on completion of the Local Development Strategy process. In addition to this, the allocations changed in 2012 when the EU co-financing rate changed due to the financial crisis and this resulted in a decrease in the overall programme allocation.

Table 1 details the initial allocations for each Local Action Group for the 2007-2013 programme period, while Table 2 sets out the 2013 revised allocations. Table 3 details the expenditure by group to March 2015.

**Table 1: Original LAG Allocations**

<b>LAG</b>	<b>Original Programme Allocation</b>
Avondhu Blackwater Partnership Ltd.	€9,057,810
Ballyhoura Development Ltd.	€11,673,519
Carlow County Development Partnership Ltd	€8,878,177
Cavan-Monaghan LEADER	€12,035,118
Cill Dara Ar Aghaidh Teo	€12,282,448
Clare Local Development Company Ltd.	€14,028,529
Co Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	€11,523,729
Co Wicklow Community Partnership	€11,135,560
Co. Sligo LEADER Partnership Company Ltd	€10,888,673
Comhar na nOileáin Teoranta	€4,642,415
Donegal Local Development Company Ltd.	€12,831,901
Fingal LEADER Partnership Co.	€7,766,780
FORUM Connemara Ltd.	€9,668,965
Galway Rural Development Company	€15,257,985
Inishowen Development Partnership	€8,286,143
IRD Duhallow Ltd.	€10,315,943
Laois Community and Enterprise Dev	€10,993,608

<b>LAG</b>	<b>Original Programme Allocation</b>
Leitrim Integrated Development Co Ltd	€10,845,497
Longford Community Resources Ltd	€8,714,110
Louth LEADER Partnership	€8,839,815
Mayo North East LEADER Partnership Co.	€10,751,894
Meath Community Rural and Social Dev.	€12,748,771
North East Kerry LEADER Partnership Teo	€10,558,882
North Tipperary LEADER Partnership	€9,708,008
Offaly Integrated Local Dev Co. Ltd.	€11,520,489
Roscommon Integrated Development Com- pany	€12,838,021
South and East Cork Area Dev Ltd.	€10,641,494
South Kerry Development Ltd.	€12,370,667
South Tipperary Local Development Co Ltd	€11,106,187
South West Mayo Development Company Ltd	€12,150,007
Waterford LEADER Partnership Ltd.	€10,558,519
West Cork Development Partnership Ltd.	€14,601,149
West Limerick Resources Ltd	€9,997,751
Westmeath Community Development Ltd	€10,987,060
Wexford Local Development	€12,515,565
Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta	€17,278,809
Overall Total	€399,999,998

**Table 2: Revised LAG allocations**

<b>LAG</b>	<b>December 2013 Revised Allocation</b>
Avondhu/Blackwater Partnership Limited	7,563,093
Ballyhoura Development Limited	18,832,677
Carlow County Development Partnership	7,619,278
Cavan Partnership Ltd. & County Monaghan	10,235,403
Clare Local Development Company Lim- ited	16,175,841
Comhar na nOileáin Teoranta	7,218,571
County Kilkenny LEADER Partnership Limited	13,587,910
County Sligo LEADER Partnership Com- pany	9,791,787
Donegal Local Development Company Limited	12,693,035
Fingal LEADER Partnership	6,488,129
FORUM Connemara	7,925,982
Galway Rural Development Company Limited	12,512,676
I.R.D. Duhallow	12,852,160

<b>LAG</b>	<b>December 2013 Revised Allocation</b>
Inishowen Development Partnership	7,410,663
Kildare (Cill Dara ar Aghaidh Teoranta)	10,642,073
Laois Community & Enterprise Development	9,564,731
Leitrim Integrated Development Company	10,332,659
Longford Community Resources Limited	7,198,679
Louth LEADER Partnership	7,265,162
Mayo North East LEADER Partnership Company	9,663,562
Meath Partnership	15,139,043
Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta	3,371,751
North & East Kerry LEADER Partnership	9,267,641
North Tipperary LEADER Partnership Company	12,917,884
Offaly Integrated Local Development Company	10,856,445
Roscommon Integrated Development	11,230,957
South East Cork Area Development Limited	10,600,928
South Kerry Development Partnership Limited	10,341,450
South Tipperary Local Development Company	12,515,649
South West Mayo Development Company	10,820,318
Waterford LEADER Partnership Limited	11,486,013
West Cork Development Partnership	13,481,280
West Limerick Resources	9,091,221
Westmeath Community Development	9,015,451
Wexford Local Development	11,919,814
Wicklow Partnership	9,128,172
<b>Total</b>	<b>376,758,090</b>

