

Written Answers.

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

Questions Nos. 1 to 5, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 6 to 11, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 12 to 18, inclusive, answered orally.

EU Battle Groups

19. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the total cost to the Exchequer of Irish participation in the EU battle groups since their foundation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33813/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Participation in EU Battlegroups demonstrates Ireland's commitment to the development of EU capabilities in the area of crisis management and contributes to our overall credibility within the Union. Ireland's continuing active engagement in EU Battlegroups enhances our capacity to influence the ongoing development and evolution of the rapid response capacity of the EU, in particular, the role Battlegroups can play in reinforcing and acting as a strategic reserve for UN operations. The United Nations strongly supports the development of Battlegroups as a capability that could be made available in support of UN mandated missions. It also supports the development of rapid deployment skills and capabilities within the Defence Forces, together with improved interoperability with like-minded States. Participation in EU Battlegroups further supports Ireland's international security and defence policy and enhances our bilateral relations with contributing Member States.

To date Ireland has participated in the Nordic Battlegroup in 2008, 2011 and 2015 as well as the Austro-German Battlegroup in 2012. Ireland is currently participating in both the German led and UK led Battlegroups which stood up on 01 July 2016 until 31 December 2016.

The total costs directly associated with Irish participation in EU Battlegroups between 2007 and 31 December 2015 amount to just under €9.5 million, of which approximately €6m is direct payroll costs which would have been incurred in the normal course. The remaining €3.5 million, relates to subsistence, allowances, transport, flights and other such costs incurred during the preparation and standby period for the Battlegroup. In the time available, my Department has not been able to fully validate all the costs incurred. Should the final figure which emerges be materially different, I will write to the Deputy.

The final figures for 2016 participation will not be known until after the German and UK led Battlegroup's stand down on 01 January 2017.

In respect of the German led Battlegroup, the current estimated additional cost for a maximum 120 day Battlegroup deployment, should the Battlegroup be deployed, is €10.7 million. This cost would cover transportation of troops and equipment, accommodation, overseas allowance and recovery of troops etc. This additional cost will only arise if the German Battlegroup were to be deployed and any deployment of the Defence Forces contingent would be subject to Government and Dáil Éireann approval and a UN Mandate in accordance with the provisions of the Defence Acts.

Questions Nos. 20 to 22, inclusive, answered orally.

Departmental Expenditure

23. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the total cost of the defence budget as a percentage of GDP in 2015. [33816/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Defence expenditure for 2015, in respect of Vote 35 (Army Pensions) and Vote 36 (Defence), was €898m which is 0.35% of GDP. The expenditure for 2015 was comprised of some €671m in Defence expenditure and €227m in Army Pensions expenditure.

On the Defence Vote, some €459m was expended on the pay and allowances of Defence Forces personnel, civilian employees and civil servants of the Department.

With regard to non-pay current expenditure, some €123m was spent on essential and ongoing Defence Forces standing and operational costs such as utilities, fuel, catering, maintenance, information technology and training.

The remaining €89m in Defence expenditure related to capital investment on essential infrastructure and equipment. The broad areas of capital expenditure in 2015 included the replacement of naval vessels in the Naval Service flotilla; ongoing investment in Defence Forces built infrastructure and the purchase of new and replacement Information and Communication Technology hardware.

The Defence Vote also included expenditure relating to the Reserve Defence Force, Civil Defence and a grant to the Irish Red Cross Society.

The Army Pensions expenditure of over €227m provided mainly for retirement benefits to over 12,100 military pensioners and their dependants in 2015.

Defence is a critical element of Government policy, with the White Paper on Defence providing the policy framework for the next decade and beyond. My priority is to ensure that the Defence Forces have the necessary level of resources required to fulfil all the roles assigned to them by Government and to facilitate investment in essential equipment and infrastructure, as identified in the White Paper.

Questions Nos. 24 and 25 answered orally.

Defence Forces Pensions

26. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the reason there is currently no gratuity or pension for members retiring from the Reserve Defence Forces despite the fact that members of similar organisations in other countries receive the same; and

if he will make a statement on the matter. [30287/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): It is important to state at the outset that I hold the members of the Reserve Defence Force in very high regard, as do all my colleagues in Government. I have been hugely impressed by the work that volunteer members of the Reserve Defence Force undertake in their local communities in the context of Aid to the Civil Authorities during periods of flooding and other such events, and the pride and professionalism with which they carry out their numerous ceremonial duties especially throughout this year, the Centenary of the 1916 Rising.

Members of the Army Reserve and the Naval Service Reserve are volunteers who undertake training in their spare time. Much of the training is unpaid. However, provision is also made for members of the Reserve to avail of paid training. In that regard, the overall budget available in 2016 is set at €2.150 million, of which €2.068 million is allocated to paid training of Reserve members. This budget provides for 30,000 training mandays. This allocation provides a minimum of 7 days annual paid training for all effective members of the Reserve. It also provides for 14 days paid training for all additional personnel recruited to the Reserve Defence Force in 2016 and for career and specialist courses for selected members of the Reserve. The allocation also includes provision for RDF participation in 2016 commemoration ceremonial parades and events.

Members of the Army Reserve and the Naval Service Reserve are not employed or engaged under a contract of employment. A contract of employment stipulates the hours of work, hours of attendance or other related matters normally associated with the concept of gainful employment. Furthermore, service with the Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve is not pensionable under the Army Pension Schemes. For these reasons, it has been the long-standing policy that neither gratuities nor pensions are paid to members of the Reserve when they leave and there are no plans to change this position.

It would not be appropriate for me to comment on the situation regarding gratuity or pension payments to military reserve members in other jurisdictions. That is a matter for the relevant governments to decide upon, within their specific policy operational, budgetary and legal circumstances.

In conclusion, I am satisfied with the current financial provision for the Reserve in terms of mandays allowance. This allowance ensures that there are sufficient paid training opportunities available to members of the Reserve. These training opportunities, in turn, allow Reserve personnel to fulfil the roles allocated to them, as set out in the 2015 White Paper on Defence.

Military Aircraft Landings

27. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he will consider the use of Shannon airport by the military of the United States of America to be a breach of military neutrality and other policies under the defence portfolio; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33815/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Government's 2015 review of foreign policy and the Defence White Paper reconfirmed that Ireland will continue to maintain its traditional policy of military neutrality which means non-membership of military alliances and non-participation in common or mutual defence arrangements. Ireland's policy of military neutrality was formed in an era when inter-State conflict was the key issue of national security for most States. The State's policy of remaining outside of military

alliances has remained in place ever since. Thankfully, the threat of inter-State war in Europe is much diminished, but there will continue to be new and emerging threats in the defence and security environment. However, Ireland's traditional policy of military neutrality should not be confused with isolationism. We may refrain from membership of military alliances but we are committed to international peace and security and our Defence Forces have stood robustly for this in many peacekeeping missions.

The issue of overflights by foreign military aircraft and the use of Shannon by foreign military aircraft are the responsibility of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade. However, the Deputy will be aware that successive Governments have made overflight and landing facilities available at Shannon Airport to the United States for well over 50 years. These arrangements do not amount to any form of military alliance with the US and are governed by strict conditions, applied to ensure compatibility with our traditional policy of military neutrality.

Finally, it goes without saying that all our policy responses must realistically reflect current and future security challenges and should be able to accommodate the necessary responses, both national and collective without prejudice to our policy of military neutrality.

Defence Forces Strength

28. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which the strength of the Army, Naval Service, Air Corps and reserves has fluctuated in the past ten years; if any changes in recruitment practice is envisaged to address any issues emerging; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33782/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The following tabular statement outlines the extent to which the whole-time equivalent strength of the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps has fluctuated over the last ten years.

As of the 30th September, 2016, the strength of the PDF (whole-time equivalent) was 9,044 personnel. The Government is committed to maintaining the stabilised strength of the Permanent Defence Force at 9,500 personnel, comprising of 7,520 Army, 886 Air Corps and 1,094 Naval Service as stated in the 2015 White Paper on Defence.

The manpower requirement of the Defence Forces is monitored on an ongoing basis in accordance with the operational requirements of each of the three services. Personnel are posted on the basis of operational needs across the organisation both at home and abroad. As there is significant turnover of personnel in the Permanent Defence Force targeted recruitment takes place so as to maintain personnel numbers at or near the agreed strength levels.

All efforts are currently being directed at recruitment in order to return the Defence Forces to their approved establishment. Regular competitions are held for recruitment of enlisted personnel, cadets and other staff.

To reduce the number of occasions an applicant must present in a military installation during a General Service competition, the Defence Forces are now conducting fitness tests and competency based interviews on the same day.

The following tabular statement (Table 2) sets out the extent to which the effective strength of the Reserve has fluctuated over the last ten years.

In terms of the Reserve, the 2015 White Paper on Defence sets out a developmental path for the organisation. It also provides that the overarching establishment of the Army Reserve (AR)

and Naval Service Reserve (NSR) is to be set at 4,169 personnel, consisting of 3,869 Army Reservists and for the expansion of the establishment of the four NSR Units from currently 200 personnel to 300.

A key challenge is to recruit and train sufficient personnel to meet the Reserve establishment provided in the White Paper. I am committed to accelerating induction into the Reserve, in tandem with expanded recruitment into the PDF.

Table 1 – PDF Strength Fluctuation

Year	Army	Naval Service	Air Corps	Total	Approved Strength
2006	8532	1082	865	10479	
2007	8512	1077	845	10434	
2008	8507	1070	832	10409	
2009	8095	1031	807	9933	
2010	7752	1032	766	9550	
2011	7650	997	791	9438	
2012	7510	1058	791	9359	
*2013	7434	1023	779	9236	
2014	7457	1057	766	9280	
2015	7309	1083	748	9140	
2016 (to end Sept)	7247	1079	718	9044	

** Strength figures from 2013 on are Whole Time Equivalents*

Table 2 – RDF Strength Fluctuation

Year	Reserve Defence Force	Approved Strength
2006	9134	
2007	8408	
2008	7671	
2009	6644	
2010	6083	
2011	5220	
2012	4978 *	
2013	3655 *	
2014	2302	
2015	2280	
2016 (to end Sept)	2095	

** 2012 & 2013 – Due to the reorganisation of the Reserve Defence Force there is a significantly larger margin of error applicable to these figures.*

EU Meetings

29. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he will provide a report on the meeting of EU defence ministers in Bratislava on 26 September 2016; the issues discussed; and if it was made clear at that meeting that Ireland would oppose all at-

tempts to create a standing EU army and that Irish neutrality is non negotiable. [33653/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): As Dáil and Government business precluded my attendance at the informal meeting of EU Defence Ministers in Bratislava which was held on the 26th and 27th of September, I was represented by the Secretary General of the Department of Defence. This was an informal meeting and as such no decisions were made on any matter. There was an exchange of views on the implementation of the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS). The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms. Frederica Mogherini, provided a progress report on the ongoing work of drafting an implementation plan on the security and defence elements of the EUGS, which is due to be presented to Member States at the Foreign Affairs Council, including Defence Ministers, taking place in Brussels on the 14th and 15th of November. The Commission also provided an update on progress on the development of the European Defence Action Plan which is expected to be presented to Member States before the end of this year.

Ministers also exchanged views on the implementation of the Joint EU-NATO Declaration made recently at the Warsaw Summit, which highlights areas where the EU and NATO can undertake practical cooperation in support of international peace and security, international crisis management operations and the protection of civilians. These areas include countering hybrid threats; broadening cooperation on maritime security and migration; expanding cooperation on cyber defence; developing coherent, complementary and interoperable defence capabilities; facilitating a stronger defence industry and defence research; stepping up coordination on exercises and supporting countries in building their defence and security capabilities.

There were also discussions on ongoing Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations with a focus on the Mediterranean Naval CSDP mission, 'Operation Sophia' and CSDP missions in the Sahel. The situation in Libya was also briefly discussed.

There are no proposals to create a standing EU army and this did not feature in any discussions. It is worth once again reiterating that *the Treaty of Lisbon does not provide for the creation of a European army.*

Defence Forces Remuneration

30. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if his Department will match the offers made by the Department of Justice and Equality to settle the Garda pay dispute to the representative organisations of the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33822/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Rates of remuneration and conditions of employment in the Irish public sector have traditionally been set by reference to relative levels of pay across the various sectors of the Irish public sector. In this regard, the level of remuneration in the Defence sector has maintained relativity with the levels available in other related public sector employments. The Deputy will be aware that the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Acts of 2009-2015 and the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013-2018 (Lansdowne Road Agreement) currently define the pay policy for public servants.

The Deputy may be aware that PDFORRA (Representative Association) have yet to ballot their members in relation to the terms of the Public Service Stability Agreement 2013-2018 (Lansdowne Road Agreement).

I am advised that PDFORRA raised a number of issues on which it sought clarification in advance of balloting its members on the agreement. These are issues of interpretation and technical issues on the savings to be achieved through the agreement rather than substantive issues of principle.

I can confirm that PDFORRA members are complying fully with all of their obligations under the public service pay agreements and the commitments they entered into in those agreements. PDFORRA has not repudiated the LRA.

Officials from my Department and PDFORRA are actively working through these issues in a very positive and collaborative process within the C&A Scheme which points to the effectiveness of the scheme as a dynamic process for resolving IR issues.

In terms of remuneration going forward, the new Public Service Pay Commission (PSPC), recently announced by my colleague the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, has been tasked with providing objective analysis and advice on the most appropriate pay levels for the public service, including the Defence Forces.

As the outstanding issues are currently being resolved within the Department of Defence Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme it would not be appropriate for me to comment further at this time.

Departmental Expenditure

31. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the cost of the Defence Forces at Shannon airport, in relation to protection given to civilian troop carriers and military planes of the United States of America and any other foreign military, for the year 2016 to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33814/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Department of Justice and Equality and An Garda Síochána have primary responsibility for the internal security of the State. Among the roles assigned to the Defence Forces in the White Paper on Defence is the provision of Aid to the Civil Power (ATCP) which, in practice, means to assist An Garda Síochána when requested to do so.

Since 5 th February 2003, the Gardaí have requested support from the Defence Forces at Shannon Airport as required. The cost incurred by the Defence Forces, in relation to protection given to civilian troop carriers and military planes of the United States of America and those of any other foreign military at Shannon Airport, for the year 2016 to date is €153,970.09.

I am satisfied that there is ongoing and close liaison between both An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces, and between my Department and the Department of Justice and Equality regarding security matters generally, including the Defence Forces ATCP roles.

Defence Forces Medical Services

32. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the recruitment measures that have been employed to deal with the shortage of medical officers in the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33846/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I am advised that Department Officials are currently finalising Terms & Conditions in consultation with RACO

(Representative Association of Commissioned Officers) in relation to the recruitment of external Medical Officers. In addition, a new scheme for training medical graduates in military medicine is currently being finalised.

Terms & Conditions for suitably qualified members of the Permanent Defence Force to fill Medical Officer positions are also currently under discussion within the Conciliation & Arbitration Scheme. The Deputy will appreciate that as discussions under the Scheme are confidential to that process, it would be inappropriate for me to make any comment at this time.

Defence Forces Medicinal Products

33. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he will consider launching a full investigation into possible negative health effects of drugs used on members of the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33817/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): At the outset, I want to assure the deputy that the military authorities and I place high priority on the health and welfare of the men and women of the Defence Forces.

The provision of medicines is an integral part of the medical service provided to members of the Defence Forces. I am informed that the range of medications used by the Defence Forces, and the effects of those medications, is kept under review by the Medical Corps. It is the policy of the Defence Forces' Medical Corps to follow best practice in relation to prescribing and dispensing all medicines to members of the Defence Forces. I am informed that all drugs are prescribed in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines/instructions.

In the circumstances, I am satisfied with the controls surrounding the prescribing and dispensing of drugs in the Defence Forces and I have no plans to launch an investigation into possible negative effects of prescribed drugs on members of the Defence Forces.

Defence Forces Recruitment

34. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his views on the levels of recruitment to the Defence Forces; his further views on whether the levels of recruitment are matching the levels of persons leaving or retiring from the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33829/16]

204. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which further recruitments in the Defence Forces might be required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34019/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 34 and 204 together.

The Government is committed to maintaining the stabilised strength of the Permanent Defence Force at 9,500 personnel, comprising of 7,520 Army, 886 Air Corps and 1,094 Naval Service as stated in the 2015 White Paper on Defence. I am advised by the Military Authorities that the strength of the Permanent Defence Force, at 30 September 2016, was 9,044, comprising 7,247 Army, 718 Air Corps and 1,079 Naval Service. These figures exclude 68 personnel who are on secondment/career break.

The manpower requirement of the Defence Forces is monitored on an ongoing basis in ac-

cordance with the operational requirements of each of the three services.

Personnel are posted on the basis of operational needs across the organisation both at home and abroad and not on a regional basis. As there is significant turnover of personnel in the Permanent Defence Force targeted recruitment has been and is currently taking place so as to maintain the agreed strength levels.

I am advised by the Military Authorities that 372 General Service Recruits have been enlisted into the Army and 47 General Service Recruits have been enlisted into the Naval Service, to date in 2016. It is envisaged that there will be a total intake of circa 700 inductees to the Defence Force, consisting of General Service Recruits and Cadets, in 2016. This year some 99 Cadets have been inducted into the Defence Forces.

I am further advised that 56 Reserve Defence Force Recruits have been enlisted to date in 2016. A recruitment campaign for the Reserve Defence Force is currently underway and further details are available on *www.military.ie*.

The intake of Cadets into the Permanent Defence Force is normally carried out on an annual basis, taking into consideration the operational requirements of the Defence Forces and the resource envelope allocated to Defence. The 2016 Cadetship campaign is now closed and the total number of Cadets inducted from this competition is 99 comprising 72 Army, 15 Naval Service and 12 Air Corps.

With the support of the Chief of Staff and within the resources available, it is intended to retain the capacity of the Defence Forces to operate effectively across all roles and to undertake the tasks laid down by Government both at home and overseas.

Defence Forces Expenditure

35. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the cost to the Army for guarding Shannon airport in 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33823/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Department of Justice and Equality and An Garda Síochána have primary responsibility for the internal security of the State. Among the roles assigned to the Defence Forces in the White Paper on Defence is the provision of Aid to the Civil Power (ATCP) which, in practice, means to assist An Garda Síochána when requested to do so.

The costs incurred in the provision of ATCP support by the Defence Forces to An Garda Síochána at Shannon airport in 2015 was €180,814.21. The costs comprise payment of Security Duty Allowance, provision of rations, and fuel.

Defence Forces Equipment

36. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he will rule out the future procurement of any Israeli technology through the European Defence Agency for use by the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33656/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The primary purpose for the procurement of defensive equipment by the Department of Defence is to enhance the capability of the Irish Defence Forces and to afford the greatest possible force protection to Irish troops on overseas Peace Support Operations.

The principle of competitive tendering for Government contracts is used by the Department of Defence for the acquisition of defensive equipment for the Defence Forces. Central to those procedures is the requirement to allow fair competition between suppliers through the submission of tenders following advertising of the tender competition on the e-tenders site and on the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) where appropriate in accordance with the relevant EU procurement directives, including the Directive on the procurement of Defence and Security equipment.

Such tender competitions are open to any individual company or country in accordance with the terms of all UN, OSCE and EU arms embargos or restrictions. There are no such restrictions or embargos in place on Israel or Israeli companies. Tender competitions are held in accordance with the EU Code of Conduct on Export Controls.

Ireland has participated in the European Defence Agency since it was established in 2004. The primary reason for Ireland's participation in the European Defence Agency is to support the development of Defence Forces capabilities for peacekeeping and international crisis management operations. Ireland's ongoing participation in the EDA is designed to enable the Defence Forces to participate in leading edge projects and have access to the latest technologies in relation to relevant military capabilities which will support their ongoing participation in international peace support and crisis management operations. Ireland also supports the European Defence Agency in its role in the development of a more competitive and efficient defence industry which could reduce the cost of equipment procurement to the Defence Forces.

The Government's White Paper on Defence, published in August 2015, states "Procurement approaches will be developed ... through more robust planning, more collaborative/joint procurement through direct engagement with other countries or through the European Defence Agency...". To date Ireland has not conducted any procurement through the European Defence Agency but my Department continues to explore potential opportunities that the Agency can offer.