**Table 3: Spend to date per LAG**

LAG	Projects paid at 18 March 2015	Animation claimed at 1 March 2015	Administration claimed at 1 March 2015	Total Amount Paid
Avondhu Blackwater Partnership Ltd.	€5,273,323	€392,644	€1,410,825	€7,076,792
Ballyhoura Development Ltd.	€14,303,843	€511,560	€2,736,185	€17,551,588
Carlow County Development Partnership Ltd	€5,609,446	€273,344	€1,500,684	€7,383,474
Cavan-Monaghan LEADER	€7,769,506	€215,224	€2,072,654	€10,057,384



LAG	Projects paid at 18 March 2015	Animation claimed at 1 March 2015	Administration claimed at 1 March 2015	Total Amount Paid
Cill Dara Ar Aghaidh Teo	€7,207,618	€459,949	€2,160,014	€9,827,580
Clare Local Development Company Ltd.	€11,689,455	€555,093	€2,379,612	€14,624,160
Co Kilkenny LEADER Partnership	€8,966,369	€477,126	€1,966,183	€11,409,678
Co Wicklow Community Partnership	€6,356,859	€286,845	€1,659,999	€8,303,703
Co. Sligo LEADER Partnership Company Ltd	€7,322,644	€462,258	€1,351,523	€9,136,424
Comhar na nOileáin Teoranta	€5,210,632	€289,232	€1,110,714	€6,610,578
Donegal Local Development Company Ltd.	€9,539,906	€467,921	€2,408,598	€12,416,424
Fingal LEADER Partnership Co.	€2,763,509	€144,454	€1,133,858	€4,041,821
FORUM Conne-mara Ltd.	€4,575,623	€32,507	€1,493,000	€6,101,130
Galway Rural Development Company	€9,048,078	€253,487	€2,378,132	€11,679,696
Inishowen Development Partnership	€5,791,797	€190,640	€1,313,146	€7,295,583
IRD Duhallow Ltd.	€9,542,727	€412,637	€1,873,899	€11,829,263
Laois Community and Enterprise Dev	€7,136,531	€63,611	€1,725,642	€8,925,784
Leitrim Integrated Development Co Ltd	€7,538,160	€259,389	€1,884,153	€9,681,702
Longford Community Resources Ltd	€4,972,197	€206,171	€1,303,384	€6,481,752
Louth LEADER Partnership	€5,356,904	€183,953	€1,491,914	€7,032,771
Mayo North East LEADER Partnership Co.	€3,501,000	€178,757	€1,618,187	€5,297,943
Meath Community Rural and Social Dev.	€7,625,916	€458,468	€2,275,763	€10,360,147

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LAG	Projects paid at 18 March 2015	Animation claimed at 1 March 2015	Administration claimed at 1 March 2015	Total Amount Paid
North East Kerry LEADER Partnership Teo	€6,560,640	€235,553	€1,885,686	€8,681,878
North Tipperary LEADER Partnership	€10,059,989	€130,701	€1,913,437	€12,104,127
Offaly Integrated Local Dev Co. Ltd.	€8,141,627	€528,304	€1,571,414	€10,241,345
Roscommon Integrated Development Company	€7,962,644	€616,972	€2,004,477	€10,584,093
South and East Cork Area Dev Ltd.	€7,482,255	€544,211	€1,663,990	€9,690,456
South Kerry Development Ltd.	€7,721,071	€259,328	€2,062,632	€10,043,031
South Tipperary Local Development Co Ltd	€9,582,785	€124,825	€1,907,490	€11,615,100
South West Mayo Development Company Ltd	€7,690,485	€633,435	€1,857,831	€10,181,751
Waterford LEADER Partnership Ltd.	€8,558,224	€175,586	€2,200,209	€10,934,019
West Cork Development Partnership Ltd.	€10,054,789	€578,746	€2,463,705	€13,097,240
West Limerick Resources Ltd	€6,777,912	€223,193	€1,853,359	€8,854,463
Westmeath Community Development Ltd	€6,162,618	€526,763	€1,507,555	€8,196,936
Wexford Local Development	€9,231,497	€371,698	€1,771,209	€11,374,405
Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta *	€1,968,043	€119,619	€1,284,089	€3,371,751
Overall Total	€265,056,619	€11,844,204	€65,195,151	€342,095,975

\* Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta (MFG) went into liquidation in 2012.

### Local Authority Housing Provision

253. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which his attention has been drawn to the housing needs of Army overholders at the Curragh, County Kildare; the number accommodated through the local authority over the past ten years; the extent to which it might be expected to meet these needs in the near future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12587/15]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly):** I understand that the term over-holder is used to describe former members of the Defence Forces and their families who have refused to leave military married quarters within 21 days of retiring or resigning from military service. Where such persons leave military quarters and are in need of housing, it is open to them to apply to their local authority for social housing support and be assessed in accordance with the eligibility and need criteria set down in the Housing Acts and the Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011. Decisions on the qualification of households for social housing support is a matter for the housing authority concerned, and I am precluded by law from becoming involved in individual cases. My Department does not hold information on the number of such over-holders accommodated by local authorities.

The broader issue of former members of the Defence Forces and their families remaining in married military quarters on the camp after resigning or retiring from military service is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Defence.

### **Housing Adaptation Grant Funding**

254. **Deputy Gabrielle McFadden** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the amount allocated in 2014 to each local authority under the housing adaptation grants for older people and people with a disability; the amount that will be allocated to each county in 2015; when the 2015 scheme will be announced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12598/15]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Alan Kelly):** Funding provided by my Department to local authorities for the suite of Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability is available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.enviro.ie/en/Publications/StatisticsandRegularPublications/HousingStatistics/>, by selecting 'Social and Affordable Housing', 'Housing Adaptation Grants by Area 2008 to date'.

Exchequer funding of over €37 million was provided by my Department to local authorities in 2014 for the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability. Combined with an additional 20% contribution by individual local authorities, there was an overall spend last year of €46.3 million in this area. I am pleased to confirm that the 2015 amount will increase by some 10% to give a combined spend of €50.5 million and the individual allocations will be made to local authorities shortly.

### **Pyrite Remediation Programme Implementation**

255. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to allow redress for homeowners who have already completed the overdue and necessary remedial works to their dwelling as a result of pyrite, under the pyrite remediation scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12623/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Paudie Coffey):** The Pyrite Resolution Act 2013 provides the statutory framework within which the pyrite remediation scheme must operate. It is not a compensation scheme and section 14(8) of the Act specifically states that homeowners cannot seek the recoupment of costs associated with the remediation of a dwelling undertaken prior to the commencement of the scheme. I have no plans to amend the legislation in this regard.

The pyrite remediation scheme is a scheme of “last resort” for affected homeowners who have no other practical option to obtain redress. Inclusion in the scheme is predicated, inter alia, on the dwelling being subject to significant damage attributable to pyritic heave, and where this can be verified having regard to I.S. 398 -1:2013 Reactive pyrite in sub-floor hardcore material – Part 1: Testing and Categorisation, as published by the National Standards Authority of Ireland, prior to works commencing. This is in line with how similar Government schemes operate or have operated in the past, where prior approval is a key eligibility requirement for inclusion in a scheme.

In general, building defects are matters for resolution between the contracting parties, i.e. the homeowner, the builder, the supplier and/or their respective insurers, and in the event that the parties cannot reach a settlement by negotiation, the option of seeking redress in the Courts is available.

### **Legislative Process**

256. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of items of legislation that were submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by his Department since 2011; his plans to allow pre-legislative scrutiny for any upcoming pieces of legislation from his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12409/15]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White):** To date there have been no Bills initiated in my Department that have been subject to the pre-legislative scrutiny procedure in the Oireachtas, which was introduced with effect from November, 2013.

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport and Communications will be meeting with my Department in April to undertake pre-legislative scrutiny in relation to the Minerals Development Bill.

There are a number of other Bills currently in preparation in the Department which will be brought to the Houses of the Oireachtas in due course. Where feasible these Bills, in accordance with pre- legislative scrutiny requirements, will also be sent to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport and Communications for consideration.