Defence Forces Strength

37. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the current effective strength of the Permanent Defence Forces in terms of the actual numbers of trained personnel available for operational taskings on a daily basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33847/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The strength of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) is calculated in terms of whole-time equivalents. This data is collated on a monthly basis. As of the 30th September, 2016, the strength of the PDF (whole-time equivalent) was 9,044 personnel. Of this figure, 175 are recruits and 160 are cadets, meaning there are 8,709 operationally available personnel.

The Government is committed to maintaining the stabilised strength of the Permanent Defence Force at 9,500 personnel, which includes personnel in training, comprising of 7,520 Army, 886 Air Corps and 1,094 Naval Service as stated in the 2015 White Paper on Defence.

The manpower requirement of the Defence Forces is monitored on an ongoing basis in accordance with the operational requirements of each of the three services. Personnel are posted on the basis of operational needs across the organisation both at home and abroad. Members of the Defence Forces are assigned to specific units, which are stationed at various military installations throughout the country, each having a defined area of taskings in line with the roles of

the Defence Forces outlined in the White Paper.

With the support of the Chief of Staff, I am confident that we shall retain the capacity of the Defence Forces to operate effectively across all roles and to undertake the tasks assigned by Government, both at home and overseas.

Defence Forces Personnel

38. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his views on the fact that 20% of Defence Forces personnel are in receipt of family income supplement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33826/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Rates of remuneration and conditions of employment in each part of the Irish public sector have traditionally been set by reference to levels of pay available in related public sector employments. In this regard, the level of remuneration in the Defence sector has maintained relativity with the levels available in other related public sector employments.

I fully appreciate that many of our citizens are facing difficulties in the current environment, including members of the Defence Forces. The Government is making every effort, within available resources, to support all those who face hardship. In addition, there are various schemes in place through the Department of Social Protection, including Family Income Supplement, to support those on low incomes.

The circumstances surrounding an application for Family Income Supplement, or indeed any other scheme operated by the Department of Social Protection, is a private matter between the applicant and the Department of Social Protection. I am, therefore, not aware of the eligibility of individual members of the Permanent Defence Force to receive such allowances, or the total numbers of Defence Force members that may be in receipt of this financial support. Various factors can give rise to such claims. However, the important thing is that, despite the difficult economic environment we have witnessed over the last few years, the Government has maintained this important safety net for families who by virtue of their particular circumstances require such financial support.

EU Meetings

39. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he will report on discussions held with his European counterparts regarding further military co-operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33820/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): As Dáil and Government business precluded my attendance at the informal meeting of EU Defence Ministers in Bratislava which was held on the 26th and 27th of September, I was represented by the Secretary General of the Department of Defence. This was an informal meeting and as such no decisions were made.

There was an exchange of views on the implementation of the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS). The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms. Frederica Mogherini, provided a progress report on the ongoing work of drafting an implementation plan on the security and defence elements of the EUGS, which is due to be presented to Member States at the Foreign Affairs Council, including De-

fence Ministers, taking place in Brussels on the 14th and 15th of November. The Commission also provided an update on progress on the development of the European Defence Action Plan which is expected to be presented to Member States before the end of this year.

Ministers also exchanged views on the implementation of the Joint EU-NATO Declaration made recently at the Warsaw Summit, which highlights areas where the EU and NATO can undertake practical cooperation in support of international peace and security, international crisis management operations and the protection of civilians. These areas include countering hybrid threats; broadening cooperation on maritime security and migration; expanding cooperation on cyber defence; developing coherent, complementary and interoperable defence capabilities; facilitating a stronger defence industry and defence research; stepping up coordination on exercises and supporting countries in building their defence and security capabilities.

There were also discussions on ongoing Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations with a focus on the Mediterranean Naval CSDP mission, 'Operation Sophia' and CSDP missions in the Sahel. The situation in Libya was also briefly discussed.

Naval Service Operations

40. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which the Naval Service has to date been instrumental in rescuing refugees in the Mediterranean; the total number rescued to date; if it is expected to expand or extend such missions; if he has satisfied himself that the processing of such refugees after rescue has been as efficient as it could or should be; if any changes might be contemplated in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33781/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Following a Government Decision on 12 May 2015, the Irish Naval Vessel, L.É. Eithne, was deployed to the Mediterranean on 16 May, 2015, to assist the Italian Authorities with the migrant crisis. During 2015 two further vessels were deployed, L.É. Niamh and L.É. Samuel Beckett, and the deployment was completed on 29 November 2015. During that period 8,592 people were rescued in the Mediterranean by Irish Naval Vessels.

The Government, on 6 April 2016, approved the return of an Irish Naval vessel to undertake humanitarian search and rescue tasks in the Mediterranean. During 2016 there have been three Naval vessels deployed to the Mediterranean. The L.É. Róisín was deployed from 1 May to 15 July and L.É. James Joyce from 8 July to 30 September. L.É. Samuel Beckett was deployed on 23 September and will remain in the area of operations until the end of November. To date in 2016 6,162 people have been rescued by Irish Naval Vessels. In total, Irish participation in the humanitarian mission has resulted in the recovery of over 14,700 migrants, to date, which clearly demonstrates the value of Ireland's involvement in this important humanitarian response.

Once the rescued migrants have been brought to the disembarkation points at the designated locations in Italy, the Italian authorities are responsible for the registration and identification of the migrants and for the processing of any applications made for asylum. The European Asylum Support Office is assisting the Italian authorities in this regard.

The question of further deployment to the operation in the Mediterranean in 2017 will be considered in the context of the ongoing situation in the Mediterranean and the overall EU response thereto, the demands on the Defence Forces, our overseas commitments and available resources.

Defence Forces Medicinal Products

41. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he is examining the benefits of the drug doxycycline as a potential replacement for Lariam as an anti-malaria drug; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33830/16]

46. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his views on making Lariam the drug of last resort when prescribing anti-malarial medication for members of the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33849/16]

47. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the medical basis, and any other basis, on which he chooses to continue the use of the anti-malaria drug Lariam for the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33827/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 41, 46 and 47 together.

The health and welfare of the men and women of the Defence Forces is a high priority for both myself and the Defence Forces.

Malaria is a serious disease which killed approximately 438,000 people in 2015, with 90% of deaths occurring in sub-Saharan Africa as reported by the World Health Organisation. It is a serious threat to any military force operating in the area.

Where malaria has been identified as a risk in a particular mission area, the choice of chemoprophylaxis medication is dependent on a number of factors including the type of malaria in the destination, resistance to particular drugs, the profile of the traveller (contra-indications, underlying health conditions, purpose of travel), the duration of travel and adherence issues.

The United Nations recent Medical Support Manual 2015, which is to serve as a standard reference document on medical support aspects of United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions in the field provides that anti-malarial medicines can be used to prevent malaria. It does not make any recommendations as to which chemoprophylaxis should be used but rather makes reference to the World Health Organisation (WHO) International Travel and Health Handbook for the latest information on malaria chemoprophylaxis.

The WHO Handbook provides for a range of anti-malarials which includes mefloquine (Lariam). The WHO Handbook notes that there are specific contraindications and possible side-effects for ALL anti-malarial drugs. I am advised that the Defence Forces Medical Policy on the use of malaria chemoprophylaxis (including the use of Lariam) is in line with the United Nations (UN) and World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines.

The choice of medication for overseas deployment for both officers and enlisted personnel, including the use of Lariam, is a medical decision made by Medical Officers in the Defence Forces, having regard to the specific circumstances of the mission and the individual member of the Defence Forces. Significant precautions are taken by Defence Forces Medical Officers in assessing the medical suitability of members of our Defence Forces to take any of the anti-malarial medications. It is the policy of the Defence Forces that personnel are individually screened for medical fitness for service overseas and medical suitability to be prescribed the necessary malaria chemoprophylactic agent.

There are three anti-malarial drugs, in use in the Defence Forces, Lariam (Mefloquine); Malarone and Doxycycline.

In the case of Doxycycline and Malarone, I am advised there are specific reasons as to why

they are not the drug of choice for use by the Defence Forces on typical deployments in sub-Saharan Africa.

Doxycycline has to be taken in the absence of dairy products for maximum efficacy. It can cause troublesome, mainly gastrointestinal side-effects, it can also produce sun-sensitivity skin rashes (akin to severe sun burn) in some individuals. This is particularly significant when used in very sunny climes.

Malarone: Up to September 2012, Malarone was only licensed for up to 28 days continuous use and was not an option as the usual duration of deployment for the Defence Forces is 6 months. The 28 day limit was removed in September 2012. However there is limited evidence as to the safety and effectiveness of Malarone usage for longer periods. On this basis the Defence Forces policy, to use Malarone up to the 27 day limit, remains unchanged. It should be noted that the majority of Defence Forces deployments to sub-Saharan Africa are for periods exceeding 28 days.

In the context of a military environment, the dosing regimen is also a considering factor. Lariam has the advantage of being taken weekly, minimising the dangers of a missed dose exposing the individual to contracting malaria. Doxycycline and Malarone have to be taken daily. Missing a daily dose can expose the individual to higher risk of contracting malaria. This is why Lariam is, in most circumstances, the drug of choice within the available options that minimises the risk of contracting malaria in sub-Saharan Africa where the predominant species of malaria is the virulent *Plasmodium Falciparum*. However, it should be noted that in Afghanistan, Doxycycline is the anti-malarial chemoprophylactic agent of choice where the predominant species of malaria is the less virulent *Plasmodium Vivax*.

In this context and having regard to the constraints associated with the alternative drugs, this is why we do not deploy personnel in the first instance who have shown a sensitivity or contraindication to Lariam to sub-Saharan Africa.

However, if for operational reasons it was imperative that an individual deploy immediately without the normal “lead-in” time which is required for Lariam, or an individual who had previously demonstrated sensitivity to Lariam, or had a contraindication to its use, who had a specific skills set which was fundamental to mission success, then one of the other alternative medications would be used. The risk to benefit ratio is a determining factor in recommendations from the Director of Medical Branch permitting use of these medications.

If during the course of deployment, an individual developed sensitivity to Lariam, he/she would be advised to cease taking the medication and substitute it with a “second line” chemoprophylactic agent. The individual would continue to be monitored and ultimately if serious enough, repatriation could be necessary.

Anti-malarial medications, including Lariam, remain in the formulary of medications prescribed by the Medical Corps for Defence Forces personnel on appropriate overseas missions, to ensure that our military personnel can have effective protection from the very serious risks posed by this highly dangerous disease.

There are no plans to withdraw Lariam from the range of anti-malarial medications available to the Defence Forces. The use of and the information on medications is kept under ongoing review.

Defence Forces Medicinal Products

42. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he will report on discussions held with PDFORRA regarding the ongoing use of Larium; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33819/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): At the request of PDFORRA, officials from my Department and the Director of the Defence Forces Medical Branch recently met with PDFORRA to outline the medical policy in relation to the use of malaria chemoprophylaxis in the Defence Forces.

I am advised, as were PDFORRA, that the Defence Forces Medical Policy on the use of malaria chemoprophylaxis (including the use of Lariam) is in line with the United Nations (UN) and World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines.

The use of and the information on medications is kept under ongoing review. There are no plans to withdraw Lariam from the range of anti-malarial medications available to the Defence Forces.

Military Aircraft Landings

43. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he will publish the records maintained by the Air Corps on the numbers, country of origin and types of foreign military aircraft that were given permission to land at Casement Aerodrome from 2010 to date in 2016; and the reason for these permissions. [33812/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I am advised by the Military Authorities that the number of foreign military aircraft that landed at Casement Aerodrome in the period from January 2010 to date is set out in the following tabular statement:

Year	Country of Origin	Number
2010	France	11
	Poland	4
	UK	2
	USA	7
Year	Country of Origin	Number
2011	Belgium	1
	Italy	1
	Monaco	2
	UK	6
	USA	21
Year	Country of Origin	Number
2012	Germany	1
	Netherlands	2
	Poland	1
	UK	2
	USA	31
Year	Country of Origin	Number
2013	Belgium	1
	Iceland	1

Year	Country of Origin	Number
	Poland	6
	UK	4
	USA	18

Year	Country of Origin	Number
2014	UK	3
	USA	4

Year	Country of Origin	Number
2015	Portugal	1
	Switzerland	9
	UK	4
	USA	4

Year	Country of Origin	Number
2016 (to date)	Italy	17
	Sweden	6
	UK	14
	USA	2

It may be noted that the Military Authorities have advised that the above figures reflect the up-to-date position having re-examined the aircraft landing records. It should also be noted that these figures reflect the number of foreign military aircraft that landed at Casement Aerodrome rather than the number of permissions granted.

The reasons permission was granted for these landings include crew training, aircraft re-fuelling, maintenance, transporting dignitaries or high level officials participating in visits to Ireland and air show participation.

In accordance with the legislative requirements of the Air Navigation (Foreign Military Aircraft) Order 1952, all foreign military aircraft wishing to overfly or land in the State require the permission of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade. A request is received by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade from the relevant embassy of the visiting/overflying foreign aircraft. This request is then forwarded to a number of parties including the Department of Defence and the Department of Justice and Equality for observations and confirmation that the aircraft can be facilitated for landing at Casement Aerodrome.

Military Records

44. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence when his Department will publish the next tranche of military service pension records from the period 1916 to 1923; and the amount of material expected to be released as part of the centenary programme. [33654/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection (MSPC) project is a joint Department of Defence and Defence Forces contribution to the Decade of Centenaries. The project is mandated to release the files and records of the Department of Defence dealing with the service of qualifying members of the Irish Volunteers, the Irish Citizen Army, the Hibernian Rifles, Cumann na mBan, Na Fianna Éireann and the Irish Republican Army from the period April 1916 to the 30th of September 1923. This involves cataloguing and partially digitising nearly 300,000 files.

This project was initiated in 2008 and will extend to 2023. Since January 2014 there have been a number of online releases of material from the collection. A recent online release coincided with the opening of the new Military Archives Facility on 26th April this year. This release was comprised of the Medals Series Database from the Collection and its associated files. It included details of those who applied for the 1916 Medal and the Service (1917-1921) Medal which recognised those who were engaged in active service during the 1916 Rising and those who served during the period 1917-1921. *Work on the collection is ongoing, however, no date has been set as yet for the next tranche of material to be made public.*

Air Corps Equipment

45. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to enhance the Air Corps capability by upgrading or replacing the current fleet of PC9s with jet aircraft; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33799/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My priority as Minister with Special Responsibility for Defence is to ensure that the operational capability of the Defence Forces, including the availability of specialised equipment for the Air Corps, is maintained to the greatest extent possible so as to enable the Defence Forces to carry out their roles as assigned by Government as set out on the White Paper on Defence.

In respect of the Air Corps, the principal aim over the lifetime of the White Paper will be to ensure that the Air Corps can continue to undertake the required military operations and to deliver a broad range of air supports to other Government Departments and agencies in line with Memoranda of Understanding and Service Level Agreements.

The future equipment priorities for the Air Corps are set out in the White Paper, which recognises that there are several new and or enhanced platforms to be procured for the Air Corps. Future capability requirements for the Air Corps are being considered as part of the rigorous capability development and equipment planning priorities process as envisaged in the White Paper. This will define ongoing and future equipment priorities having regard to the evolving security environment and available funding.

In the context of the Air Corps fleet, this will include the replacement of the Cessna fleet with three larger aircraft suitably equipped for Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance tasks. The preparatory work for the tender competition has begun within the Defence organisation, and it is expected that the competition will be initiated by the end of this year.

There are no current plans, however, to upgrade or replace the current fleet of PC-9M aircraft purchased in 2004. The fleet of PC-9 aircraft is expected to fall due for replacement in 2025. The Pilatus PC 9 aircraft were obtained as trainer aircraft for the purpose of training pilots in the Air Corps. They are capable of being armed and as such have a limited defensive capability. However, these limitations were noted in the White Paper on Defence and the development of a more capable combat/intercept capability is to be considered in due course as part of the White Paper review process.

It should be noted that a decision was made recently to replace a PC-9M aircraft which was written off following a fatal crash in 2009. The replacement PC-9M aircraft scheduled for delivery next year from Pilatus Aircraft in Switzerland at a cost of €5m plus VAT will bring the fleet up to 8 and will assist in a required increase in pilot training in the Air Corps.

Questions Nos. 46 and 47 answered with Question No. 41.

Defence Forces Medicinal Products

48. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he will provide the detailed medical advice given by the medical corps and the medical officer of the Defence Forces that states Lariam is the most suitable drug for members of the Defence Forces in sub-Saharan Africa. [33808/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I already provided the information sought by the Deputy to this question on 18 October, 2016 in written PQ 20561/16. I am happy to provide the information to the Deputy again.

The health and welfare of the men and women of the Defence Forces is a high priority for me and the Defence Forces.

Malaria is a serious disease which killed approximately 438,000 people in 2015, with 90% of deaths occurring in sub-Saharan Africa as reported by the World Health Organisation. It is a serious threat to any military force operating in the area.

There are three anti-malarial drugs, in use in the Defence Forces:

- Lariam (Mefloquine);
- Malarone; and
- Doxycycline.

The choice of medication is a medical decision made by Medical Officers in the Defence Forces having regard to the specific circumstances of the mission and the individual member of the Defence Forces. That position has not changed. The Defence Forces Director Medical Branch issues instructions on matters of medical policy. Current DMB Instruction No. 52 amendment No. 1, dated 24 August 2016 provides for Vaccinations and Other preparations for Overseas Deployments. Paragraphs 5 to 8 deal specifically with the use of malaria prophylaxis and provides for the following:

“ 5. Please note that the ‘default’ chemoprophylaxis against Malaria, in Sub-Saharan missions and other areas where the predominant species is Plasmodium falciparum and where there is no evidence of resistance to it in the region, is Mefloquine (Lariam) 250mg weekly. Mefloquine is the only ‘once weekly’ medication currently available as a chemoprophylactic agent for Malaria. The dosing regimen is particularly suitable for the deployed soldier, given that he/she has minimal control over the operational environment on a day to day basis, thus increasing the risk of missing a dose of a daily medication. To be effective Mefloquine must be started two (2) weeks prior to deployment and should, if possible, be started four (4) weeks prior to departure in order to allow accommodation to minor and tolerable side-effects or to determine the appearance of intolerable side-effects or contraindications. Where operational imperatives demand immediate deployment without any ‘lead-in’ period, Mefloquine is not appropriate as a chemoprophylactic agent and one of the daily medications (Doxycycline or Malarone) should be used instead. All Medical Officers should familiarise themselves in detail with the contraindications and side-effect of all prescribed medications. To this end, the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) website can be consulted. Where an individual has an intolerance or sensitivity or contraindication to the use of Mefloquine, he/she should not be prescribed Mefloquine and should be ‘stood down’ from that particular deployment. In the event of there being no other person available within the Defence Forces with the particular skills set required for the mission, derogation may be sought from the appropriate authority to permit use of an alternative medication. As in all such circumstances the risk benefit ratio will become the

determining factor in the recommendation from the Office of DMB to DCOS Sp.

6. In all other areas where troops are to be deployed and where malaria is endemic, the chemoprophylactic agent(s) will be dictated by the predominant species of plasmodium in the area as well as the resistance patterns to the various agents. For example, currently Doxycycline is the recommended first line chemoprophylactic agent for the malaria season in Afghanistan.

7. Irrespective of which agent is used, all deploying personnel should be made aware of the steps to be taken to minimise mosquito bites in the first place e.g. long sleeves, unexposed legs, use of insect repellent on face and neck and other exposed areas, mosquito nets etc etc.

8. There is a requirement for personnel returning to Ireland from deployment in a malarious and/or tropical or Sub Saharan mission/area to be provided with the following medications on repatriation and to be advised on the importance and necessity of course completion:

a. Primaquine 15mgs twice daily for 14 days.

b. Mefloquine (Lariam) 250mgs weekly for 4 weeks.

c. Mebendazole 100mgs twice daily for 3 days. The above regime should commence following repatriation so that the Primaquine and Mebendazole regime is taken concurrently with the last 2 weeks of the Lariam prophylaxis regime."