### **Semi-State Bodies**

257. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources further to Parliamentary Questions Nos.185 and 186 of 25 February 2015, when Ervia will respond directly to this Deputy on the questions asked; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12518/15]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White):** As I indicated in my reply to Questions 185 and 186 of 20 February last, these are operational matters for Ervia and not an area in which I have any role or function.

I understand that the company has written to the Deputy in recent days to arrange a meeting in order to provide a comprehensive briefing on the pay model and exactly how it is applied in the company.

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## Energy Efficiency

258. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide an assessment of the cost savings and other benefits, to date, arising from the installation of energy-efficient public lighting as a pilot project in Crossmolina, County Mayo, in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12521/15]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White):** Improving energy efficiency in the public sector offers a key opportunity to reduce both public expenditure and harmful emissions, while improving value for money and public service delivery. This is why a target of improving public sector energy efficiency by 33% by 2020 has been set as part of Ireland's National Energy Efficiency Action Plan.

Public lighting is one of the larger areas of energy use in the public sector. The implementation of energy efficient public lighting projects is led primarily by Local Authorities. The project to which the Deputy refers was developed by Mayo County Council with support from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) through the Better Energy Programme. I am advised by the SEAI that very positive progress has been made by Mayo County Council on this project, which I understand has broken new ground in the approach to the technical solutions being applied and in public engagement. Furthermore, it tested new approaches to financing through using the Energy Service Company (ESCO) model. The project is expected to provide very useful lessons for other Local Authorities, among which there is considerable interest in realising the potential for greater energy efficiency, and financial savings, in public lighting. Should the Deputy wish to find out more, I recommend she contact Mayo County Council directly. My officials can supply the relevant contact details.

I would also like to advise the Deputy that the SEAI's annual report on energy use in the public sector has been finalised and will be published shortly. A Public Sector Energy Efficiency Action Plan is also in preparation with a view to completion by the middle of this year. The purpose of the Action Plan is to set out the actions each sector within the public service can take to build upon the progress made to date towards the 2020 target.

## Cyber Security Policy

259. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he has quantified the potential loss to Irish businesses from cross-border cyber attacks; if he has considered taking action to address this potential serious risk to businesses, should they become a victim of cyber attacks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12638/15]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White):** As with other countries, Ireland's information society increasingly relies upon the Internet and Internet based services to conduct everyday business. The State, critical infrastructure, businesses and citizens depend upon the reliable functioning of information and communication technologies and of the Internet. Any significant disruption to these systems, regardless of the cause, poses a threat to the functioning of the State and the economy, and can have profound effects on the daily life of citizens and on the operation of business. Any threat to the resilience and security of these systems and services therefore requires a robust and coherent response, both nationally and at an EU level.

Cyber attacks can be very diverse in character, origin and seriousness, meaning that preparing for and responding to these threats is far from simple. In 2011, the Government approved the



establishment of a Computer Security and Incident Response Team (CSIRT-IE) in my Department and this team has since been working across Government to secure government systems and information. Cyber security experts in my Department participate in regular national, EU and international emergency response exercises, as well as providing expert advice to Government Departments and industry stakeholders on individual cyber attacks. In 2012, my Department, in partnership with industry sponsors, re-launched the “Make-IT-Secure” campaign that aims to inform small and medium sized businesses and the general public on steps they can take to improve their own cyber security.

My Department is presently in the final stages of preparing a new national cyber security strategy. This strategy will include further development of awareness raising measures, highlighting in particular the responsibilities of businesses around securing their networks, devices and information and providing support to them in this by means of information, training and voluntary codes of practice.

My Department also co-operates and engages intensively with EU and international stakeholders on cyber security matters. An EU Network and Information Security Directive is currently being finalised in Brussels and will contain obligations for specific sectors of business considered vital to the economies and societies of Member States. Such obligations will involve taking appropriate steps to manage security risks, to report serious cyber incidents and to comply with specific security requirements. When finalised, my Department will prepare legislation to transpose this Directive into national law at the earliest opportunity.

### **North-South Interconnector**

260. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the reason the North South Interconnect Project did not have the same methodologies applied as grid west when considering viable underground route options, despite the fact that the independent expert panel had requested additional information in relation to underground options, and in particular the findings of the Tobin Report, which indicated that a trench of 1.1 metre wide and 1.35 metre in depth was required in comparison with the Parsons Brinckerhoff Power Report, which showed the necessity for a 20 to 22 metre working swathe, which meant that the local and regional roads were not wide enough; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12662/15]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White):** I am advised that in June 2014 EirGrid provided the Independent Expert Panel with a description of the comparative analysis carried out by EirGrid of the underground cable and the overhead line options considered for the North South project. This description included information specifically requested by the Panel in respect of EirGrid’s consideration of the suitability of public roads as a routing option for the underground cable options. In July 2014 the Panel provided its opinion to the Minister on the compatibility of the methodologies to be employed on the Grid West and Grid Link projects with what has already been done on the North South project. The Panel found that the methodologies employed were compatible and that no material differences arose.

### **Departmental Contracts Data**

261. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide a list, in tabular form, of all contracts and tenders awarded

by his Department to a company (details supplied) since 1 January, 2004, including any such awarded singularly or as a joint bid or consortium including said company; if he will indicate which Department, Agency or semi-State company was the contacting party in each case; the value in each case; the purpose of each contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13108/15]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Alex White):** My Department has not awarded any contracts to the company referred to in the Deputy's question since the establishment of the Department in 2007.

It is not possible from the information supplied to fully confirm whether a contract was awarded to a joint bid or consortium including the said company. Only the lead contractor in such a case would appear on the Department's financial records and I can confirm that the company referred to in the Question does not appear as a lead contractor.

I have asked the Agencies under the aegis of my Department to supply the requested information, where relevant, in respect of those Agencies, directly to the Deputy.

### **Emergency Services Personnel**

262. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport; Tourism and Sport if he will report on the current situation regarding drivers of emergency response vehicles attending to emergencies in relation to their rights, insurance coverage, right-of-way and responsibilities while on duty; the way this may affect their personal rights and insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12477/15]

266. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport; Tourism and Sport if he has been in contact with the Minister for Justice and Equality, and the Road Safety Authority to address the issues surrounding the drivers of emergency response vehicles attending to emergencies; if he will report on their rights, insurance coverage, rights-of-way and responsibilities while on duty; the way this may affect their personal rights and insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12478/15]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 262 and 266 together.

Road traffic legislation provides that vehicles driven by members of emergency services during the course of their duties are exempt from a range of traffic laws. This applies to An Garda Síochána, as well as fire and ambulance services, and is set out in section 87 of the Road Traffic Act 2010, as amended by section 23 of the Road Traffic Act 2014.

The reference to sections from which the organisations concerned are not exempted includes intoxicated driving (sections 49 and 50 of the Principal Act, 4 and 5 of the 2010 Act), driving without reasonable consideration (section 51A of the Principal Act), careless driving (section 52 of the Principal Act), dangerous driving (section 53 of the Principal Act), obligations to provide breath, blood or urine samples as required (sections 12, 13 and 15 of the 1994 Act, 12 and 14 of the 2010 Act).

I am satisfied that road traffic legislation in respect of the use of emergency response vehicles as set out above is satisfactory and I have not been in contact with either the Minister for Justice and Equality or the Road Safety Authority regarding the matters raised.

**Insurance Costs**

263. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the change in the cost of motor insurance as measured by the Central Statistics Office in each year following the introduction of the Personal Injuries Assessment Board; his views on the operation of the motor insurance market here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12634/15]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Injuries Board (previously known as the Personal Injuries Assessment Board) was set up under the Personal Injuries Assessment Board Act 2003, and commenced operations in 2004. The Board's first annual report was published for 2004. Percentage changes in the cost of motor insurance as quantified by the Central Statistics Office, and available from the CSO StatBank, are set out in the table below.

As can be seen from this table there has been a significant fall in the cost of motor insurance since the Injuries Board was established showing a reduction of over 24% from 2003 to 2014.

I consider that the PIAB Acts and the Injuries Board have had a significant positive role in reducing the processing costs of many motor insurance claims with a consequential beneficial effect in reducing motor insurance premiums and in encouraging insured driving. I would support any further measures which would encourage claimants to pursue their claims through the more cost-effective Injuries Board route rather than through incurring unnecessary processing costs through the courts.

There has been a recent trend towards increasing motor insurance costs. While I am concerned with increasing motor insurance costs, the setting of prices in that area is a matter for the industry and I have no role in the regulation of insurers.