Defence Forces Regulations A.12. (Medical Treatment) provides for medical examination of all members of the Permanent Defence Force. The Defence Forces Director Medical Branch instruction No. 40 Medical Examinations amendment No. 3, dated 6 September, 2012 paragraph 5 provides for individual screening and assessment of members of the Defence Force who present for Overseas Medical Examinations. This paragraph provides that the individual member will be: "*subjected to a full medical examination with particular emphasis being given to the physical and psychological demands of the mission and the patient's age and suitability for the specific environment, the proposed vaccinations and any relevant chemo prophylactic agent which may be required.*" The current policy is consistent with previous policy in relation to malaria prophylaxis. The Defence Forces policy, in relation to the use of anti-malaria medication, including Lariam, is in line with current summary of product characteristics and product manufacturer's guidelines. Where malaria has been identified as a risk in a particular mission area, the choice of chemoprophylaxis medication is dependent on a number of factors including the type of malaria in the destination, resistance to particular drugs, the profile of the traveller (contra-indications, underlying health conditions, purpose of travel), the duration of travel and adherence issues. Significant precautions are taken by Defence Forces Medical Officers in assessing the medical suitability of members of our Defence Forces to take any of the anti-malarial medications. It is the policy of the Defence Forces that personnel are individually screened for fitness for service overseas and medical suitability.

The use of and the information on medications is kept under ongoing review. As I already indicated, the health and welfare of the Defence Forces is a priority for me and the Defence Forces and this will continue to inform the approach to the issue of Lariam.

Departmental Records

49. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Taoiseach if he will provide a list of contingent assets known to the Central Statistics Office and the amount that he recorded in various State Departments and bodies; the reason these are not included in the State's balance sheet; the rules in relation to this as approved by Eurostat; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33957/16]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Regina Doherty): The legally binding rules underlying the preparation of the national accounts, including government finance statistics, are those of the European System of Accounts 2010 (ESA 2010). These rules define contingent assets and liabilities as “*agreements whereby one party is obliged to provide a payment or series of payments to another unit only where certain specific conditions prevail.*” (ESA 2010 para 5.08) The rules further clarify that “*As they do not give rise to unconditional obligations, contingent assets and contingent liabilities are not considered as financial assets and liabilities*” ESA 2010 para 7.19 (d) clarifies that contingent assets and contingent liabilities lie outside the asset/liability boundary and are therefore not recorded in the national accounts. However ESA 2010 acknowledges (para 5.11) that “*Although contingent assets and contingent liabilities are not recorded in the accounts, they are important for policy and analysis and information on them needs to be collected and presented as supplementary data.*” The guidance in ESA 2010 is thus in line with other accounting standards (IPSAS 19, IAS 37) which direct that contingent assets/liabilities should not be recognised in the balance sheet but should generally be disclosed unless the likelihood of their realisation is extremely remote.

The focus on reporting of such supplementary information for the government accounts in recent years has been on the disclosure of contingent liabilities rather than contingent assets. Information on guarantees and off-balance sheet PPPs have been collected as part of the bi-annual EDP notification for a number of years, but these data have not been published in a consistent format across Member States until recently. Article 14 of the European Council Directive 2011/85/EU of 8 November 2011, on requirements for budgetary frameworks of the Member States, established the requirement for publication of “*relevant information on contingent liabilities with potentially large impacts on public budgets, including government guarantees, non-performing loans, and liabilities stemming from the operation of public corporations, including the extent thereof. Member States shall also publish information on the participation of general government in the capital of private and public corporations in respect of economically significant amount.*”

In 2014 Eurostat put in place templates and a transmission facility for countries to report on contingent liabilities of government in compliance with the Directive. Annual data on contingent liabilities have been transmitted to Eurostat and published nationally since end 2014. These data are available on the Department of Finance website <http://www.finance.gov.ie/what-we-do/public-finances/draft-budgetary-framework/budgetary-framework>.

No similar framework for the reporting of contingent assets currently exists and the CSO do not currently compile data on the contingent assets of government.

Irish Language

50. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Taoiseach the frequency with which Irish language interpreters were used during the term of the 31st Dáil for each of the years 2011 to 2016 to date. [33982/16]

The Taoiseach: Irish Language Interpretation Services were used by my Department during the term of the 31st Dáil as follows:

Year	Event	Date
2012	Meeting of the Convention on the Constitution	1 December

Year	Event	Date
2013	Meeting of the Convention on the Constitution	26-27 January
	Meeting of the Convention on the Constitution	16-17 February
	Meeting of the Convention on the Constitution	13-14 April
	Meeting of the Convention on the Constitution	18-19 May
	Meeting of the Convention on the Constitution	8-9 June
	Meeting of the Convention on the Constitution	28-29 September
	Meeting of the Convention on the Constitution	2-3 November
2014	Meeting of the Convention on the Constitution	1-2 February
	Meeting of the Convention on the Constitution	22-23 February

Departmental Data

51. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Taoiseach if he will provide a list of all contingent assets in his Department and in agencies under his Department where amounts can be owed but are not listed in the national accounts as an asset; if he will further provide a full breakdown of each category of contingent assets and the estimated amounts in the category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34083/16]

The Taoiseach: There are no contingent assets in my Department or the National Economic and Social Development Office.

Road Traffic Legislation

52. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 74 of 2 November 2016 and following this Deputy's leaders' question on 19 October 2016, if her attention has been drawn to the fact that the Taoiseach's statement (details supplied) is incorrect; if her attention has been further drawn to the fact that this technology is not yet in use in Irish policing; and if she has met with the Taoiseach and the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport on the issues raised. [34057/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Deputy is already aware that I have informed the Taoiseach as to the current position in my response to the Deputy's parliamentary question number 74 of 2 November 2016.

An Garda Síochána's Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021 sets out key strategic objectives for Roads Policing which will inform and guide An Garda Síochána's Road Policing plans over the next 5 years. I would draw the Deputy's attention to the importance of technology in the context of Road Policing, as set out in the Modernisation and Renewal Programme, including the expansion of ANPR, and the planned use of roadside hand-held devices.

The annual Policing Plans over the lifetime of the Modernisation and Renewal Programme will provide an excellent opportunity to set out how these longer term goals will be progressively realised. The significant investment in Garda resources currently underway is closely associated with delivery on the Modernisation and Renewal Programme and it is, therefore, important that these resources are deployed in a targeted manner so that the impact of these resources on Roads Policing (and, of course, on other areas of policing) over time can be monitored and reported on.

I know the Deputy is aware of the Government's multi-agency approach to road safety in Ireland, whereby relevant stakeholders work in partnership to promote and enforce road safety. My Department engages regularly with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport across a number of different fora in this regard, including the Criminal Justice (Fixed Charge Processing System) Working Group, which oversees the implementation of the recommendations of the Garda Síochána Inspectorate Report in this area; a number of which relate to information technology.

In addition, I will be meeting the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport later this month at the biannual Ministerial Committee on Road Safety, which oversees the implementation of the Road Safety Strategy and provides a forum for high-level discussion of road safety issues.

Garda Industrial Relations

53. Deputy Dara Calleary asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the estimated first year and full year cost of the proposed agreement with the Garda Representative Association and Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors set out by the Labour Court on 3 November 2016; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34059/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will be aware, following intensive negotiations between the Government, the Garda Representative Association (GRA) and Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI) facilitated by the Workplace Relations Commission, the Labour Court last Thursday issued a recommendation in relation to the dispute. On foot of this the GRA and AGSI agreed to defer the intended industrial action for last Friday to facilitate a ballot of their membership. This was a very welcome decision by the Garda associations and has ensured that a full policing service remains in place. The Associations have also now deferred the further three days of industrial action planned for this month.

The Government fully respects the decision of the Labour Court as the independent industrial relations body of last resort in the State and yesterday agreed to accept the recommendation of the Labour Court. The outcome of the process is now being examined in detail by all sides and it is hoped that it will form the basis for a final resolution of this dispute following the balloting of members of AGSI and the GRA in due course.

The independent recommendation of the Labour Court seeks to address the concerns that have been articulated by the representative bodies in relation to their pay and conditions including of new recruits, and their access to the statutory dispute resolution bodies. The nature of the Labour Court's recommendation is such that some of the cost of the implementation of the proposals, if they are accepted by the members of AGSI and the GRA, depend on the amount of overtime worked in any year. That said, I am advised that, depending on a number of variables, the estimated gross annual cost of implementing the Labour Court Recommendation could exceed €50m; however, this gross cost will be offset by statutory deductions for tax, PRSI, etc., which will reduce the net Exchequer cost.

It is important now that members of AGSI and the GRA are afforded the time and space to give the Labour Court's recommendation the detailed consideration that it deserves.

Fines Data

54. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the total value of uncollected fines for criminal offences in courts here for 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 to date in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33911/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I wish to advise the Deputy that I have made enquiries with the Courts Service in respect of the statistics requested. The information sought is currently being compiled and verified. I shall arrange for this information to be forwarded to him shortly.

Garda Transport Data

55. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 89 of 2 November 2016, where she stated that, as of 24 October 2016, some 103 official Garda vehicles, 91 of which are in the traffic corps, have been fitted with automatic name plate recognition technology, ANPR, the number of traffic corps vehicles there were as of 24 October 2016 in total; when the remaining vehicles will be fitted with ANPR; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33915/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will be aware, decisions in relation to the provision and allocation of resources is a matter for the Garda Commissioner and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that, as of 4 November, there are 289 vehicles assigned for use by the Traffic Corps. I am also informed that ANPR is in use in all Garda Divisions and Districts nationwide and that the use of this technology is kept under constant review by Garda management.

The Deputy may be aware that under the Garda Síochána Modernisation and Renewal Programme 2016-2021, there are plans to make greater use of ANPR. The Programme envisages the expansion of the number of ANPR units and all units being 3G-enabled to give Gardaí real-time information on suspect vehicles. In addition, the Programme envisages that An Garda Síochána will examine the introduction of fixed ANPR sites at strategic locations across the road network in addition to using portable ANPR units while patrolling.

Direct Provision Data

56. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the latest data on the numbers of persons currently in direct provision for one year or less, one year to two years, two years to three years, three years to four years, four years to five years and more than five years; and the equivalent data for the same date in 2015, in tabular form. [33923/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): When a person makes an application for international protection, they are offered accommodation in State provided accommodation. Whilst there is no obligation on them to accept this offer, approximately 50% of applicants avail of the accommodation offered. They are not obliged

to remain in this accommodation and can leave and indeed return as they so require. In addition, those who refuse the initial accommodation offer can choose to avail of it at a later date.

The following two tables set out the number of persons in State provided accommodation as of the end of October 2015 and October 2016 respectively. The duration of stay based on the last entry into State provided accommodation is shown in the left hand column. This may not directly correspond to the date of their initial application for international protection.

The total for 2016 includes approximately 400 persons who have permission to remain in the State and are in transit to independent living.

Statistics as at the end of October 2015	
Duration of Stay	Number of persons
<12 months	2,033
1 year <2 years	623
2 years <3 years	382
3 years <4 years	301
4 years <5 years	241
5 years +	1,212
Total:	4,792

Statistics as at the end of October 2016	
Duration of Stay	Number of Persons
<12 months	1,690
1 year<2 years	1,032
2 years<3 years	518
3 years<4 years	249
4 years<5 years	198
5 years +	614
Total:	4,301

Direct Provision Data

57. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of asylum seekers in direct provision awaiting a decision on their right to refugee status; the number of persons who have been granted refugee status but are still living in direction provision centres; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33924/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton): At the end of October 2016 there were approximately 4,300 persons availing of State provided accommodation. Approximately 400 of those persons have some form of permission (not exclusively refugee status) to remain in the State. The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the number of those resident in State provided accommodation that are awaiting a decision on their right to refugee status is not currently to hand but I will follow up directly with the Deputy on this matter in due course.

While residents who have received some form of permission to remain in the State cease to be ordinarily entitled to accommodation supports provided by RIA, RIA have always continued to provide such persons with continued accommodation until they secure their own private accommodation. RIA are particularly mindful of the reality of the housing situation in the State and the pressures on the Community Welfare Service in respect of Rent Supplement or the City

and County Councils in respect of Housing Assistance Payments and Housing Lists. That said, the State has been criticised for the length of time persons spend in Direct Provision and accordingly, the various relevant State bodies must all work together to transition persons granted status out of the system as quickly as possible.

Migration Data

58. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Syrian nationals refused access or leave to land here in each year since the start of the war in Syria in 2011. [33925/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that in the years 2011 to 2014 there has been an average of less than 10 per annum refused permission to enter the State of persons of Syrian nationality or claiming to be of Syrian nationality. The figure for 2015 was 62 and in the first 10 months of this year is 39.

These persons did not travel directly to the State from their country of origin and, where it arose, would be returned to their point of embarkation for the State - predominantly other EU member States. On a general point there tends to be a rise in persons claiming to be from conflict zones when confronted at ports of entry – each case is examined on the information available to the immigration officer.

There are in total eleven grounds on which an immigration officer may refuse to give a permission to enter the State and these are set out at Section 4 (3) of the Immigration Act 2004. While a person may be refused permission to enter the State based on a number of grounds, such refusal need only be based on any one of those grounds. Immigration officers are required to provide a refused person with a written notice setting out the reasons for such a decision.

In all cases, removals from the State are conducted in accordance with the law. Removals are essentially operational matters for the Garda National Immigration Bureau who work closely with officials of my Department in arranging where necessary travel documents and other papers required.

It should be noted that information on numbers refused permission to enter the State may be subject to revision over time where individual cases are examined further and the status of some cases may change.

Naturalisation Applications

59. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she will grant family citizenship to persons (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33929/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that there is no record of a current application for a certificate of naturalisation from persons with the family name referred to by the Deputy.

Section 15 of the Act provides that the Minister may, in her absolute discretion, grant an application for a certificate of naturalisation provided certain statutory conditions are fulfilled. The conditions are that the applicant must -

- be of full age
- be of good character
- have had a period of one year's continuous residency in the State immediately before the date of application and, during the eight years immediately preceding that period, have had a further total residence in the State amounting to four years
- intend in good faith to continue to reside in the State after naturalisation
- have, before a judge of the District Court in open court, in a citizenship ceremony or in such manner as the Minister, for special reasons, allows—
 - (i) made a declaration, in the prescribed manner, of fidelity to the nation and loyalty to the State, and
 - (ii) undertaken to faithfully observe the laws of the State and to respect its democratic values.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for citizenship if and when they are in a position to meet all the statutory requirements. An on-line residency calculator is available on the website www.inis.gov.ie, which may be of assistance in establishing if the residency requirements are met.

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

Immigration Status

60. Deputy Jan O'Sullivan asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the action being taken by her Department in response to the call by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in March 2016 for the Government to provide clear, accessible and formal procedures to regularise undocumented children and their families; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33944/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child issued its concluding observations on the Third and Fourth Periodic Report by Ireland in February 2016. The Committee acknowledged the ongoing efforts of Ireland to-date and made a number of further recommendations regarding the protection of children's rights here. One such recommendation, as was pointed out by the Deputy, concerns formal procedures for conferring immigration status on children and their families who are in an irregular situation. Ireland is due to report again to the Committee in October 2021. In the interim this Department will study any relevant recommendations in detail and will consult with other State and non-government organisations as necessary and will actively contribute to a whole of Government response to the issues raised.

On the broader question of a general regularisation scheme for persons who are undocumented or in an irregular situation I would direct the Deputy to my reply to Parliamentary Questions 101 and 103 of 21 June 2016 where I indicated that I have no immediate plans to

introduce such a scheme and that any such scheme have very significant implications for the State, financially and otherwise.

Garda Industrial Relations

61. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if any of her departmental staff or members of An Garda Síochána suggested or mentioned using members of the Defence Forces in a peacekeeping capacity, or any other capacity, potentially or otherwise, during any talks concerning industrial action by An Garda Síochána; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33955/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): While there would no question of the Defence Forces carrying out normal policing duties, the Defence Forces are always available as an aid to the civil power and, of course, in contingency planning discussions that role was envisaged to continue should a withdrawal of labour by members of An Garda Síochána have taken place.

Naturalisation Eligibility

62. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the progress to date in the determination of application for citizenship in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33965/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I refer the Deputy to the reply to his recent Parliamentary Question No. 64 of Thursday 6th October 2016 in relation to the person concerned. I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the position remains unchanged. The processing of the application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person concerned is under consideration and has not yet reached a conclusion but I understand however that the case is due to be submitted for decision in the very near future.

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.

It is recognised that all applicants for citizenship would wish to have a decision on their application without delay. While most cases are now generally processed within six months, the nature of the naturalisation process is such that, for a broad range of reasons, some cases will take longer than others to process. In some instances, completing the necessary checks can take a considerable period of time.

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.

Criminal Prosecutions Data

63. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prosecutions in 2015 and to date in 2016 per district court for disqualified drivers driving while disqualified; the number of disqualified drivers prosecuted for failing to submit a licence under section 29 (16) and (17) of the Road Traffic Act 2010; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33970/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Deputy will be aware that under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service and I have no role in the matter. Section 4(3) of the 1998 Act provides that the Courts Service is independent in the performance of its functions, which includes the provision of information on the courts system. However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made with the Courts Service and the following tables set out the information sought.

Report 1

No. of prosecutions by District Court Area for disqualified drivers driving while disqualified for January to December 2015 and January to 30 September 2016.

N.B. Report displays the number of offences irrespective of the outcome, i.e. offence may not yet be disposed with.

-	Jan – Dec 2015	Jan – 30 Sep 2016
Name	No. of Offences	No. of Offences
ARDEE	10	3
ARKLOW	12	8
ATHLONE	26	6
ATHY	10	5
BALLINA	6	3
BANDON	22	8
BEAL AN MHUIRTHEAD	3	
BALLINASLOE	15	5
BALLAGHADERREEN	13	3
BALLYSHANNON	2	3
BANTRY	4	4
BRAY	27	10
BUNCRANA	4	1
CARLOW	33	14
CASHEL	24	13
CAVAN	47	21
CASTLEBAR	17	4
CLIFDEN	6	5
CLONMEL	17	10
CLONAKILTY	5	3
CORK CITY	136	67
CARRICK ON SHANNON	7	6
CARRICKMACROSS	16	7
CARNDONAGH	3	4
CARRICK ON SUIR	6	2
CASTLEREA	4	1
DUBLIN METROPOLITAN DISTRICT	667	348

-	Jan – Dec 2015	Jan – 30 Sep 2016
Name	No. of Offences	No. of Offences
DUNGARVAN	5	1
DONEGAL	2	1
DROGHEDA	28	17
DOIRE AN FHEICH	2	1
DUNDALK	39	22
AN CLOCHAN LIATH	1	
ENNIS	47	11
AN FAL CARRACH	1	1
FERMOY	17	6
GALWAY	40	17
NA GLEANNTA	2	
GORT	8	3
GOREY	7	6
KELLS	1	1
KENMARE	1	1
KILLALOE	5	2
KILCOCK	30	17
KILKENNY	40	12
KILLORGLIN	5	3
KILRUSH	9	2
KILLARNEY	8	4
LETTERKENNY	35	20
LIMERICK	200	106
LISTOWEL	7	4
LONGFORD	29	8
LOUGHREA	11	8
MACROOM	9	6
MALLOW	48	20
MANORHAMILTON	1	
MIDLETON	8	4
MEATH	17	14
MONAGHAN	6	2
MULLINGAR	41	9
NAAS	86	40
NENAGH	28	13
NEWCASTLE WEST	45	14
NAVAN	37	9
PORTLAOISE	37	18
ROSCOMMON	14	4
SKIBBEREEN	8	4
SLIGO	19	9
STROKESTOWN	2	13
THURLES	21	
TIPPERARY	14	8
TRALEE	40	15
TRIM	15	2
TUAM	25	7

-	Jan – Dec 2015	Jan – 30 Sep 2016
Name	No. of Offences	No. of Offences
TUBBERCERRY	2	2
TULLAMORE	23	8
VIRGINIA	26	10
WEXFORD	12	4
WICKLOW	24	14
WESTPORT	5	1
WATERFORD CITY	75	25
YOUGHAL	3	3
Total	2,413	1,116

Report 2

No. of drivers prosecuted by District Court Area who failed to submit a licence under Section 29(16) and (17) of the Road Traffic Act 2010

N.B. Report shows the number of persons irrespective of the outcome, i.e. offence may not yet be disposed with.

-	Jan – Dec 2015	Jan – 30 Sep 2016
Name	No. of Offences	No. of Offences
CORK	0	1
DUBLIN METROPOLITAN DISTRICT	3	5
FERMOY	1	1
GALWAY	2	0
LOUGHREA	1	1
MULLINGAR	1	1
PORTLAOISE	0	1
TRALEE		1
WICKLOW	2	1
TOTAL	10	12

Private Security Authority

64. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of complaints against private investigators that have been submitted to the Private Security Authority since 1 November 2005 when the licensing of private investigators was introduced; the number of these complaints that have been upheld; the limits of inquiry of the PSA in relation to complaints against private investigators; and if she will consider a legislative review of the sale of spyphone software (details supplied) here. [33978/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Private Security Authority (PSA), established under the Private Security Services Act 2004, as amended, is the regulatory body with responsibility for regulating and licensing the private security industry in the State. The Authority is an independent body under the aegis of my Department.

Section 39 of the aforementioned legislation provides for the making of complaints against a licensee and sets out the procedures to be followed by the PSA in investigating such complaints. In addition, the PSA also operates a system whereby a person can report a matter to the Authority who, if satisfied that the report is a matter of concern, will investigate it further.

Licensing of contractors working in the private investigator sector became mandatory from 1 November 2015. I am informed by the Authority that since the licensing of this particular sector commenced, the Authority has not received any complaints under Section 39 of the Act that pertain to private investigators. The PSA has however received 5 reports concerning private investigators. Of these reports, I am informed that 4 have been closed following the making of enquiries and one is still under investigation. Of those that have been closed, one related to a matter which did not fall within the remit of the PSA, one related to an entity which was no longer trading and two related to advertising. The reports relating to advertising were followed up on by the Authority and the issues raised were resolved.

The Deputy will appreciate that the sale of spyphone software does not come under the remit of the PSA or indeed my Department.

Residency Permits

65. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if stamp 4 will be facilitated in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33988/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have been informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned entered the State on 5 February 2011 and was registered as a student on Stamp 2 conditions between 1 March 2011 and 30 September 2016.

On 5 October 2015, the person concerned made an application for permission to remain in the State on the basis of their parentage of an Irish citizen child. However, this application was refused on 16 September 2015 as the child in question was not the holder of an Irish passport.

In respect of the position in the State of the person concerned, I wish to draw the Deputy's attention to the Student Pathway information leaflet which is currently available on the INIS web site. This notice clarifies the position in relation to a non-EEA student registered in Ireland prior to 1 January 2011. As well as the above document, a series of guideline notes outlining how the new immigration regime operates is available on the INIS web site, including information on maximum time limits for students who wish to study at Language Non Degree Level and Degree Level. In that regard, under the Student Pathway Scheme, the person concerned has the option of remaining in the State as a student if they fulfil the criteria that are specified on the web site. However, as they are on the Student Pathway, the person concerned is not eligible for permission to remain in the State under Stamp 4 conditions.

The person concerned also has the option of applying for a work permit. They can make an application for same to the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. However, the Deputy should note that the criteria and procedures for applying for such a permit are matters for the Employment Permit Section of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise, and Innovation.

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

Gambling Sector

66. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality her views on the practice of online betting companies using software to track persons' online betting habits to target them for marketing purposes in view of the fact some betting companies claim the software is an anti-fraud measure; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33998/16]

67. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality her plans to appoint a dedicated gambling regulator; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33999/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):
I propose to take Questions Nos. 66 and 67 together.

The Deputy will be aware that the General Scheme of the Gambling Control Bill was published in July 2013 following approval by the Government and is currently in drafting by the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel. The aim of the Bill is to update all existing laws on the regulation of gambling, including betting and gaming but excluding the National Lottery. It will provide for the licensing of all forms of on-line gambling.

The bill proposes to confer responsibility for all regulatory matters on the Minister for Justice and Equality. The Minister's functions as set out in the draft Scheme include licensing, inspections and prosecutions, and it is envisaged that these functions will be carried out by a body located within the Department of Justice and Equality. The General Scheme also provides for a dedicated inspectorate to ensure compliance by licence holders with the terms of their licences and with the new legislation generally.

The proposed legislation has consumer protection generally as one of its core principles, and it is envisaged that it will include several measures aimed at the protection of vulnerable persons, including children, from risks to their well-being arising from gambling. The Scheme includes measures that will require licence holders to act in a socially responsible way. These measures will include controls on advertising, promotions and sponsorship.

As regards progressing the proposed legislation, departmental officials are currently reviewing the Scheme published in 2013, taking account of intervening developments and technologies in the gaming sector. This review will help to update policy in this area. I am also considering whether some sections might be prioritised as they may require more immediate action rather than is possible with the longer, more detailed Bill. It is the intention that work on such early measures will continue in tandem with the wider review of the existing Scheme of a Bill to avoid any undue delay.

Gambling Sector

68. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of applications for certificates of personal fitness from remote operators and terrestrial bookmakers not ordinarily resident in the State made in the past five years in tabular form broken down by company name and year; the number of successful applicants and the number of those refused; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34005/16]

69. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of applications for certificates of personal fitness from remote operators and terres-

trial bookmakers resident in the State made in the past seven years in tabular form broken down by company name and year; the number of successful applicants; the number of those refused; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34006/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):
I propose to take Questions Nos. 68 and 69 together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that the information requested by her, as held by my Department, is set out in the following tables.

The Deputy will be aware that the Betting (Amendment) Act 2015 brought remote betting operators within the licensing regime for the first time. Accordingly, details on applications from such operators are only available from 2015 to date.

In accordance with the Betting Act 1931, the Minister for Justice and Equality is responsible for issuing certificates of personal fitness (CPFs) to officers representing remote operators, in addition to issuing CPFs to terrestrial bookmakers not ordinarily resident in the State. Licences granted on foot of CPFs being issued are of two years duration following the enactment of the Betting (Amendment) Act 2015.

CPFs are independently issued to terrestrial bookmakers resident in the State by individual Superintendents of An Garda Síochána. The Minister for Justice and Equality does not have any role in relation to the assessment of applications for CPFs from such bookmakers. Accordingly, my Department does not have records of applications made by these operators.

Applications from Remote Operators 2015-2016

Applications were received from 133 individuals representing 67 companies as set out in the following table. There were no unsuccessful applications made.

Company
Social Gaming Ventures
Betfair
Paddy Power
WHG (International) William Hill
Ladbrokes
Bonne Terre (Sky Bet)
Boylesports
Nektan
Rational Gaming Europe Limited
Triplebet
Hillside Sports
Mangas Gaming Limited
Annatar
Runlastman.com
888 Limited
Gala Coral/Coral Interactive
Beanbagsports
Luxbet European Ltd
Sporting Index Ltd
Dedsert Limited

Company
Betfair
Virtual Fusion (Alderney) limited
Smarkets
BetFred
Betway Limited
BET-AT-HOME.COM Limited
Celton Manx Limited
BetVictor
SJU Limited
Stanjames PLC
Binary (Europe) Limited
Racebets
Mondagoal
Sportsbetting
bwin.party Limited
Cosmo Gaming Company
EveryMatrix Limited
Ayondo Markets Limited
Headlong Limited
Interwetten Gaming Limited
Asian BGE Limited
Bruce Betting
Tully Bookmakers
JA Sportsbook Limited
Star Racing
Geoffrey Banks
Tukcorp
Doublerquits
Blue Star Planet Limited
32 Red
Starspreads Limited
Tradeplayer
EU Lotto Limited
Fantasy Rugger Limited
Danny Whitty
BML Group Limited
Racing International Agency Ltd
Sportsfundraisinglimited
Mr Green Gaming Limited
Poniard
Fay Racing
HSB Sportbook Limited
FantasyTote Limited
MyLotto24 Limited

Company
Slango LLP
LMATRIX
Bar One Racing

Applications for a certificate of personal fitness for out of state bookmakers for the year 2012 - 2016

Details of applications made from terrestrial bookmakers not resident in the State are set out in the following table. The Deputy should note that such applications are made in the individual's own name and that there are no companies involved in this process.

2015 - 2016	2014	2013	2012
Granted certificates: 48 Refused certificates: 4	Granted certificates : 51 Refused certificates: Nil	Granted certificates: 54 Refused certificates: Nil	Granted certificates: 48 Refused certificates: Nil

Garda Misconduct Allegations

70. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality further to her letter of 6 October 2016, if the terms of reference for the five inquiries to be established under section 42 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 have been settled; when these inquiries will proceed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34008/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The five inquiries to which the Deputy refers are to be established following my acceptance of recommendations by the panel of the Independent Review Mechanism.

As I pointed out to the Deputy in the letter to which he refers, section 42 (3A) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, as amended, requires me to consult with the Policing Authority with regard to the terms of reference for these inquiries. Consultations are ongoing and, once they are settled, I can assure the Deputy that it is my firm intention that the inquiries will commence as soon as practicable thereafter.

Departmental Records

71. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she will provide a list of all contingent assets in her Department and in agencies under her Department where amounts can be owed but are not listed in the national accounts as an asset; if she will further provide a full breakdown of each category of contingent assets and the estimated amounts in the category; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34080/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I wish to advise the Deputy that as my Department does not prepare accounts under the accruals convention, the question of recognition or accounting for contingent assets does not arise.

Departmental Funding

72. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if she will make resources available within her Department to support and facilitate a centre (details supplied) in view of the improving economic conditions. [34085/16]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): A second Sexual Assault and Violence in Ireland study (SAVI 2) would show the prevalence of and attitudes to sexual violence and elucidate how the experience has changed since SAVI 1. The overall cost of a report is likely to be in the order of €1 million over three years. A formal proposal submitted by the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre recognised that, given the significant budget, funding would be divided between four Departments - the Departments of Justice and Equality, Children and Youth Affairs, Education and Skills, and Health. I wrote to the relevant Ministers on this matter and expressed my support for the project. The responses received make the viability of funding the project, as proposed, unlikely.

However, my Department continues to investigate the financial feasibility, resource implications and approaches to identifying a ring-fenced funding stream for undertaking a SAVI 2 study and to explore obligations with regard to requisite public procurement arrangements. While I strongly recognise the value of further research in this area, I am sure the Deputy will accept that the right balance must be struck between the funding of front-line services and funding research. I will, however, continue to pursue this matter.

It may be helpful to add that in March 2014, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) launched the results of the largest ever violence against women survey in the EU. Details of the prevalence of sexual violence by a partner or non-partner experienced by those women surveyed who are resident in Ireland are contained in this report.

Stability and Growth Pact

73. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Finance if he or his Department have had any engagement with EU institutions regarding the fiscal rules since he came into office; the nature of this engagement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33887/16]

74. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Finance if he or his Department have commissioned or developed any papers or strategies on achieving greater flexibility in relation to the application of the fiscal rules; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33888/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 73 and 74 together.

As the Deputy is aware (Parliamentary Questions 20 and 69 of 29/09/2016) the fiscal rules to which Ireland is subject have direct application through a number of EU regulations as well as having domestic legal effect through the Fiscal Responsibility Act 2012 following the passage of a constitutional referendum in May 2012. Changes to these regulations would have to follow the normal EU approach starting with a proposal from the Commission before consideration by Member States and the European Parliament.

I and my Department are active in a number of fora in the EU that discuss the fiscal rules, including the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN), the Economic and Finance Committee (EFC), the EFC-Alternates, the Economic Policy Committee (EPC) and the Output Gap Working Group (OGWG).

The issue of facilitating greater flexibility in the application of the fiscal rules has received significant focus at European level and framed discussions on the establishment of the structural and investment clauses, which were codified by the Commission in November 2015. Specifically these provisions allow for temporary deviations from the required structural budgetary adjustment, subject to strict conditions.

There are also certain more explicit flexibility provisions within the rules. For instance, within the expenditure benchmark pillar of the rules, public investment is granted favourable treatment - as a result of four-year capital smoothing, only one quarter of the increase in public investment must be funded in the first year from within the fiscal space. Furthermore, the fiscal rules aim to facilitate the conduct of counter-cyclical policy, notably via the cyclical conditions matrix.

Moreover, former practice involved reference rates being fixed every three years in the calculation of fiscal space under the expenditure benchmark. In the case of Ireland, this would have significantly suppressed the permitted real net expenditure growth rate, since reference rates would have placed greater weight on an outdated outlook when potential growth was considerably weaker. In advance of Ireland entering the Preventive Arm, my officials initiated discussions with the Commission, calling for an annual recalibration of the reference rates and were successful in lobbying to the Commission to this end. This new approach significantly increases the permitted room for expenditure growth, which would not have been possible under the former practice.

Furthermore, in the same period, Ireland gained the endorsement of the EPC on an alternate and more plausible method of calculation of projected working age population growth to be used when estimating potential output, resulting in a 1.0 percentage point improvement in potential output growth for 2017-2020. The impact of these changes were described in Box 10 of the Spring Economic Statement 2015.

My Department continues to progress work aimed at producing sensible estimates of supply-side indicators, the importance of which has been repeatedly highlighted by the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council. A summary of this work has been included in Box 1 of the 2016 Stability Programme Update.

Finally, the harmonised methodology for calculating the economic cycle used in the implementation of the SGP remains an area with limitations within the fiscal rules. My Department has secured useful changes to this methodology over the years by consistently raising concerns and objections at European level. These changes have partially compensated for the reality that the harmonised methodology is not suitable for small open economies. My Department continues to advocate for improvements in the harmonised methodology and will continue to engage constructively on this and other relevant technical issues.

The fiscal rules are designed to promote budgetary discipline and underpin sustainable economic growth. While Ireland's economy is growing and debt is on a downward trajectory, the debt level is still comparably high and caution must be exercised due to the potential of rollover risk should interest rates increase. We are a small and very open economy in a world that has more risks than usual. It makes sense to reach a balanced budget in structural terms by 2018. Reducing our debt to much lower levels will increase our capacity to withstand shocks by building our capacity to borrow. Compliance with the fiscal rules underpins and facilitates this.

Economic Policy

75. Deputy David Cullinane asked the Minister for Finance if he and his Department realise the distinction between borrowing for current spend and capital spend; if the EU rules restricting borrowing are limiting potential to invest in capital infrastructure; if he will seek changes in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33889/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I want to assure the Deputy that both I and my Department are conscious of the distinction between borrowing for current and capital purposes.

I also want to assure the Deputy that I and my Department are aware that our debt level is of the order €200 billion this year.

Moreover, both I and my Department are conscious of the fact that market access on reasonable terms is contingent upon continuing to reduce our debt-to-GDP ratio.

Having said that, I would point out that while my Department is forecasting an Exchequer current budget surplus of c.€2 billion in 2017, it is forecasting an Exchequer capital deficit of nearly €4.2 billion. In other words, we are borrowing for capital purposes.

The fiscal rules do not prevent or constrain public investment. The fiscal rules simply require that all expenditure - be it current or capital - is sustainably financed. Member States are free to choose whatever level of capital spending they like, subject to the requirement that the expenditure can be financed. Put another way, resources are finite - it is a question of whether we prioritise current expenditure or capital expenditure. This is, of course, a difficult balancing act, and in the recent Budget the Government struck an appropriate balance.

It is also worth pointing out the flexibility provisions within the fiscal rules for capital spending. For instance, within the expenditure benchmark pillar of the rules, public investment is granted favourable treatment through the four-year smoothing of capital formation increases. This means that only one quarter of the increase in public investment must be funded in the first year from within the fiscal space. Basically, this facilitates the front loading of capital formation increases.

In conclusion, sustainable public finances are a prerequisite for continued strong economic growth. My view is that the fiscal rules should not be seen as inhibiting policymakers - they are about ensuring sustainable improvements in living standards for all our citizens.

Carbon Tax Exemptions

76. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Finance the reason combined heat and power engines are exempted from carbon tax in view of the fact that the signing of the Paris Agreement suggests significant efforts will need to be made to divest away from fossil fuels. [34067/16]

77. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Finance the foregone taxation revenue from exempting combined heat and power engines from carbon tax. [34068/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 76 and 77 together.

Combined Heat and Power (CHP) is the simultaneous generation of usable heat and electricity in a single process. The dual process of using energy inputs to generate both heat and power is the most efficient use of fuel with an energy efficiency of up to 80%, which is significantly higher than individual processes. It makes use of the heat produced in electricity generation instead of releasing it into the atmosphere.

The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment's White Paper on Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030 indicates that CHP can provide a method of improving efficiency of energy use leading to emission reductions, as well as com-

mitting to the development of a policy framework to encourage the growth of CHP. Biomass CHP as a power source will make a contribution towards achieving 2020 targets in both the renewable electricity and heat sectors. The paper takes into account European and International climate change objectives and agreements, as well as Irish social, economic and employment priorities.

In that context, my colleague the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment wrote to me asking that I consider the supports for the incentivisation of CHP Plants in Budget 2017. Separately, the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) is updating the certification processes and will now base certification on the fuel used in the highly efficient production of electricity in CHP Plants. This will provide relief retrospectively based on the actual data used in highly efficient production of electricity.

Work is ongoing to transition away from the use of fossil fuels, however, in the meantime, it is logical to ensure that when fossil fuels are used they are used as efficiently as possible. It is for that reason I decided to provide a full relief from the carbon tax when the fuel is used in a highly efficient process.

I am informed by Revenue that the partial carbon tax relief for fuel used for environmentally friendly CHP installations was introduced in the Finance Act 2012 and the cost to date of that relief is just under €760,000.

The following table contains the amounts claimed in 2014, 2015 and 2016 in respect of the relief and shows the total amount claimed since introduction.

YEAR	Number of Claims	Amount Refunded
2014	2	€82,133.00
2015	24	€264,733.51
2016	44	€411,754.60
	Total	€758,621.11

The Finance Bill 2016 includes a proposal to introduce a full relief from carbon taxation for fuel used in CHP to produce high efficiency electricity. I am advised that Revenue has made an approximate estimate of just under €2m to provide full relief (€1.87m) for all fuel. This estimate is based upon information currently available which is largely composed of projected energy efficiency performance of CHP installations. This estimate also includes data concerning CHP units that are still in the planning stage, but have been included to avoid underestimation.

Property Tax Exemptions

78. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance the length of time local property tax exemptions will remain for unfinished estates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33884/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by Revenue that residential properties that are included in a list of unfinished housing estates prescribed in 2013 by the then Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government are currently exempt from the payment of local property tax (LPT).

As with any other LPT exempt property, a property in an unfinished estate that was exempt on the first valuation date of 1 May 2013 will not become chargeable until the next valuation date i.e. 1 November 2019. The exemption is retained even where a property, or the estate in which it is situated, is completed to a local authority's satisfaction and used for residential pur-

poses prior to that date.

The originally projected valuation date of 1 November 2016 was deferred to 1 November 2019 by the Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Act 2015.

IBRC Liquidation

79. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the status of the liquidation process at IBRC including a list of all groups of creditors; the likelihood that they will be paid; and the likely financial result for the state. [33903/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The status of the Special Liquidation as at 31 December 2015 is set out in a third progress update report published by the Special Liquidators on 27 May 2016 and which is available on the Department of Finance website through the following link:

http://www.finance.gov.ie/sites/default/files/Progress%20update%20report_31%20Dec%202015.pdf.

There remains a number of tasks in the liquidation to be completed including the ongoing management of c. 350 legal cases, the completion of the creditor adjudication process, the work with the Commission of Investigation, the management of the remaining loan book of c. €3.7bn, the liquidation of the remaining subsidiaries, the realisation of all remaining assets and the completion of various projects which include the Interest Overcharge Remediation Project.

As the Deputy is aware, in relation to the payment of proceeds from the liquidation, each class of creditor will be paid according to their legal priority as set out in the Companies Acts, with costs and expenses of the liquidation ranking first followed, in order, by preferred creditors, senior unsecured creditors and subordinated debt creditors. All of the preferential creditors have been paid in full. As previously advised in the IBRC Progress Update Report of May 2016 it is expected that an interim dividend of 25% will be paid to all admitted unsecured creditors by 31 December 2016.

I am advised by the Special Liquidators that their expectation, based on current information, is that the eventual unsecured creditor dividend will be in the range of 75% - 100% of all eligible claims. The Special Liquidators further advise me that this eventual dividend range is subject to change depending on future events which are outside their control. The ultimate level of dividend paid to each creditor cannot be known until such time as all loan assets are sold, the total level of adjudicated creditors is finalised and the other contingent creditor claims which may crystallise, including those from litigation, are known.

The likely financial result for the State is not yet known as it will be dependent on the ultimate level of dividend available.