Affordable motor insurance is an important element in the delivery of road safety in Ireland and I would be concerned that increasing insurance costs could lead to an increase in uninsured driving to the detriment of all road users.

**Motor Car Insurance**

YEAR	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	AN-NUAL
2001	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	-
2002	99.7	99.6	103	109	108	106	105	106	106	107	106	106	105.1
2003	106	107	108	108	108	108	107	106	103	97.9	94.9	94.5	104
2004	94.1	94.2	93.6	93.6	93.5	92	92.7	92.8	87.2	87.3	87.1	86.4	91.2
2005	86.2	85.7	84.2	82.4	82.4	82.5	81.5	81.5	81.5	81.8	79.8	79.8	82.4
2006	78.2	78.3	78.5	78.5	78.3	78.3	77.2	77.2	74	74	74	71.2	76.5
2007	70.9	70.5	70.3	66.1	66.1	66.3	66.7	66.3	66.7	65.8	65.8	64.4	67.2
2008	64	64.1	64.2	64.2	64.6	64.6	65	65.1	65.1	65	65.5	66	64.8
2009	68.3	69.4	71.2	72.5	72.6	73.3	73.8	74.6	74.7	74.4	74.1	72.7	72.6
2010	73.3	74.6	71.8	72.4	72.4	72.8	73.4	74.2	74	74.9	75.6	77.3	73.9
2011	75.5	76.3	76.3	77.3	77.9	78.8	79	78.2	78	78	77.9	77.9	77.6
2012	79.7	80.1	79.4	79.3	79.5	80	80.3	80.5	80.5	81.8	81.8	81.8	80.4
2013	74.1	73.8	74.3	75.2	73.4	73.2	74	74	74.1	73.8	73.8	74.2	74
2014	74.2	75.5	77.7	77.9	78	78.2	78.3	78.4	79	81.7	82.3	83	78.7
2015	85.3	87.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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## Tourism Promotion

264. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide a commitment that an adequate Fáilte Ireland office will be provided in the Adare Heritage Centre, Adare in County Limerick in view of the fact that Adare is a large tourist town and there is a need for an adequate tourist information function in the centre to assist the many tourists who come in to Adare daily. [12366/15]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Arrangements for the provision of Tourist Information are an operational matter for the Board and management of Fáilte Ireland. Accordingly, I have referred the Deputy's question to them for further information and direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

## Legislative Process

265. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of pieces of legislation that were submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by his Department since 2011; his plans to allow pre-legislative scrutiny for any upcoming pieces of legislation from his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12420/15]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** A list of legislation that was submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by my Department since 2011 is contained in the table.

Bill Name	Date	Pre-Legislative Scrutiny
Road Traffic (No. 2) Act 2011	Published 16 September 2011	Pre-legislative scrutiny JOC July 2011
Road Safety Authority (Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness) Act 2012	Published 3 April 2012	Pre-legislative scrutiny by JOC July 2011 as part of Road Traffic (No. 2) Bill 2011 (the original Road Traffic No. 2 Bill 2011 was subsequently split into two Bills)
Number 139 of 2013 Merchant Shipping (Registration of Ships) Bill 2013	Presented 19 December 2013 Published 23 December 2013	General Scheme of the Bill was sent to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Transport and Communications on 17 October 2012.
Roads Bill 2014	Initiated in January 2014	The Bill was subject to the pre-legislative scrutiny procedure in March 2013.
Vehicle Clamping Bill 2014 (No. 51 of 2014)	Published June 5th 2014	Pre-legislative scrutiny was undertaken. Report of the Joint Committee on Environment, Transport, Culture and the Gaeltacht on the Regulation of Vehicle Clamping (March 2012, Prn. A12/0504)
State Airports (Shannon Group) Act 2014 (No. 27 of 2014)	enacted on the 27th July 2014.	The bill was subject to the pre-legislative scrutiny procedure
No. 85 of 2014 Sport Ireland Bill	Initiated on 26 August 2014	The Bill went through the pre-legislative scrutiny procedure in the Oireachtas in Q1 2014

Bill Name	Date	Pre-Legislative Scrutiny
Harbours Amendment Bill	Expected publication date Q1 2015	The bill was subject to the pre-legislative scrutiny procedure in June 2014
Road Traffic Bill 2015	Expected publication Summer 2015	Sent to JOC for pre-legislative scrutiny 25 Feb 2015
Public Transport Bill 2015	Expected publication date Q2 2015	It is intended that the draft Bill will be sent to Oireachtas Joint Committee on Transport and Communications shortly.