VAT Yield

80. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 110 and 111 of 2 November 2016, if he will consider the introduction of a method to record the information returned in VAT returns to include the identification of the yield from a particular activity and or product; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33904/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by Revenue that all businesses are required to indicate their sector and activity type using the EU-standard NACE Code at the time of tax registration, but are not required to provide this information on each VAT Return. However, traders are required to update their NACE Code should their activity type change. In terms of introducing a mandatory sectoral breakdown of trading information in the VAT returns made by traders, the value of such data needs to be balanced against the administrative burden for business that would be involved and the reliability of the allocations made by traders in their returns.

Banking Licence Applications

81. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance the process required for an international bank to acquire a licence to operate here; the length of time the process takes; if consideration has been given to speeding up this process and creating a shorter waiting time than is in place in other jurisdictions to attract more foreign direct investment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33920/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Central Bank operates as part of a European system of regulation and standards. The authorisation process is broadly consistent across the European Union and entirely consistent within the eurozone. Post ‘Banking Union’, the European Central Bank (‘ECB’) is the competent authority in Ireland for the granting of banking licences in accordance with Section 9 of the Central Bank Act, 1971 (as amended). The Central Bank has published Guidelines on its website to assist those wishing to submit an application for a Banking Licence under Section 9 of the Central Bank Act 1971.

The principal stages in the authorisation process are as follows:

- Exploratory Phase - During this phase the potential applicant will submit a proposal to the Central Bank for review. The Central Bank will undertake a detailed review of the proposal and issue comments advising the applicant of any further information or clarifications required in relation to any aspect of the proposal. The purpose of the review is to determine whether the proposal will meet the required standard for authorisation. The Central Bank will, having conducted an initial assessment, notify the ECB of receipt of the proposal and provide all required information to enable it to commence its assessment of the proposal;

- Formal Application - Should the proposal meet the required standard, the applicant will then submit an application for authorisation. Both the Central Bank and the ECB will complete their assessment of the application which may involve further clarification being sought from the applicant. At the end of this stage the Central Bank will determine whether to recommend to the ECB that authorisation be granted;

- ECB Decision - Decision by the ECB on whether to grant a banking licence - A banking licence will only be granted where the ECB and the Central Bank are satisfied that the applicant complies with the authorisation requirements. The robustness of the discharging of our gate-keeping role is critical to the protection of consumers and maintenance of financial stability.

In relation to applications for authorisation under Section 9A of the Central Bank Act, 1971, referred to as ‘Third Country Branches’ (i.e. where the applicant is a credit institution whose head office is located in a state or territory other than an EEA state and which holds an authorisation to carry on banking business in that state or territory from the authority that exercises in that state or territory functions corresponding to those of the Bank), the Central Bank is the competent authority for granting such authorisations.

The principal stages are the same as for section 9 authorisations, set out above, with the exception that there is no ECB involvement in the assessment and the decision on authorisation is made solely by the Central Bank. The Central Bank has published a Policy Statement on the authorisation of Third Country Branches.

The total time for licensing will depend upon:

- the quality of the proposal submitted by the applicant;
- the nature, scale and complexity of the proposed business model;
- the time taken by the applicant to respond to comments raised on each draft of the proposal and application;
- the quality of the responses received addressing all issues raised;
- any changes made by the applicant to its proposal during the authorisation process; and
- the time taken by any relevant third parties to respond to queries in relation to the application.

The Central Bank has informed me that once a full, completed application is received and accepted, the assessment process is commenced without delay but in practice, the authorisation process takes many months of engagement, discussion and back and forth on key issues before the application is completed. So measuring on this basis we can expect a time horizon of probably at least a year.

When it comes to applications for licences in Ireland, the Central Bank assures me that it stands ready to meet the challenges that may arise. The Central Bank will do so on the basis of an active, open stance, ready to engage, but in line with their duty to protect consumers, and in keeping with EU rules, international standards, and our published processes.

Tax Reliefs Availability

82. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance if companies involved in the wind energy industry can avail of the section 110 regime under the Finance Act; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33941/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by Revenue that in order to avail of relief under section 110 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, a company must be a qualifying company within the meaning of that section.

Amongst the conditions of a qualifying company is that it must hold or manage qualifying assets.

Since the enactment of Finance Act 2003, a qualifying asset is defined as an asset which consists of, or of an interest in, a financial asset, and financial asset is defined as:-

- shares, bonds, and other securities;
- futures, options, swaps, derivatives and similar instruments;
- invoices and all types of receivables;
- obligations evidencing debt (including loans and deposits);

- leases and loan and lease portfolios;
- hire purchase contracts;
- acceptance credits and all other documents of title relating to the movement of goods;
- bills of exchange, commercial paper, promissory notes and all other kinds of negotiable or transferable instruments.

Finance Act 2008 amended the definition of qualifying asset to an asset which consists of, or of an interest (including a partnership interest) in a financial asset, and added to the list of financial assets:-

- greenhouse gas emissions allowance and
- contracts for insurance and contracts for reinsurance.

Finance Act 2011 extended the definition of qualifying asset to include commodities and plant and machinery.

However, the generation of green energy is not the holding or managing of a qualifying asset and therefore it is not an activity which a qualifying company can carry on.

Tax Data

83. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide a breakdown of the number of first-time buyers per annum who have availed of the deposit interest retention tax refund scheme for first-time buyers since its introduction; the average amount of refund payable for each of those years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33947/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by Revenue that applications for refunds of Deposit Interest Retention Tax (DIRT) for first-time buyers who purchase a house or apartment to live in as their home are as follows (scheme began on 14 October 2014);

-	Number of applications approved.	Amount refunded
14/10/14-31/12/15	126	€137,241
1/1/16-7/11/16	380	€299,557
Totals to date	506	€436,798

I am also advised that, 102 applications have been refused to date and 80 are currently being processed.

Tax Collection

84. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the extent to which the Revenue Commissioners have to date facilitated the restructuring of a business in the case of persons (details supplied) having particular regard to the efforts being made by the persons to meet their targets and in view of the fact that their agents have indicated an improvement in the business in the context of which it should be possible to enter into an agreement acceptable to the Revenue Commissioners and the proprietors and with particular reference to the need to maintain the employment associated with the business; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33969/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I previously referred to this case in my reply to Parliamentary Question No. 134 of 4 October 2016.

As advised in my reply, it was not possible for Revenue to agree any phased payment arrangement with the business at that time because there were a number of returns outstanding and the full extent of the debt could not be quantified.

The business subsequently filed the outstanding returns and a phased payment arrangement was agreed on 6 October 2016. The arrangement was agreed on the understanding that all future taxes would be paid on a timely basis and all returns filed as they became due.

Revenue has advised me that the taxpayer has not adhered to the conditions of the arrangement and no payments in respect of current taxes have been received to date despite assurances given in the context of a business restructuring. Revenue has also advised me that where payments were received, they were returned unpaid and as a consequence the debt has continued to increase.

The continuing failure of the business to meet its tax obligations and in particular to pay current taxes as they fall due left Revenue with no option but to recently deploy debt collection/enforcement action to secure the outstanding liabilities.

Before Revenue can consider any change to its debt collection/enforcement action, the business needs to immediately honour the recent cancelled payments and to fully commit to the terms of the phased payment arrangement.

Vehicle Registration

85. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Finance the length of time a vehicle from Northern Ireland can be in this State without crossing back over the Border before the VRT process starts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33980/16]

86. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Finance if it is illegal for a resident here to drive a car on loan from a garage in Northern Ireland while repair work is being carried out on their own car which is taxed and registered in the South; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33981/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 85 and 86 together.

I am advised by Revenue that a State resident that brings a foreign registered car into the State is legally obliged to make an appointment to register the car within seven days and to have it registered within thirty days from the date the car is first brought into the State. This rule applies whether the person resident in the State has bought the car in question or has the loan of the car from a garage or from some other source.

Departmental Schemes

87. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding first-time buyers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33989/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The commencement date for the Help to Buy scheme of 19 July 2016 was chosen as it was the date of the launch of 'Rebuilding Ireland

- Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness', in which the development of such a scheme for inclusion in the Budget was initially announced. The intention to backdate this tax incentive to this date was announced at that time with a view to avoiding any potential interruption in house sales by purchasers who may otherwise have deferred purchases, pending the commencement of the incentive.

I have no plans to backdate the scheme prior to 19 July as to extend eligibility for the scheme further back than the date of its initial announcement would consist entirely of dead-weight. One of the primary policy aims of the incentive is to assist those struggling to save for the deposit required in purchasing a house. Individuals who purchased new homes since the start of the year did not need the assistance of the State to fund the required deposit. Such individuals made their purchasing decisions on the basis of the information available to them at the time of purchase, and could not have expected a subsequently introduced tax relief to also be available to them.

As with all time bound reliefs, there will always be those who just miss out on qualification. I do not intend to extend the parameters of this new measure any further as it would become less targeted and more costly.

VAT Exemptions

88. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Finance if he will consider a VAT exemption for underage sports teams on the purchase of equipment and uniforms to assist with the financial burdens of these volunteer clubs and to assist with encouraging a healthier lifestyle for children; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34004/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by Revenue that the VAT rating of goods is governed by the EU VAT Directive (Council Directive 2006/112/EC), with which Irish VAT law must comply. The Directive provides that the supply of sports equipment and uniforms is generally subject to the standard rate of VAT, regardless of who the purchaser is.

However, under Article 110 of the Directive, Ireland has retained the application of the zero rate of VAT to the supply of children's clothing and footwear, which does not exceed the size appropriate to children of average build and average foot size of 10 years of age, including sports uniforms and sports footwear.

As Ireland applied the zero rate to clothing and safety equipment for children up to 11 years of age on 1 January 1991, we are entitled to retain that zero rated application. However, as the standard VAT rate applied to clothing and footwear for adults and older children at 1 January 1991, it is not possible to apply a reduced or zero rate to them.

Departmental Records

89. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide a list of all contingent assets in his Department and in agencies under his Department where amounts can be owed but are not listed in the national accounts as an asset; if he will further provide a full breakdown of each category of contingent assets and the estimated amounts in the category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34076/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): While contingent assets are provided

for in international accounting standards, they only apply to entities that use the accruals basis of accounting. The vote for my Department and the other votes within the Finance Vote group are accounted for in the annual Appropriation Accounts on a cash basis, in accordance with the Exchequer and Audit Departments Act, 1866. Notes to the annual accounts are provided on foot of policies specified in Public Financial Procedures and in the circulars issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Likewise, the Finance Accounts, which is the account of the Central Fund, and the Annual Account of Taxes and Duties collected, which is produced by the Revenue Commissioners, follow the cash basis of accounting. In accordance with these accounting requirements, there is no reporting in relation to contingent assets. Information in relation to the Central Bank of Ireland is not to hand. I will forward it to the Deputy as soon as possible. In the case of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation, there are potential recoveries depending on the outcome of litigation, but it is not possible at this time to make an accurate estimate of the amounts involved. In regard to the other agencies under my Department that are required to use the accruals basis of accounting, I am advised that they do not have any contingent assets that must be accounted for under the relevant accounting standards applying to them. The national accounts are prepared by the Central Statistics Office under rules set out in the European System of Accounts (ESA 2010).

Tax Data

90. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Finance the number of aircraft leasing companies that have obtained a trading treatment for leasing activities; the number that have obtained trading treatment for a single leasing activity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34043/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that as of September 2016, 2,660 companies were assigned to the primary industry description (NACE code) of renting and leasing of air transport equipment.

As information on the number of leases entered into by air transport equipment leasing companies is not required to be entered on corporation tax returns, it is not possible to provide information on the number of such companies that have entered into a single lease.

Budget 2017

91. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the last minute expansion of the so-called fiscal space by some €300 million for the 2017 budget and its implications for next year's spending; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30932/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The increase in the fiscal space between the amount forecast in the Summer Economic Statement (SES) 2016 and final amount in the Budget 2017 document was some €200 million, not €300 million.

The €1 billion fiscal space in the Summer Economic Statement (SES) was funding a proposed Budget package of €1.2 billion in 2017 consisting of additional expenditure worth €860 million and tax reductions worth €330 million. A Budget package worth more than the available fiscal space is possible due to the effect of four-year capital smoothing, where only one quarter of the increase in capital expenditure must be funded in the first year from within the fiscal space.

The final Budget package announced for 2017 was worth €1.3 billion, so the additional in-

crease vis-a-vis the SES was €100 million.

The actual package consisted of net tax reductions worth €295 million and additional spending worth €1 billion. This consisted of about €800 million for current spending and €200 million for capital spending.

The difference between the €200 million increase in fiscal space and the €100 million package increase between the SES and the Budget arises because the Government increased capital expenditure this year by €200 million, to address flood damage and school building, utilising €50 million of the fiscal space available for 2017 and the split between current and capital increases was altered.

Finally I would point out that the ‘walk’ from €1 billion to €1.2 billion of fiscal space is described in Box 1 “Evolution of ‘fiscal space’ in 2017” in Chapter 3 of the Economic and Fiscal Outlook section of the Budget 2017 book.

National Risk Assessment

92. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Finance the strategic risks identified by him in the draft national risk assessment report in relation to tax issues and multinational corporations based here. [31824/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The National Risk Assessment (NRA) is an annual horizon scanning exercise in which broader risks to Ireland’s well-being are assessed. It takes into account risks from an economic, environmental, geo-political, social and technological perspective to take a holistic view of all potential areas of risk. The NRA finds that the main risks in Ireland in 2016 relate to Brexit/uncertainty over the UK’s relationship with the EU, weakening global economic growth, infrastructural deficits, international terrorism and expenditure pressures.

The Department of Finance inputs into this national exercise in respect of economic risks.

Section 2 of the NRA deals with Economic Risks and section 2.3 examines the issues around the importance of multinational corporations to the Irish economy and the risk of unfavourable international tax changes.

The document recognises that Ireland’s economy and employment are heavily dependent on a relatively small number of multinational corporations concentrated in a small number of enterprise sectors.

The identified risks in relation to tax issues and multinational corporations simply reflect reality. The Taoiseach has stated that: “the Draft National Risk Assessment 2016 sets out risks for public consultation. They are complex and demand a considered policy response. By being open about these risks, we hope we can have a mature debate about these challenges and their implications for Ireland”.

The Corporation Tax receipt profile is kept under ongoing review by the Department of Finance, in conjunction with the Revenue Commissioners, and it is one of the issues covered by the National Risk Assessment is the receipt profile of various tax heads.

The NRA was recently published by the Department of An Taoiseach and is available at the following link - http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Publications/Publications_2016/Draft_National_Risk_Assessment_2016_%E2%80%93_Overview_of_Strategic_Risks.html.

NAMA Property Sales

93. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Finance the number of empty, completed or unfinished residential units which have been sold by NAMA here to date; the average price received for finished and unfinished units respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28642/16]

94. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Finance the construction companies which have been employed by NAMA to date in their building operations; the average cost per unit; and the way in which this compares with the cost of local authority builds. [28643/16]

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

As the Deputy is aware NAMA has acquired loans from the five participating institutions and is not the owner or manager of properties. The Agency's role is, like a bank, that of a secured lender. Other than properties that have been enforced, all of which are listed on NAMA's website and which are managed by the appointed receivers/administrators, properties continue to be managed by their existing owners.

Like a bank, as a secured lender NAMA does not develop, manage or rent/sell properties. Accordingly, the information that the Deputy has sought is not applicable to NAMA because NAMA does not employ or engage construction companies and NAMA does not sell residential properties.

Information on NAMA's financial performance and on other aspects of its operations, including the provision of development funding for commercially viable residential and commercial development projects, is provided in its quarterly and annual financial statements, all of which are available on the NAMA website, www.nama.ie.

Tax Code

95. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to introduce a tax on residential properties left vacant for over a year in areas of high housing demand, as is the case in Scotland, England and France; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28639/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have no plans to introduce a tax along the lines suggested by the Deputy.

The Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 as amended provides that residential properties that are suitable for use as a dwelling are generally liable to the local property tax, whether or not they have been left vacant. However, properties that are not suitable for use as a dwelling, and are not occupied as such, for example, because they are in a serious state of dereliction, are not liable to this tax.

Implementing an increased rate of tax along the lines suggested by the Deputy would present practical and perhaps legal difficulties in the identification of genuinely empty properties. In any event, as the full rate of Local Property Tax already applies to vacant residential properties in Ireland it is thought that this should provide sufficient encouragement for property owners to ensure they are not left vacant indefinitely.

Tax Yield

96. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the relatively low increase in the income tax take in 2016 despite the rise in employment; his views on whether this points to the need to increase wages of low and middle income workers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34042/16]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Budget 2016 estimated that overall income tax receipts for 2016 would amount to €18,995 million, which represents a 4.4% year-on-year increase. Budget 2017, published last month, also projected annual growth in income tax for 2016 of 4.5%, with receipts of €19,185 million expected. This is an additional €190 million above the Budget 2016 estimate for this tax head.

Looking at the performance in the year-to-date, income tax receipts to end October 2016 are currently up 4.2% or €577 million year-on-year, but 0.6% or €94 million below profile. The performance of DIRT in 2015 was disappointing and this has continued in 2016 following lower-than-expected interest rates with receipts from this sub-component now c. €130 million below profile. Removing the impact of DIRT receipts from the income tax performance in the year-to-date would show overall receipts marginally ahead of profile, with almost one quarter of the annual income tax receipts profiled for the last two months of the year.

This indicates that the main elements of income tax continue to show robust year-on-year growth rather than a “relatively low increase” that the Deputy refers to.

As regards wage levels of low and middle income workers, I would remind the Deputy of the importance of safeguarding our competitiveness, particularly in light of the uncertainty presented by Brexit. In this regard, the Deputy will be aware of the significant depreciation of sterling over the past year or so, and the impact that this is having on our competitiveness. In order to protect jobs and prevent an increase in unemployment, it is paramount that wages move in line with productivity. Finally, I would highlight that inflation has been virtually non-existent this year, which is helping to protect real wages.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

97. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will review the system for means assessing income for the SUSI grant to allow for net income instead of gross income to be assessed, as families are struggling to meet the rising costs of education, especially families where there are multiple children in third level education; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33883/16]

98. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will consider removing the universal social charge from the means test for the SUSI grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33895/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 97 and 98 together.

The means test arrangements of the Student Grant Scheme are applied nationally on the same basis to both employed and self-employed applicants. Gross income before the deduction of income tax or the universal social charge, is assessed with certain specified social welfare and health service executive payments excluded.

The assessment of income from the same starting point is deemed to be fair and reasonable because this approach eliminates any distortion which might arise from different spending decisions in different households.

The Student Grant Scheme provides for different levels of income thresholds where families have (i) less than 4 dependent children (ii) between 4 and 7 dependent children and (iii) 8 or more dependent children. In recognition of the additional cost to families where more than one person is attending college, income thresholds may also be increased by up to €4,830 for each additional family member attending college at the same time. In this way, the Student Grant Scheme is responsive to the individual circumstances of particular families.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

99. Deputy Catherine Connolly asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of students that have been refused a SUSI grant due to the fact they could not comply with the rigid requirement for specific documentation in relation to proof of address and, more particularly, in relation to those students who live with a relative and-or a friend and do not have utility bills but notwithstanding that it is their home and their address for social protection payments; the number of appeals that have been made arising from these circumstances and the number that were successful; the number of appeals that have been made to the Student Grant Appeal Board and the number that were successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33897/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Very significant numbers of third-level students move out of home to go to college and continue to be supported by their parents while in full-time education. Confirmation that a student is living separately from his/her parents is, of itself, not sufficient to establish independent status. When considering whether a student meets the conditions to be assessed independently of his or her parents, grant awarding authorities are obliged to satisfy themselves beyond doubt, that an acceptable degree of proof of independent living in the relevant period has been submitted by the grant applicant.

The onus is on the grant applicant to provide the necessary documentary evidence as requested by the relevant grant awarding authority. In this regard, a grant awarding authority will seek to assist students in identifying relevant documentation.

Appeals to both the awarding authority and the Student Grants Appeals Board can comprise of a number of issues in addition to student classification as independent/dependent. As such, it is not possible to provide data in respect of the particular queries requested by the Deputy. However, if the Deputy has a specific query in respect of a constituent then an enquiry can be e-mailed direct to SUSI at oireachtas@susi.ie. This dedicated e-mail service is provided by SUSI to Oireachtas members to ensure that all necessary avenues are open to applicants to receive the information they need. Staff in SUSI are responding to email queries within a matter of days.

Schools Building Projects

100. Deputy Robert Troy asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will expedite the construction of a new building for a school (details supplied). [33916/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware that a building project for the school in question is included in my Department's 6 Year Construction Programme (2019/21). My Department is aware of the school's accommodation needs and will liaise with the school in due course in the context of progressing the project into the architectural planning process.

School Patronage

101. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the awarding of patronage for a school (details supplied) to the education training board without considering the huge demand in the area for an educate together ethos second level school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33919/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Two applications were received by my Department for patronage of the new post-primary school to open in 2017 to cater for the area referred to by the Deputy, one from Educate Together and the other from the relevant Education and Training Board (ETB).

The patronage assessment process is detailed and rigorous and is conducted in a careful and transparent manner. The draft assessment reports completed by my Department were forwarded to the New Schools Establishment Group, an external independent advisory group set up to oversee the process, for their consideration. Following the Group's consideration, it submitted a report with recommendations to me for consideration and final decision.

As with the assessment process for the other eight new post-primary schools opening in 2017 and 2018, parental preferences, along with the extent of diversity in the area, were key considerations in my decision in relation to the patronage of the new school. In this regard, I am satisfied that both patron applicants would increase multi-denominational, co-educational provision in the area. There was a clear majority of parental interest favouring the ETB, which provided 809 valid parental preferences. This was some 29% above the number of preferences expressed for Educate Together, which provided 626 valid parental preferences. I am satisfied with my decision to award the patronage of this new school to the ETB in this instance. I do not believe that to have awarded the patronage to Educate Together, against the transparently expressed view of the majority of parents, would have been the correct decision.

The assessment reports and the recommendations of the NSEG are available on my Department's website www.education.ie.

Education and Training Provision

102. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the supports in place to support persons who have been approved onto a Springboard course as they currently do not qualify for a SUSI grant or cannot claim BTEA if not in receipt of social protection for nine months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33945/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Springboard provides free, flexible reskilling and upskilling opportunities at higher education level for unemployed and previously self-employed people in areas of emerging skills needs. Also included under the Springboard+ banner are ICT conversion courses.

To be eligible for a place on a Springboard course a person must be unemployed, actively seeking employment, and be in receipt of one of a range of qualifying Social Protection payments, or be signing for credits or be previously self-employed. Applicants for ICT skills conversion courses are not required to be unemployed or in receipt of any DSP payments to be eligible for the courses. The only requirements are that they already hold a relevant level 8 or equivalent qualification and are able to demonstrate the capacity and underlying aptitude to undergo an intensive programme of study and work experience to acquire honours degree level ICT programming skills. ICT Conversion Courses are available on a one year full time basis, or a two-year part time basis.

Participants on part-time Springboard courses who are in receipt of one of the eligible De-

partment of Social Protection income support payments may be able to retain such payments under the Part Time Education Option (PTEO) payment. There is no requirement for participants to be in receipt of one of these payments for a particular period of time prior to the commencement of the part-time Springboard course, however, participation on a Springboard course does not confer any entitlement to receive an income support payment from the Department of Social Protection.

A person undertaking a full-time ICT Skills Conversion Course who is receipt of Jobseekers Benefit or Jobseekers Allowance for at least nine of the previous twelve months prior to commencing the course may qualify to retain their income support while participating in a full-time ICT skills conversion course. Eligible participants will transfer to a bespoke version of the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA).

Applicants in receipt of the Jobseekers Allowance, Jobseekers Benefit, Farm Assist, or those who are receiving benefits as Qualified Adults of Working Age, may participate on a two-year part-time ICT skills conversion course however they are not eligible for BTEA as they are not undertaking a full-time course of study. They will also not be able to retain their payment under the Part Time Education Option (PTEO) payment. Those in receipt of other payments such as the One Parent Family Allowance or the Disability Allowance, may be eligible to participate on the part-time programmes and retain their payment.

The BTEA and the PTEO are administered by the Department of Social Protection. Queries in relation to eligibility for the PTEO and the BTEA are dealt with by that Department.

Further details on Springboard+ courses and eligibility are available at www.springboard-courses.ie.

Courses under Springboard+ are not eligible for receipt of Student Grants as they do not meet the criteria for an approved course. Under the Student Grant Scheme, an approved course is defined as a full-time undergraduate course of at least two years duration or a full-time post-graduate course of not less than one year duration, pursued in an approved institution. Section 8 (1) (b) of the Student Support Act 2011, requires a student to attend a full-time course, in order to be considered for a grant under the Student Grant Scheme.

Schools Building Projects Status

103. Deputy Joan Burton asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the building of a school (details supplied); when construction is likely to commence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33963/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The building project for the school to which the Deputy refers is at an advanced stage of architectural planning, Stage 2b - Detailed Design, which includes the applications for Planning Permission, Fire Cert and Disability Access Cert and the preparation of tender documents. All statutory approvals have been obtained.

In September 2016, the Design Team was requested to review the impact of the recently introduced changes to the Public Works Contracts (PWC) and to revert to my Department with an assessment of what, if any, additional works are required to bring the tender documents into line with those changes.

Once the Stage 2b (Detailed Design) submission is received and reviewed by my Department and subject to no further issues arising my officials will revert to the school with regard to

the further progression of the project at that time.

This project was included in the 6 Year Programme announced on 17th November 2015 to progress to tender and construction.

School Costs

104. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to a survey by a charity (details supplied) and the findings in relation to the costs to parents in preparing children for school and their suggestions to deal with same; the way he will respond to the findings and suggestions of this survey; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33972/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I am aware of the report referred to by the Deputies.

I strongly support any measures that can be put in place to reduce costs for parents.

All schools must be sensitive to the financial pressures on parents in making decisions, not just about school uniforms or books, but about any matter that has cost implications for parents.

The Action Plan for Education outlines hundreds of actions to be implemented over the 3 year period 2016 to 2019. Some of the actions as part of the plan are to strengthen the focus on reducing school costs for parents by:

- Restoring capitation funding over a three-year period as resources permit
- Increasing the financial support for book rental schemes, in order to reduce or eliminate school book costs for parents
- Issuing a new circular to school authorities and ETBs regarding school uniform policy and other costs and the need to put a greater emphasis on reducing the cost of school uniforms and other costs.

Budget 2017 represents the start of a major programme of reinvestment in education, and the first phase of implementation of the Action Plan for Education, aimed at becoming the best education system in Europe within a decade.

It was not possible to provide additional funding in Budget 2017 in relation to this element of the Action Plan due to the many competing demands for the available funding. However, this commitment remains a priority for me to address as soon as possible during the lifetime of the Action Plan. It is important to note that the total allocation to this Department for additional policy measures, after demographics and Industrial Relations commitments, was €130 million and of which all our commitments in higher and further education and primary and secondary schools had to be funded.

My Department's position in relation to voluntary contributions is that they are permissible provided it is made absolutely clear to parents that there is no question of compulsion to pay. I have no plans to alter this position so long as schools ensure that the contributions are sought in a manner that makes this clear to all concerned.

Separately, the Deputy will be aware that the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill, which was published on 6th July 2016, contains a provision prohibiting the charging of fees or seeking payment or contributions for an application for admission to a school or for the enrolment

or continued enrolment of a student in a school.

I also intend to introduce a stronger complaints procedure and a charter for parents. It is important that schools should consult parents on matters relating to their children's education, including those matters which have cost implications, and schools should be responsive to the views and concerns of parents. In that regard requiring schools to have a parent charter will ensure that schools will interact better with parent associations and with individual parents.

I plan to make an announcement shortly on draft legislation that will replace Section 28 of the Education Act, 1998 and require every school to publish and operate a Parent and Student Charter in accordance with national guidelines. These guidelines will be published after consultation with the education partners.

I believe that these actions will significantly strengthen the focus on reducing school costs for parents.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

105. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to encourage post-primary mainstream schools to establish ASD special classes; his views on the reluctance of many schools to establish such classes despite requests from the NCSE through their network of SENOs; the total number of ASD classes in post-primary schools broken down by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34009/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware that this Government is committed to ensuring that all children with Special Educational Needs, including those with autism, can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in school settings through the primary and post primary school network.

Such placements facilitate access to individualised education programmes which may draw from a range of appropriate educational interventions, delivered by fully qualified professional teachers, with the support of Special Needs Assistants and the appropriate school curriculum.

There are approximately 14,000 students with ASD in the school system:

- 63% are educated in mainstream classes
- 23% are educated in special classes in mainstream primary and post-primary schools; and
- 14% are educated in special schools

In respect of children with ASD who are unable to learn effectively in a mainstream class for most or all of the school day even with appropriate supports, they may be enrolled in special classes or special schools where more intensive and supportive interventions are provided.

Special classes for children with ASD within mainstream post primary schools have a lower pupil-teacher ratio of 6:1.5 and also have Special Needs Assistant support normally amounting to 2 Ss for a class of 6 students.

The NCSE, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), in consultation with the relevant education partners, is responsible for the establishment of special classes in various geographical areas as required. The NCSE continues to engage with schools in opening special classes where there is an identified need for special class provision.

Progress in developing this network has been significant and in addition to the special school placements there are currently over 1,000 special classes throughout the country at primary and post primary level of which 762 are for children with Autism.

The NCSE recently published a list of special classes for the 2016/17 school year. In total there are 1,153 special classes available, which is an increase of over 100% in the number of special classes which were available in 2011, which was 548.

The NCSE has advised that for the current school year there will be 127 early intervention classes, 525 primary ASD classes and 237 post-primary ASD classes, which represents an increase of approx. 16% on 2015/16 classes for children with autism.

The Education (Admission to Schools) Bill was published on 6th July 2016. The Admissions Bill provides that where a school has places available it must admit all applicants. The Bill contains a provision for the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) to designate a school for a child who has no school place for reasons related to the child's special educational needs and for the Child and Family Agency to designate a school for a child who has no school place (other than a child with special educational needs).

Details of all special classes for children with special educational needs, are available on www.ncse.ie in county order, and with new classes identified.

The NCSE recently launched guidelines for Boards of Management and Principals of Primary and Post Primary schools which provide information on setting up and organising special classes. These guidelines are available to download from www.ncse.ie in county order, and with new classes identified.

Departmental Records

106. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide a list of all contingent assets in his Department and in agencies under his Department where amounts can be owed but are not listed in the national accounts as an asset; if he will further provide a full breakdown of each category of contingent assets and the estimated amounts in the category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34074/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): In line with general accounting procedures, and in accordance with Public Financial Procedures and guidance for the preparation of Appropriation Accounts issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, my Department does not recognise contingent assets or include them in notes in the Appropriation Accounts.

Any known amounts owed to my Department at the end of the financial year (31 December) are either recorded in the Balance Sheet or noted in my Department's Annual Appropriation Accounts.

Agency bodies under the aegis of my Department produce their own separate accounts and the accounting treatment of any amounts owed to these bodies is a matter for the bodies concerned.

Departmental Funding

107. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will make

resources available within his Department to support and facilitate a centre (details supplied) in view of the improving economic conditions. [34087/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland (SAVI) Report, launched in 2002 was funded by Atlantic Philanthropies with additional funding from the then Department of Health and Children and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. While recognising the importance of this valuable study my Department is not, however, in a position to provide funding support for the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre to conduct a second SAVI Study.

Higher Education Institutions

108. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress made in relation to the programme for Government commitment on addressing long-term challenges such as long-term funding models in higher education. [33805/16]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Report of the Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education, published in July, clearly outlines the funding challenges and offers a number of approaches and recommendations for consideration for the medium to long term. As committed to in the Programme for Government, the report has been referred to the Education Committee as part of the process for formulating a plan for the future of the sector.

We will require reasonable consensus to enable us to move forward with a realistic and achievable strategy for funding the system into the future. I shall work with the Education Committee as it analyses all of the options put forward by the Expert Group and hears the voice of all stakeholders.

While this process will address the medium and long term funding needs of higher education we must in the interim also consider the immediate challenges, and in that context I am pleased that in Budget 2017 I secured for the first time in nine years additional funding for the sector. In 2017 an additional €36.5 million will be made available with €160 million additional over the next three years.

It is also intended to carry out a policy review in order to implement a sustainable and predictable multi-annual funding model for higher and further education and training involving increased Employer and Exchequer contributions from 2018. This review will be in line with the policy framework set out in the National Skills Strategy and will complement the ongoing work by the Oireachtas Committee in relation to the Expert Group report.

Wind Energy Guidelines

109. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his timetable to update the wind energy guidelines 2006 which were based on ETSU-R-97, the assessment and rating of noise from wind farms issued by the UK Department of Trade and Industry in September 1996; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33893/16]

110. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he will consider issuing fresh draft guidelines in view of the time taken to date considering the draft guidelines on wind energy to take into account current international

best practice as the draft guidelines have been considered for such an extensive period that they will be out of date before they come to be approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33894/16]

111. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the position regarding the publication of new guidelines for wind turbines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33964/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 109 to 111, inclusive, together.

In December 2013, my Department published proposed “draft” revisions to the noise, setback distance and shadow flicker aspects of the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines. These draft revisions proposed:

- the setting of a more stringent day- and night-time noise limit of 40 decibels for future wind energy developments,
- a mandatory minimum setback distance of 500 metres between a wind turbine and the nearest dwelling for amenity considerations, and
- the complete elimination of shadow flicker between wind turbines and neighbouring dwellings.

A public consultation process was also initiated on these proposed draft revisions to the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines, which ran until 21 February 2014. My Department received submissions from 7,500 organisations and members of the public during this public consultation process.

As outlined in the Programme for a Partnership Government, the Government is committed to finalising the revisions to the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines within the first six months of coming into office. The revisions to the Guidelines will be informed by the public consultation process and by best international practice. My Department is continuing to advance work on the Guidelines, in conjunction with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, in order to bring the matter to a conclusion as early as possible.

The revisions to the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines, when finalised, will be issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Planning authorities, and, where applicable, An Bord Pleanála are required to have regard to such guidelines, issued under Section 28, in the performance of their functions under the Planning Acts.

Motor Tax

112. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 611 of 16 September 2016, the number of the 1,170,226 vehicles taxed on the basis of engine capacity, that is, pre-2008 cars, where the engine capacity is greater than 1,200 cc and less than 1,200 cc; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33886/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The information requested is set out in the following table. The reply to Question No 611 of 16 September 2016 reflects the position at 31 December 2015, but as the numbers in the engine capacity fleet are decreasing month on month, an additional column with the num-

bers taxed as at 30 September 2016 is also included.

Engine Capacity	No. of vehicles at 31 December 2015	No. of vehicles at 30 September 2016
Engine capacity less than 1,200 cc	171,845	156,586
Engine capacity greater than 1,200 cc	998,381	906,182
Total	1,170,226	1,062,768

Motor Tax

113. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 611 of 16 September 2016, if he will provide a breakdown of the number of the 814,904 cars taxed on the basis of CO2 emissions by emissions category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33890/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The information requested is set out in the following table. The reply to Question No 611 of 16 September 2016 reflects the position at 31 December 2015, but as the numbers in the CO2 fleet are increasing month on month, an additional column with the numbers taxed as at 30 September 2016 is also included.

Band	CO2 emissions	No. of vehicles at 31 December 2015	No. of vehicles at 30 September 2016
A0	0 g/km	1,028	1,470
A1	1 - 80 g/km	1,008	2,617
A2	81 - 1000 g/km	56,339	89,283
A3	101 - 110 g/km	92,024	135,359
A4	111 - 120 g/km	206,652	248,791
B1	121 - 130 g/km	122,651	144,435
B2	131 - 140 g/km	189,895	201,861
C	141 - 155 g/km	91,574	97,292
D	156 - 170 g/km	33,850	34,780
E	171 - 190 g/km	13,626	14,139
F	190 - 225 g/km	5,516	5,507
G	& 225 g/km	741	738
Total	-	814,904	976,272

Departmental Funding

114. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the purchase price of a property (details supplied) in County Tipperary. [33896/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I understand that Tipperary County Council is seeking to purchase a site for the purposes of developing a new town park and related facilities at Newport. The estimated cost of the overall development is €650,000, which includes site acquisition costs. My Department approved funding of €325,000 in August 2016, on a matching funds basis, with the balance to be provided by Tipperary County Council. The details regarding the site acquisition are a matter for the Council.

Agriculture Industry

115. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he will implement stricter enforcement of the protocol for the spreading of bio-solids and sludge as many residents in affected areas of County Meath are concerned regarding the strong odour which comes from fields in which bio-solids and sludge spreading takes place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33961/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department has responsibility for the European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2014. These Regulations set requirements for all land-spreading, including the spreading of sewage sludge, and are designed to provide additional protection to waters from agricultural sources. They include measures such as set periods when the land spreading of fertilisers are prohibited; limits on the land application of fertilisers; and set distances from water bodies including boreholes, springs and wells for the abstraction of water used for human consumption and storage requirements.

In addition to the above, the spreading of sewage sludge on agricultural land is subject to compliance with relevant codes of practice such as the Code of Good Practice for the Use of Bio - solids in Agriculture. This Code has been designed to ensure that the use of bio - solids in agriculture will, *inter alia*, not pose a risk to human, animal or plant health, avoid water and air pollution and minimise public inconvenience. In this regard, the Code includes guidelines on the minimum buffer zones to be observed when spreading bio-solids in the vicinity of particular structures or features, such as sensitive buildings, dwellings, domestic wells, lakes or small watercourses.

My colleague, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, also has responsibilities in this area under a number of waste management regulations dealing with the use of sewage sludge, including the registration of sewage sludge facilities by local authorities.

Local Authority Housing Provision

116. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the reason, at a time when he says priority is being given to the building of houses to meet the huge need for social and other accommodation, officials from his Department have effectively stalled the building of 55 houses by Galway City Council in the Ballymoneen Road, Knocknacarra area of Galway city by instructing the council to review the possibility of building an additional five houses in the development, the effect being to further delay a development for which the council had been given verbal indication that approval was imminent almost a year ago; when he expects this development to be given approval; when construction will begin; when the houses will be completed; the other housing projects that are in the pipeline for Galway City Council and Galway County Council, including their locations and timetables of their progress; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33984/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): Funding approval is already in place from my Department for the construction by Galway City Council of a total of 69 new social houses at Ballymoneen Road at an estimated cost of over €14 million. I understand that the first phase of this project to deliver 14 new houses is scheduled to commence on site shortly, while the second phase to deliver a minimum of 55 houses is at design stage. As with all social housing proposals, there is an onus on the

local authority and on my Department to ensure best value for money and a reasonable density within the development to meet respond to social housing need. Accordingly, contacts between my Department and Galway City Council have included the consideration of options in relation to the density and design for this development, but such considerations should not delay advancement of the project. I have assured all local authorities that funding is available to support them in the early advancement of new social housing projects. With funding approval already in place, I am particularly keen to see the phases of the project at Ballymoneen Road advanced as quickly as possible, with the precise dates for completion being a matter for Galway City Council.

More broadly on social housing across Galway City Council and Galway County Council, both local authorities were notified of social housing targets and provisional funding allocations in April 2015; these are available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.environ.ie/housing/social-housing/minsters-kelly-coffey-announce-eu15-billion-social-housing-targets-local> .

The two Galway authorities have a combined target of 1,126 social housing units for the period out to 2017, supported by an allocation of €58.5 million, to be invested in a combination of building, buying and leasing schemes.

Following the notification of these targets, approvals for a substantial number of new social housing projects were announced in May 2015, July 2015 and January 2016. These three announcements included over 270 units of accommodation in respect of Galway, supported by investment of some € 44.3 million, details of which are available on my Department's website at the following links:

<http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentHousing/Housing/News/MainBody,41340,en.htm>

<http://www.environ.ie/en/DevelopmentHousing/Housing/News/MainBody,42225,en.htm>

<http://www.environ.ie/housing/social-housing/ministers-kelly-coffey-announce-further-1000-social-housing-units>.

In addition, a project to deliver 73 new social housing units at Ballyburke in Galway is amongst over 450 new units that are part of bundle 2 of the social housing Public Private Partnership (PPP) programme. I announced the eight sites in bundle 2 in co-operation with the local authorities in each area in July 2016 and the projects have a capital value of approximately €100 million, as part of a programme of investment totalling €300 million in social housing through the PPP model that will, overall, deliver 1,500 social housing units. All of these projects are now undergoing planning and development work by the local authorities and, as with all social housing projects. I am keen to see them advanced as soon as possible.