*Question No. 266 answered with Question No. 262.*

### National Car Test

267. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the location of driving test centres; the number tested for each year since 2012; the pass rate per test centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12509/15]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The operation of the driver testing service is the statutory responsibility of the Road Safety Authority. I have therefore referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response has not been received within ten days.

### National Car Test

268. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of staff based in each driving test centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12511/15]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The operation of the driver testing service is the statutory responsibility of the Road Safety Authority. I have therefore referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response has not been received within ten days.

### National Car Test

269. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the annual expenditure, by location, for each of the driving test centres, including staffing and other costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12512/15]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The operation of the driver testing service is the statutory responsibility of the Road Safety Authority. I have therefore referred the question to the Authority for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response has not been received within ten days.



### **Sports Capital Programme Applications**

270. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that correspondence sent to a sports club (details supplied) in County Cork regarding the Sports Capital Programme contains erroneous details of previous applications; the reason this inaccurate response was provided; if the matter will now be corrected as a matter of urgency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12520/15]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Officials in the Department have examined records for the organisation referred to by the Deputy and an error was discovered in relation to a 2001 allocation. The allocation was recorded on *www.sportscapitalprogramme.ie* as being “closed – fully drawn down” when it should have been recorded as “withdrawn”. I am not aware of any erroneous correspondence being sent to the organisation.

The error occurred when grant information was being transferred to a new IT system. The records have now been corrected.

### **Road Network**

271. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide additional funding in 2015 to Monaghan County Council for the non-national road network, in view of the serious deterioration in road conditions throughout the county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [12616/15]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of each local authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from local authorities’ own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded is also a matter for the local authority.

The economic reality of recent years has meant significant reductions in roads budgets across the board. My Department has allocated a total of €294 million for regional and local roads in 2015, €7.1m of which has been allocated to Monaghan County Council.

Funding for regional and local roads in 2015 has now been allocated.

It is important to reiterate that the role of Exchequer grants for regional and local roads is to supplement local authorities in their spending in this area and it is also open to Monaghan County Council to fund additional work from its own resources.

### **Legislative Process**

272. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of pieces of legislation that were submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny by her Department since 2011; her plans to allow pre-legislative scrutiny for any upcoming pieces of legisla-

tion from her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12407/15]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Five General Schemes of Bills have been submitted by my Department for pre-legislative scrutiny by the Oireachtas. The scrutiny process has been completed in two cases – the proposed National Cultural Institutions (National Concert Hall) Bill and Official Languages (Amendment) Bill. It has also been indicated to my Department that no scrutiny process is envisaged in the case of the proposed Heritage (Amendment) Bill. In two other cases – the proposed National Cultural Institutions Bills (Nos. 2 and 3) – a decision is awaited as to whether pre-legislative scrutiny is to be carried out.

I intend to follow this approach also in the case of future legislation.

### Scéim na mBóithre

273. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil sé i gceist airgead a chur ar fáil i mbliana do scéim na mBóithre Pobail a bhí ann i rith thréimhse an rialtais deiridh trínar cuireadh airgead ar fáil d'Údarás na Gaeltachta le caoi a chur ar bhóithre portaigh agus bóithre eile trí mheascán d'obair scéimeanna ar nós an scéim SST agus deontas airgid; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [12427/15]

**Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Mar is eol don Teachta, tá buiséad caipitil mo Roinne don Ghaeltacht laghdaithe le roinnt blianta anuas. Chomh maith leis sin, tá na scéimeanna faoina gcuirtí maoiniú ar fáil d'obair fheabhsúcháin ar bhóithre curtha ar fionraí. Sa chomhthéacs sin, níl sé beartaithe maoiniú a chur ar fáil d'Údarás na Gaeltachta le haghaidh bóithre. Leis an allúntas atá ar fáil don Ghaeltacht, tá mo Roinn ag díriú ar infheistíocht caipitil a bhaineann leis an bpleanáil teanga agus le forbairtí sa réimse sin, ar nós na gcoláistí Gaeilge, áiseanna réamhscolaíochta agus infreastruchtúr Gaeilge i gcoitinne.

### Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme

274. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if persons who own turbary rights or fee simple in bogs that are subject to a ban on cutting under present conservation legislation are entitled automatically to compensation; if not, the categories of persons entitled to compensation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12428/15]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 and the Wildlife Acts, compensation may be payable where a person has been refused consent by me, as Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, for a prescribed activity within a designated site that he or she had been undertaking in the five year period prior to the refusal.

However, compensation schemes have generally been put in place, where required, without the need to undergo a formal process under the relevant legislation. Such schemes include a comprehensive compensation scheme for those affected by the cessation of turf cutting on raised bog habitat.

The qualifying criteria for this cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme are that:

- The claimant must have a legal interest in one of the raised bog special areas of conser-

vation or natural heritage areas – ownership or turbary right;

- The claimant must have been the owner or entitled to exercise turbary rights on the land in question on 25 May 2010;
- The turbary on the site must not be exhausted;
- The claimant must have been cutting turf on the land in question during the relevant five year period; and
- No turf cutting or associated activity is ongoing on the property.

The closing date for the receipt of applications under the scheme generally has passed for raised bog special areas of conservation. However, my Department will continue to accept late applications under the scheme for the time being.

### **Departmental Staff Remuneration**

275. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will review the level of benefit-in-kind being attributed to an employee of her Department (details supplied) in County Kerry, in view of the possibility that her Department may have considerably over-valued the rental value of the property that she lives in; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12485/15]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I am advised that my Department had an independent professional valuation of the property in question carried out. Following communication with the occupier in relation to the level of benefit-in-kind proposed, a subsequent independent internal appeal was processed, which determined that the original decision of my Department was reasonable and should stand.

### **Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Applications**

276. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will provide an update on an application for compensation under the cessation of turf cutting scheme in a special area of conservation (details supplied) in County Roscommon. [12489/15]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The individual referred to in the Deputy's Question claims to have inherited land within a raised bog special area of conservation from his father and has applied for compensation under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme.

I am advised that the father of the individual in question sold his interest in land in a raised bog special area of conservation under the voluntary bog purchase scheme, administered by my Department. An incentive payment of €6,000, available under the scheme, was also made to him at the time of purchase, on the condition that he permanently cease domestic turf cutting on sites included in special areas of conservation.

My Department will be in contact with the individual referred to in the Deputy's Question in relation to his application as soon as possible.

### **Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Applications**

277. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will provide an update on an application under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon. [12490/15]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** An application for compensation under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme has been received by my Department from one of the individuals referred to in the Deputy's Question. I am advised that payments of €1,500 in respect of Year 1 of 15 (2012), €1,518 in respect of Year 2 of 15 (2013) and €1,521 in respect of Year 3 of 15 (2014) have been made to this applicant. In addition, a once-off payment of €500 has been made to the applicant in respect of the signing of a legal agreement under this scheme.

Officials of my Department have been in contact with the other individual referred to in the Deputy's Question and a third family member in relation to additional applications for compensation in respect of the same bog plot. Correspondence has recently been received in relation to these applications and is being assessed within my Department. Departmental officials will be in contact with these applicants in relation to the matter shortly.

### Departmental Funding

278. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in view of the formal submission received, if she will provide funding for a World War One memorial at the Market House in Ballybay in County Monaghan; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12652/15]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** My Department received a representation from the Deputy in relation to this matter last week.

The proposal is under consideration within my Department and a reply will issue shortly.

### Departmental Contracts Data

279. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will provide a list, in tabular form, of all contracts and tenders awarded by her Department to a company (details supplied) since 1 January, 2004, including any such awarded singularly or as a joint bid or consortium including said company; if she will indicate which Department, Agency or semi-State company was the contacting party in each case; the value in each case; the purpose of each contract; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13106/15]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I am advised that, since its establishment on 2 June 2011, no contract was awarded by my Department to the company referred to by the Deputy, either singularly or as part of a joint bid or consortium.

With regard to agencies/bodies under the aegis of my Department, the Deputy will appreciate that the matters raised are part of the day-to-day operational responsibilities of the bodies in question. I am arranging, therefore, for the terms of the Deputy's Question to be transmitted to the heads of relevant bodies with a request that they provide information, to the extent feasible, directly to the Deputy.