With the projects already in the pipeline for both Galway Councils, and given the measures set out in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, I anticipate a ramping up in terms of social housing construction activity over the next year. While social housing construction projects are being advanced, acquisitions of new and second-hand houses and apartments remain an effective means of meeting immediate social housing need. This year, the Galway Councils are looking to purchase around 40 housing units for social housing purposes, while they have also continued to receive substantial support from my Department to remediate vacant social homes and make them available to those on the waiting list.

Support is also provided by my Department to Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) under the Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF) for the delivery of new social housing. This funding approach is being used to support the acquisition of 165 units by four AHBs in Galway City and

County. Delivery is contingent on AHBs securing the balance of funding required from either private finance or other borrowings. If successful, it is anticipated that 69 of these units will be delivered by the end of 2016, a further 92 in 2017 and the final 4 in early 2018. Locations include Roscam, Ballinasloe, Ballymoneen Rd, Doughiska, Spiddal and Tuam.

Departmental Records

117. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he will provide a list of all contingent assets in his Department and in agencies under his Department where amounts can be owed but are not listed in the national accounts as an asset; if he will further provide a full breakdown of each category of contingent assets and the estimated amounts in the category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34075/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): There are no contingent assets in my Department. All amounts owed to my Department at the end of the financial year (31 December) are recorded in the national accounts as assets under Accrued Income as per the statement of accounting policies and principles for appropriation accounts. The most recent Appropriation Account for my Department is in respect of the year ended 31 December 2015 and is available online at <http://www.audgen.gov.ie/documents/annualreports/2015/appacc/en/vote%2034.pdf>.

The accounting treatment of any amounts owed to bodies under the aegis of my Department is a matter for the bodies concerned.

Housing Provision

118. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the progress made in relation to the programme for Government commitment on addressing long-term challenges such as housing. [33805/16]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I refer to the reply given to Question No. 167 of 2 November 2016 which outlines the position in relation to this matter.

Since that reply issued, the First Quarterly Progress Report on the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness – Rebuilding Ireland (in respect of Quarter 3 commitments and actions) was published on 1 November, and can be accessed through the following link:- <http://rebuildingireland.ie/First-Progress-Report.pdf>.

Local Authority Staff

119. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason local government employees employed post January 2013 pay PRSI class K contributions and not A1 contributions; his plans to review this policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33960/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): All employees of local authorities are insured for PRSI purposes, as either modified rate contributors or as class A contributors, arising from their employment in the local authority. Class K PRSI only applies to their

non-local authority income.

Civil and public sector workers, including local government employees, recruited before April 1995 pay PRSI on their salary at modified or lower rates of contribution and are classified for PRSI purposes under PRSI Classes B, C or D. These “modified rate” contributors have access to a limited range of social insurance benefits, including widow/widowers’ contributory payments and guardian’s payment contributory.

Civil and public sector employees engaged after 1995 pay PRSI on their salary under PRSI Class A. It is charged at the rate of 4% for employees, with employer PRSI rates of 8.5% or 10.75%, depending on earnings. Class A PRSI contributions entitle the employee to access the full range of long term and short term social insurance benefits.

In 2013, modified rate contributors who also have earned self-employed income or unearned income became liable, for the first time, to pay PRSI on that earned income. This income is liable at the class K rate of 4%. Entitlement to social insurance benefits does not accrue from the payment of this charge.

Since 2014, all employees (in the public and private sector) and occupational pensioners under 66 years, with unearned income only, are liable to pay Class K PRSI on that unearned income where it exceeds €5,000.

Class K PRSI is charged at 4% and does not give access to social insurance entitlements based on the payment of the charge. Prior to 2014 these employees were exempt from PRSI on such unearned income, which includes rental and investment income, dividends and interest on deposits. This provision applies to all employees, regardless of the PRSI class they pay on their employment income.

All workers pay PRSI on their earnings from employment. If an employee has income from self-employment e.g. taxi driver, farmer etc. he or she also pays PRSI as a self-employed contributor on the profits from the taxi driving plus any other unearned income he or she might have e.g. rental income. The measure to charge class K PRSI on employees who have unearned income only was introduced to ensure equity by ensuring that PRSI is chargeable, regardless of the source of the employee’s additional income.

Employees paying class K PRSI on unearned income can generate entitlement to social insurance benefits based on PRSI they pay on their employment income. Class A employees with unearned income already have access to the full range of social insurance benefits, because of their PRSI class A status. Modified rate employees have access to a limited range of social insurance benefits but have entitlement to generous Exchequer-funded occupational pensions.

Invalidity Pension Eligibility

120. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will reinstate an invalidity pension in respect of a person (details supplied) pending receipt of information requested by his Department in view of the fact that the request letter was issued on 28 October 2016 and the person did not have 28 days to reply to same; and the reason farming five hectares of land for therapeutic purposes would disbar the person from being in receipt of this pension when there is no substantial income and where his Department has a policy of encouraging persons in receipt of invalidity pension to remain as effective as possible. [33905/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Invalidity pension (IP) is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because

of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the pay related social insurance (PRSI) contribution conditions.

A review of the gentleman's continued eligibility has been completed and he continues to satisfy the conditions for receipt of IP. His IP payment has been reinstated and arrears due have issued.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Payments

121. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on a carer's allowance will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33913/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Carer's allowance was awarded to the person concerned on 3 August 2016 and the first payment issued to their nominated bank account on 13 October 2016.

Arrears of allowance due from 4 August 2016 to 5 October 2016 have also issued. The person concerned was notified of these details on 5 October 2016.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Applications

122. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on a carer's allowance will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33914/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I confirm that my department received an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on 4 October 2016. The application is currently being processed and once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy. If you require any further assistance on this please contact Philip in my office.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

123. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of a domiciliary care allowance appeal by a person (details supplied). [33922/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer on 17th October 2016, 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.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Social Welfare Benefits Waiting Times

124. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the current waiting times for social protection applications for various schemes (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33930/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The information requested by the deputy is detailed in the following tabular statement.

Social Welfare claims by average time to award October 2016	
Scheme	Average Waiting Time (weeks)
Carer's Allowance	19
State Pension Non-Contributory	23
State Pension Contributory (Domestic)	6
Domiciliary Care Allowance	14
Disability Allowance	14
Invalidity Pension	9
Social Welfare Appeals (year 2015)	21

Social Welfare Benefits Eligibility

125. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Social Protection if the extension of treatment benefits to self-employed persons from March 2017 will include the cost of hearing aids; if these benefits will be available to retired persons as well as active self employed persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33949/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The announcement made in Budget 2017 provides for the extension of treatment benefits to self employed contributors, including cover for the hearing aid grant, from March 2017.

When the proposed changes are legislated for, PRSI contributions paid at Class S will be reckonable for dental, optical and audiological (hearing aid) benefit in the same way as is currently the case with Class A contributions. Retired people who have paid Class S PRSI may also qualify, providing they meet the relevant PRSI contribution conditions.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy. If you require any further information please don't hesitate to contact Philip in my office.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

126. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an appeal on a carer's allowance decision in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33950/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 26th October 2016. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When

these papers have been received from the Department, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral appeal 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.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Rent Supplement Scheme Appeals

127. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of an appeal on a rent allowance decision in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33952/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 14th October 2016. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought from the Department of Social Protection. These papers have been received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 24th October 2016 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Benefit Appeals

128. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of a carer's benefit appeal in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33962/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I confirm that my department received an application for carer's benefit from the person concerned on 27 April 2016. The person concerned was refused carer's benefit on the grounds that she was not providing full-time care and attention as required.

The person concerned was notified on 19 July 2016 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

A review of this decision was requested and following this review the deciding officer decided that there was no change to the original decision. The person concerned was notified on 29 August 2016 of the outcome, the reason for it and of her right of appeal within 21 days.

There is no record of an appeal against this decision being made to the Social Welfare Appeals Office.

If the lady in question believes she may qualify, she may make a new claim for carer's benefit and it will be considered and decided upon by my Department as soon as possible.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Eligibility

129. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Social Protection when carer's allowance payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in view of the fact that the appeal was successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33967/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): An application for carer's allowance (CA) was received from the person concerned on 25 January 2016.

The application was disallowed on 31 May 2016. The person concerned appealed this decision and the case was submitted to the Social Welfare Appeals office for determination on 12 July 2016.

An appeals officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence has allowed the appeal and the decision has been returned to my Department for implementation. The case is currently being processed and, once completed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the relevant details.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Disability Allowance Applications

130. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Social Protection the status of a disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34000/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): Following a successful appeal, this lady has been awarded disability allowance with effect from 4 May 2016. The first payment will be made by her chosen payment method on 30 November 2016.

Arrears of payment due will issue as soon as possible once any necessary adjustment is calculated and applied in respect of any overlapping payments or in respect of outstanding overpayments (if applicable).

I trust this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

Invalidity Pension Applications

131. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an invalidity pension will be approved for a person (details supplied); and if the matter will be expedited. [34002/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The gentleman referred to has been awarded invalidity pension with effect from the 28 July 2016. Payment will issue to his nominated bank account on the 24 November 2016. Any ar-

rears due from 28 July 2016 to 23 November 2016 (less any overlapping social welfare payment and/or outstanding overpayment) will issue in due course. The gentleman in question was notified of this decision on the 08 November 2016.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Records

132. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will provide a list of all contingent assets in his Department and in agencies under his Department where amounts can be owed but are not listed in the national accounts as an asset; if he will further provide a full breakdown of each category of contingent assets and the estimated amounts in the category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34082/16]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The following contingent assets are recorded in the Department of Social Protections (DSP) books of account as at 31 December 2015:

DSP Contingent Assets at 31/12/2015

-	€000	€000	€000
Category	Social Insurance Fund (SIF)	Vote 37 Appropriation Account	TOTAL
Scheme Debt	90,225	376,851	467,076
Redundancy Debt	335,671	-	335,671
Insolvency Debt	111,342	-	111,342
TOTAL	537,238	376,851	915,089

The definition of a contingent asset as defined by the International Public Sector Accounting Standards Board (IPSASB) is as follows:

“A contingent asset is a possible asset that arises from past events and whose existence will be confirmed only by the occurrence or non-occurrence of one or more uncertain events not wholly within the control of the entity (IPSAS 19)”.

In accordance with IPSAS 19 and standard Government cash accounting practice the contingent assets as detailed in the table are not recognised in the balance sheet of DSP’s statutory accounts.

DSPs accounts are prepared on a cash basis as opposed to an accruals basis. Social welfare benefits and allowances (including Redundancy & Insolvency (R&I)) are recognised when the payments are made. Receipts in relation to amounts recovered from welfare benefits and allowances (including R&I) are recognised in the period in which the amount is recovered.

Consequently the related debt is not recognised as an asset in either DSP’s Vote Appropriation account or in the SIF account. In the case of the above mentioned contingent assets, the book value of the debt is disclosed in notes 4 and 5 in SIF account and 6.1 in the Vote Appropriation account.

Departmental Records

133. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will

provide a list of all contingent assets in his Department and in agencies under his Department where amounts can be owed but are not listed in the national accounts as an asset; if he will further provide a full breakdown of each category of contingent assets and the estimated amounts in the category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34077/16]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department is responsible for two Votes, Vote 27 (International Co-operation) and Vote 28 (Foreign Affairs and Trade). There are no agencies under the aegis of the Department.

Insofar as Vote 27 is concerned there are no contingent assets held by the Department.

Regarding Vote 28, the only contingent asset is a very small one relating to arrangements whereby citizens are repatriated at State expense in exceptional situations. The types of situations are varied and usually relate to persons with serious illness, destitution or where there is a serious concern for the welfare or safety of individuals.

Persons assisted are obliged to sign an undertaking to repay the amount advanced to the Department, with every effort made to recover the amounts advanced.

In 2016, eight citizens have received assistance to-date under the repatriation budget at a total cost of €3,325. €1,672 has been recouped so far this year and has been remitted as Exchequer Extra Receipts.

In 2015, six citizens received assistance under the repatriation budget at a cost of €2,697. €2,215 was recovered in 2015 and remitted as Exchequer Extra Receipts.

Public Sector Staff Recruitment

134. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 258 of 2 November 2016, if he will confirm that there are currently plans for recruitment at assistant principal level in 2016. [33902/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): As the Deputy will be aware, the last open and interdepartmental standard Assistant Principal Officer competitions were held in June 2015 and is currently being used to fill existing vacancies at Assistant Principal Officer level in the Civil Service. Such panels usually last for a period of between eighteen months to two years.

A competition for Human Resource Managers at Assistant Principal Officer level was advertised by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) last Thursday 4 November 2016.

While my officials and officials in PAS are discussing the possibility of further competitions including at Assistant Principal Officer level, it is not possible at this time to confirm when such a competition may be held.

Appointments to State Boards

135. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he changed his position on the reappointment of a person (details supplied) to Horse Racing Ireland following a request from the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to sanction the reappointment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33951/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The appointment of the Chief Executive is a matter for the Board of Horse Racing Ireland under the relevant legislation. The Board of Horse Racing Ireland formally reappointed the Chief Executive Officer on the 21st of July on terms and conditions approved by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine and I, as Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

The case made for the reappointment was supported by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The case made indicated that the reappointment was required because of the substantial importance of the role played by the CEO HRI in the thoroughbred horse industry, the expertise, experience and qualifications brought by the current CEO to the post and the continuity the appointment would provide for the implementation of the strategic plan for the development of this important industry.

Lansdowne Road Agreement Implementation

136. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the total cost of the implementation of the Lansdowne Road Agreement in 2017; if that cost has been revised in view of recent Labour Court recommendations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34060/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The provisions of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2015, which implements the terms of the Lansdowne Road Agreement, partially unwind the pay reductions imposed on public servants, and are prudent and sustainable in the fiscal space currently available to Government. The estimated overall gross cost of these pay measures (inclusive of the previously committed costs attributable to the Haddington Road Agreement) in each year of the Agreement is €267m in 2016, €290m in 2017, and €287m in 2018 or a cumulative total of €844m in 2018. Budget 2017 allocated €290 million to implement the terms of the Lansdowne Road Agreement in 2017,

The cost of the Labour Court's proposed settlement (which remains subject to ballot by the relevant Garda Associations) will be met from within existing budgetary allocations.

Public Service Pay Commission Establishment

137. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the timeframe for the Public Service Pay Commission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34061/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Government has established the Public Service Pay Commission which held its first meeting yesterday and is now up and running. The Commission will be advisory in nature and provide an initial report in the second quarter of 2017. For its initial report, the Commission has been asked to provide input on how the unwinding of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest legislation should proceed. This will inform any future engagement with staff representatives in relation to pay. The Commission is chaired by Mr Kevin Duffy, who has a deep knowledge of Irish Industrial Relations after nearly 20 years serving on the Labour Court.

The Government will retain the ability to negotiate directly with its employees in respect of pay. The Commission's role will be to provide evidence-based objective analysis on pay matters to assist Department of Public Expenditure and Reform officials in discharging their

negotiation function on behalf of Government.

Departmental Records

138. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide a list of all contingent assets in his Department and in agencies under his Department where amounts can be owed but are not listed in the national accounts as an asset; if he will further provide a full breakdown of each category of contingent assets and the estimated amounts in the category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34081/16]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): While contingent assets are provided for in international accounting standards, they only apply to entities that use the accruals basis of accounting. The Vote for my Department and the other Votes within the Public Expenditure and Reform Vote group are accounted for in the annual Appropriation Accounts on a cash basis in accordance with the Exchequer and Audit Departments Act, 1866. Notes to the annual accounts are provided on foot of policies specified in the circulars issued by my Department.

In accordance with these accounting requirements, there is no reporting in relation to contingent assets. In the case of agencies under my Department that are required to use the accruals basis of accounting, I am advised that they do not have any contingent assets that must be accounted for under the relevant accounting standards applying to them.

National Museum

139. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the major changes being made to the National Museum buildings to facilitate another organisation in view of the enormous and unnecessary disruption to the work of the museum in conserving, protecting and exhibiting the historic artifacts of the nation and the world. [33917/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I assume that the Deputy is referring to the request from the Houses of the Oireachtas Service to the Government that the Ceramic Room in the National Museum, Kildare Street, be made available on a temporary basis for Seanad Éireann in order to allow essential fire protection and health and safety works to be carried out in Leinster House. Such a temporary relocation of the Seanad is, of course, a matter for the Houses of the Oireachtas in the first instance, while issues relating to the works to be carried out are proper to the Office of Public Works, which has overall responsibility for the State's accommodation needs.

My role, on behalf of Government, was to request the National Museum to facilitate the relocation request and the Board of the Museum has agreed to so facilitate it. As the Ceramic Room is used primarily for education purposes, additional funding is being made available to provide alternative accommodation within the Museum for its education programme and for the installation of a new lift, which will provide disability access to the upper level of the Museum for the first time.

I understand that the Board of the Museum is engaging in a proactive way with the Oireachtas and a wider oversight group with a view to facilitating the temporary relocation of the Seanad while ensuring that the Museum can continue to deliver its full range of services.

Departmental Schemes

140. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs when she expects to notify local authorities which applications under the town and village renewal scheme are to go ahead; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33985/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): On 9th August this year, I launched the Town and Village Renewal Scheme with an allocation of €10 million in funding for this year. A sum of €380,000 was made available to each of the 26 counties for 2016 under this initial phase of the scheme. Local Authorities, in conjunction with local communities and businesses, were each invited to submit up to 8 proposals to my Department by the end of September for approval.

Following an assessment of the proposals received, on 4th November I announced the details of 172 towns and villages which will benefit from the funding available under this year's Town and Village Renewal Scheme. The full list of towns benefiting under the scheme is available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/more-than-170-towns-and-villages-benefit-from-funding-under-e10m-town-and-village-renewal-scheme-minister-humphreys/>

My officials will be in contact with the relevant Local Authorities shortly to finalise arrangements and enter into funding agreements for the proposed projects.

Towns and villages are the heart of rural communities in Ireland and I am committed, through this scheme, to making them more attractive and more sustainable places in which to live and work. I have secured increased funding of €12 million for an enhanced Town and Village Renewal scheme as part of Budget 2017. This represents a trebling of the original 2016 baseline allocation of €4 million. Under the 2017 scheme, I intend to run a pilot to encourage increased residential occupancy in town and village centres. Details of this scheme are currently being prepared by my officials.

Commemorative Events

141. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs when the 2017 Famine Memorial Day will take place. [33927/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Arrangements for the 2017 National Famine Commemoration will be considered shortly by the National Famine Commemoration Committee, which I chair. Details of the venue and location will be announced early in the New Year.

Invasive Plant Species

142. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the number of invasive species of plants and weed detected in Connemara National Park, Letterfrack, County Galway; the extent of their presence there; the kind of threat they pose to the natural environment; the plans in place to tackle them, including an estimated cost of any such action; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33983/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather

Humphreys): At present, there are three species of invasive plants identified within the boundaries of Connemara National Park. These are Lesser Knotweed (*Persicaria campanulata*), Giant Rhubarb (*Gunnera tinctoria*) and Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*). Each of these poses its own particular challenge and requires a specific plan of action to control, manage and, where possible and practicable, eradicate.

Lesser Knotweed is present in a small area of Connemara National Park and is not considered a major threat. A plan has been developed, in conjunction with Letterfrack Tidy Towns Committee, to eradicate this species within the village and the National Park. Due to the small area involved, costs will be minimal and total eradication is expected.

A small number of Giant Rhubarb plants have been identified within the confines of the National Park. Due to identification of this species in the adjacent Letterfrack village area, it has been included in the plan, formulated with Letterfrack Tidy Towns, to eradicate invasive species from the area. As with Lesser Knotweed, it is expected that the costs involved will be low, being limited mainly to the cost of the herbicides used.

Rhododendron occurs in important habitats in Connemara National Park such as oak woodlands, bogs and heath, and is considered a problematic invasive species. My Department carries out an annual targeted programme of works to manage the spread of Rhododendron in the Park. The extent of the problem varies from area to area within the Park and, having regard to the very dynamic nature of this invasive species, the targeted management programme is routinely monitored and adjusted with a view to ensuring optimum efficacy.

If left unchecked, this invasive species can grow in dense thickets and replace native shrub, exclude native vegetation, and constrain native woodland regeneration. The management programme has made significant inroads into the problem and large areas of previously infested areas are now clear of the plant. Since 2012, over €13,000 has been spent by my Department on Rhododendron clearance in Connemara National Park.

Ultimately the plan is to clear all Rhododendron ponticum from our National Parks and, as part of that plan, the annual Rhododendron management programme is intended to create conditions in the Park that are conducive to the protection and re-establishment of native species and, particularly, our native woodlands. My Department is committed to continuing this important and challenging work into the future.

In this regard I would like to recognise the important contribution of volunteer groups to this work, and also to acknowledge the excellent work of my Department's staff in Connemara National Park who, along with their colleagues in National Parks around the country, have been instrumental in developing new methods to increase the effectiveness of our efforts to control this plant and other invasive species.

General information on invasive species and what the public can do to help is available on the invasive species section of the National Biodiversity Data Centre website at <http://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/>.

Foras na Gaeilge

143. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the amount of budget for Foras na Gaeilge for 2017; if this funding is an increase or decrease on the 2016 figure; if her attention has been drawn to the fact that approximately 120 jobs are dependent on this budget; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33990/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne): As I indicated in my reply to Questions Nos 285, 287 and 288 on 8 November 2016, the budget for Foras na Gaeilge is subject to approval by the North South Ministerial Council, given its status as an agency of An Foras Teanga, which is a North South Implementation Body co-funded by my Department and the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland.

An indicative provision of €13.239m has been provided within my Department's Vote for An Foras Teanga in 2017. The comparative provision in 2016 was €13.201m.

Hare Coursing

144. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the mauling of a hare at a hare coursing event in Ballinagar, County Offaly, on 29 October 2016 (details supplied); if her Department is investigating the incident; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34013/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Staff of my Department were present at this coursing event to monitor it and I have asked for a report on the matter.

Departmental Records

145. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs if she will provide a list of all contingent assets in her Department and in agencies under her Department where amounts can be owed but are not listed in the national accounts as an asset; if she will further provide a full breakdown of each category of contingent assets and the estimated amounts in the category; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34070/16]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I am advised that while contingent assets are provided for in international accounting standards, they only apply to entities that use the accruals basis of accounting. The Vote for my Department is accounted for in the annual Appropriation Accounts on a cash basis in accordance with the Exchequer and Audit Departments Act. Notes to the annual accounts are provided on foot of policies specified in the circulars issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and, in accordance with these accounting requirements, there is no reporting in relation to contingent assets.

In relation to those agencies under the aegis of my Department, I am advised that they do not have any contingent assets that that would come within the scope of the Deputy's Question.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

146. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the fair deal scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34015/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): The Nursing Homes Support Scheme (NHSS) is a system of financial support for those in need of long-term nursing home care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their income

and assets while the State pays the balance of the cost. The Scheme aims to ensure that long-term nursing home care is accessible and affordable for everyone and that people are cared for in the most appropriate settings. A financial assessment is carried out by the HSE to determine how much a participant in the Scheme will contribute to the cost of their care. The Programme for a Partnership Government has committed to reviewing the NHSS to remove any discrimination against small business and family farms.

When the NHSS commenced in 2009, a commitment was made that it would be reviewed after three years. The Report of the Review was published in July 2015. Arising out of the Review, a number of key issues have been identified for more detailed consideration across Departments and Agencies, including the treatment of business and farm assets for the purposes of the financial assessment element of the Scheme. This work is currently underway and the IFA has made a submission in this context to the Interdepartmental Group which is overseeing the Review. Changes arising from this Review may require legislative implementation.

Health Services

147. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the name of the consultant ophthalmologist that has been assigned to assess a person (details supplied); if he will expedite the person's assessment and operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33885/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

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.

Health Services

148. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the name of the consultant ophthalmologist that has been assigned to a person (details supplied); if he will expedite the assessment and operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33891/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospital Services

149. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 369 of 4 October 2016, with regard to the risk requirement for a second cath lab being placed on the South/South West Hospital Group risk register in April 2016 rated at 16, if the rating of 16 was changed or revised upwards or downwards; when changes took place; the basis for any changes; the person or body that makes the decision to alter the risk rating; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33892/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I have been advised by the HSE that neither University Hospital Waterford nor the South/South West Hospital Group have changed their risk ratings in relation to out of hours access to interventional cardiology services in the six months prior to 19 September 2016. However, as the management of the South/South West Hospital Group risk register is an operational matter, I have asked the HSE to reply directly to you.

Orthodontic Services Waiting Lists

150. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be issued with a date for an orthodontic appointment; the reason for the cancellation of an appointment in view of the fact that this person had an appointment to undergo treatment in October 2016; if he will confirm that the dental equipment to undergo treatment is available for persons who are depending on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33898/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for reply to the Deputy.

HSE Staff

151. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if he will clarify that it is HSE policy that it is the responsibility of individual home help workers to secure cover during periods of planned annual leave; if workers are prevented from taking planned leave should they be unable to find suitable cover; the role the employer takes to source cover during such periods; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33899/16]

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

Mental Health Services Expenditure

152. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the total amount of spending on mental health as recently announced in budget 2017 broken down by capital and current spending, in tabular form; the percentage and absolute spending change in each category from budget 2016; the total projected budget for new services coming on stream in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33906/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): The following table shows the projected current and capital expenditure for 2016 and 2017.

Mental Health	Year	Current €m	Capital €m
Expenditure – projected 2017	2017	€851.3m	€54.6m
Expenditure estimated to end year 2016	2016	€826.6m*	€15.3m
Increase		€24.7m	€32.3m
Percentage Increase		3%	215%

* it should be noted that €7 million of the current expenditure for 2016 was spent on capital works.

The estimate for Mental Health current spending in 2017 is €851.3 million, an increase of €24.7 million, or approximately 3%, over 2016. In addition, a further €50 million will be provided for the construction of the new national forensic hospital in Portrane. This development is long overdue and the signing of the main construction contract will allow for its completion in line with A Vision for Change.

I am initiating €35 million in new mental health services in 2017. Key priorities to be addressed in the HSE's 2017 Service Plan include youth mental health, further improvement to child & adolescent and adult services, older people's services and further enhanced out of hours response for those in need of urgent services. Recognising the time lag in new staff taking up posts and the completion of preparations for the introduction of these services, it is estimated that the revenue spend in 2017 associated with this increased allocation will be some €15 million. There will also be a further additional spend of €9.7 million in mental health associated with increased pay rates.

Following the Budget announcement and the issue of the letter of determination the HSE is working on its 2017 National Service Plan which will be submitted to the Department of Health shortly for the consideration of the Minister for Health prior to approval and publication.

Residential Institutions

153. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the persons who should be assigned next of kin to sanction and sign the form with regards to St Mary's of the Angels, Beaufort, County Kerry and the addition of the residents' names to the Kerry County Council local authority housing list (details supplied); the person or body that sanctioned this in view of the fact the families and next of kin of the residents were not the signatories nor were they made aware of this process; the reason the families and next of kin were not the acting signatory; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33907/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Accident and Emergency Departments

154. **Deputy Michael D'Arcy** asked the Minister for Health the reason persons with a medical card living in County Wexford have to pay a fee for accident and emergency at Dublin dental hospital while persons with the same medical card from counties Dublin, Wicklow and Kildare do not; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33912/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): 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 was issued to Oireachtas members.

Mental Health Services Funding

155. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Health the development funding announced in budget 2017 to implement the national mental health policy, A Vision For Change; the money available to the HSE in 2017 for this purpose; if he will increase this funding in order to allow for much needed improvements in mental health care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33921/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): The allocation for Mental Health in 2017 will be €851.3 million, an increase of €24.7 million, or approximately 3%, over 2016. In addition, a further €50 million will be provided for the construction of the new national forensic mental health service in Portrane.

I am initiating €35 million in new services in 2017 to further implement “A Vision For Change”. Key priorities to be addressed in the HSE’s 2017 Service Plan include youth mental health, further improvement to child & adolescent and adult services, older people’s services and further enhanced out-of-hours response for those in need of urgent services. Recognising the time lag in new staff taking up posts and the completion of preparations for the introduction of these services, it is estimated that the revenue spend in 2017 associated with this increased allocation will be some €15 million. There will also be a further additional spend of €9.7 million in mental health associated with increased pay rates.

Hospital Appointments Status

156. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33946/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to

respond to you directly.

Services for People with Disabilities

157. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be provided with a residential place as discussed at a recent meeting; if funding for this is available in view of the urgency of the case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33948/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's question relates to an individual case, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

158. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health if he will establish the circumstances of a case (details supplied); if he will address the apparent system failures in the handling of this case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33956/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Deputy's question relates to service delivery matters and accordingly I have asked the HSE to respond directly to her.

Mental Health Services Funding

159. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding funding for mental health; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33971/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): The allocation for Mental Health in 2017 will be €851.3 million, an increase of €24.7 million, or approximately 3%, over 2016. In addition, a further €50 million will be provided for the construction of the new national forensic mental health service in Portrane.

I am initiating €35 million in new services in 2017. Key priorities to be addressed in the HSE's 2017 Service Plan include youth mental health, further improvement to child & adolescent and adult services, older people's services and further enhanced out of hours response for those in need of urgent services. Recognising the time lag in new staff taking up posts and the completion of preparations for the introduction of these services, it is estimated that the revenue spend in 2017 associated with this increased allocation will be some €15 million. There will also be a further additional spend of €9.7 million in mental health associated with increased pay rates.

Hospital Staff

160. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the way in which he plans to ensure that the 80:20 percentage division between public and private practice in public hospitals for consultants is vigorously observed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33993/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The current consultant contract which was negotiated in 2008 provides for the regulation of private practice and includes mechanisms for ensuring compliance by consultants with the permitted ratio of public to private practice.

Section 20 of the Consultant Contract 2008 provides for the regulation of private practice and the mechanisms for ensuring compliance with the 80:20 ratio of public to private practice. Section 4 b), states that “both the Consultant and the Employer shall co-operate in giving effect to such arrangements as are put into place to verify the delivery of the Consultant’s contractual commitments” and Section 12 l), requires the Consultant “to participate in and facilitate production of all data/information required to validate delivery of duties and functions and inform planning and management of service delivery.”

I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

Health Insurance Data

161. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health his plans to review the legislation in view of claims data submitted by insurers (details supplied) and the negative impact on the affordability of private health insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33994/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Insurance companies operate as commercial providers and make their own decisions about the price of their health insurance plans. The cost of private health insurance is influenced by a number of factors such as the number of persons in the market, the age profile of those holding private health insurance and ongoing medical innovations. Each of these are contributors to the cost of care, the cost of claims and therefore the cost of premia payable.

While everyone is entitled to use a public hospital, some people choose to be treated privately, in which case they have chosen to pay the consultant and the hospital. Prior to the Health (Amendment) Act 2013, private in-patients in public hospitals were, in the case of an emergency admission where a private bed was not available, accommodated in a public bed for which they were charged €75 per day (to a maximum of €750 for 10 nights per annum) although they continued to pay the fees of their hospital consultant. The Comptroller and Auditor General pointed out in his 2010 Annual Report that almost 45% of in-patients being treated privately by consultants were not paying the designated charge to the public hospitals in which they were being treated, because they did not occupy a designated private bed. This represented a significant loss of income to the public hospital system, to taxpayers and was an indirect subsidy to private insurance companies, who cover most private patients.

On the basis that users of private services should pay for the costs of providing these services even when they are provided by a public hospital the previous Government introduced legislation in 2013 to amend Section 55 of the Health Act 1970 to provide for the charging of private in-patients whenever they have opted to be treated as a private patient by their hospital consultant. The charging regime as introduced was intended to decrease but not eliminate any gap in providing services to private in-patients and that target is being reached. There are no

plans to reverse this policy.

It should also be noted that under the 2013 Act, all private patients are charged in a similar manner, and this enabled the legislation to provide for an average reduction of 9% in the daily charges for private patients in public hospitals. The private in-patient charge goes not only towards meeting accommodation costs but also towards meeting part of the cost of providing the hospital's services to private patients, for example, the cost of non-consultant doctors, nursing, administration and support staff, diagnostic services (such as x-rays and other scans), medical and surgical supplies, operating theatres, laboratory services (such as blood tests etc) and capital costs.

Health Promotion

162. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if the Government will consider supporting healthier choices in the workplace with the introduction of initiatives to incentivise companies to support the health and wellbeing of staff as part of its healthy Ireland framework to improve the health and wellbeing of persons here (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33995/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy): There is a growing interest in and understanding internationally of the contribution healthy workplaces can make to healthier societies and the benefits of this to business both in terms of more productive workforces and the ability to attract and retain the best employees.

The World Health Organization (WHO) considers workplace health programmes as one of the best-buy options for prevention and control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and for mental health. Such programmes can help achieving the WHO objective of reducing the avoidable deaths of NCDs and the burden of mental ill health and to protect and promote health at the workplace.

My Department, with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, is leading a sub-group to develop a National Healthy Workplace Framework. This work primarily involves development of a framework to encourage and support the development of Health and Wellbeing programmes in all places of employment. The objective is to support employers to develop individual, practical plans identifying how they will protect and promote the physical, mental and social wellbeing of their employees, within the context of their own size, sector, location, number of employees, etc.

There are schemes currently in place which support and encourage employees to make healthier choices, such as the Taxsaver Commuter Scheme, Cycle to Work Scheme and the Smarter Travel Workplaces public awareness programme.

In addition, the workplace wellbeing element of the Health and Wellbeing (Calorie posting and workplace wellbeing) Bill which is in development will require all public sector workplaces to have and report on a healthy workplace policy.

Health Services Provision

163. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the way in which he plans to address the way the delivery and funding of high quality health care in the context of a major demographic challenge (details supplied); his plans to help keep health insurance affordable in

the long term, in view of the fact that claims significantly increase with age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33996/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Committee on the Future of Healthcare was established in June this year and has been specifically tasked with examining and costing different funding models for the health service and to make recommendations on a funding approach that is best suited to the Irish context. The committee will present its final report to the Dáil by 23 January 2017.

In relation to private health insurance, in Ireland we have a system of community rated private health insurance which is supported by a Risk Equalisation Scheme. Under the Risk Equalisation Scheme, insurers receive risk equalisation and hospital utilisation credits to compensate for the additional cost of insuring older and less healthy members. The credits are funded by stamp duty levies payable by insurers in respect of each life covered. The Risk Equalisation Scheme ensures that some of the higher cost of insuring older and less healthy members is shared across the market. The Health Insurance Authority closely monitors claims paid by insurers and demographic changes in the private health insurance market. The Authority takes these into account each year when recommending the level of credits and associated stamp duties to apply under the Risk Equalisation Scheme.

The overall cost of private health insurance is influenced by a number of factors including the number of people in the market, the age profile of those holding private health insurance and medical innovations which can have an impact on the cost of care and the cost of claims. An increase in the number of younger and healthy people taking out health insurance helps to control premium inflation, thereby keeping health insurance more affordable for older and less healthy people. Lifetime Community Rating was introduced in 2015 and has encouraged people to take out health insurance at a younger age. In a community rated market this helps to spread the costs of older and less healthy people across all insured persons. The introduction of young adult rates in 2015 has also helped to increase the number of young insured people in the market.

Hospital Waiting Lists

164. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will have their surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33997/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Services for People with Disabilities

165. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health his views that a number of section 38 disability voluntary providers are experiencing considerable financial challenges, which has resulted in some providers having to engage in agreed defaulting of revenue payments to ensure that services are not impacted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34001/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The particular issue raised by the Deputy is a service matter for the HSE. Accordingly, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Respite Care Services Provision

166. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the status of reports on plans to introduce a charge for respite care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34007/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Long stay charges for in-patient services - which may include in-patient respite care - apply to the further provision of in-patient services, other than acute services and nursing home services in public nursing homes supported under the Nursing Homes Support Scheme (Fair Deal), to persons who have already received at least 30 days of in-patient services during the immediately preceding 12-month period, irrespective of where those 30 days of in-patient services have been received.

Charges for the maintenance element of long-stay in-patient services are currently provided for under the Health (Amendment) Act 2005 and the Health (Charges for In-Patient Services) Regulations 2005, as amended. The Regulations provide for two different classes of income-based charges in respect of the maintenance element of the in-patient services provided:

- Class 1 relates to charges for those receiving in-patient services on premises where 24-hour nursing care is provided, subject to a current maximum of €175 per week for a person whose income is €208 or more, and

- Class 2 charges apply where 24-hour nursing care is not provided, subject to a current maximum of €130 per week for a person whose income is €194 or more.

Affordability and the avoidance of financial hardship are built-in features of the charging provisions under the 2005 Act and Regulations:

- Firstly, the Act caps the amount which may be charged – at 80% of the non-contributory State Pension weekly rate. At present, that means an upper limit of €177.60 per week.

- Secondly, the charges are structured to ensure that those paying them retain a reasonable income for personal use: at least €33 per week for those paying Class 1 rates and at least €64 per week for those paying Class 2 rates.

- Thirdly, the Act provides that the HSE may reduce or waive a charge imposed on a person if necessary to avoid undue financial hardship.

To assist in the fair application of the provisions of the 2005 Act and Regulations, the HSE has developed national guidelines for the determination of long-stay charges for in-patient services. These include the need to have regard to the individual circumstances of each service user and his or her dependants. The guidelines ensure that the applicable charge is determined taking account of each person's income and necessary outgoings while receiving care, including reasonable regular financial commitments. This avoids any unfair burden on the service user or his or her dependants.

Legislation to commence Residential Support Services Maintenance and Accommodation Contributions (long stay contributions) will come into operation on 1 January 2017. They will replace the existing system of long stay charges.

The key features of the existing long-stay charges system will be retained including the above mentioned 30 day rule and comprehensive waiver provisions to ensure that contribution requirements are in line with what people can afford.

Hospital Appointments Status

167. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34014/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

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.

Services for People with Disabilities

168. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide further funding in respect of core hours, personal assistant hours for persons in need of these hours; if his attention has been drawn to the severe cutbacks made in the core hours in respect of this scheme in the west of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34016/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose, and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the particular issue raised by the Deputy is a service matter for the HSE, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Home Help Service Provision

169. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide further funding in respect of home help hours scheme and the home care package scheme for persons in need of these hours; if his attention has been drawn to the severe cutbacks made in these hours in respect of these schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34017/16]

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

Home Help Service Provision

170. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide extra home help hours for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34028/16]

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

Departmental Records

171. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a list of all contingent assets in his Department and in agencies under his Department where amounts can be owed but are not listed in the national accounts as an asset; if he will further provide a full breakdown of each category of contingent assets and the estimated amounts in the category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34078/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): My Department has no contingent assets. Also, no contingent assets were reported by statutory agencies under the aegis of my Department in their most recently audited annual financial statements.

Health Services Funding

172. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the progress made in relation to the programme for Government commitment on addressing long-term challenges such as long-term funding models in health. [33805/16]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Programme for a Partnership Government committed to the establishment of an Oireachtas All-Party committee to develop a long term vision for healthcare and direction of health policy over a 10 year period, with cross party support. The Committee on the Future of Healthcare was established in June this year and has been specifically tasked with examining and costing different funding models for the health service and to make recommendations on a funding approach that is best suited to the Irish context.

The development of a new funding model is key to the long-term sustainability of our health service and the development of a universal single tier service.

However, making changes to funding levels and financing methods takes time and requires careful management, not least to avoid disruption to vital existing services. It is for these reasons that the all-party Committee has been established and tasked with considering this important issue in the context of an overall long-term vision and plan of how the health service can be developed.

I have already committed to not making any major structural reforms in this area while the Committee does its work, as we have to be serious about building consensus on how to fund a shared vision of universal healthcare. However, I am continuing delivery of aspects of the on-going health reform programme which must be completed so that the foundations are in place to change the funding model. In this regard, it is worth noting that one of the key building blocks for universal healthcare that is currently being advanced by the HSE is the introduction of a more efficient payment system for hospitals known as activity-based funding.

The Programme for Partnership Government confirmed the Government's continued commitment to the implementation of activity based funding, which went live in 2016. This is a model whereby hospitals and other healthcare providers are funded based on the quality and quantity of the services they deliver for patients as opposed to historical budgets. Linking budgets with activity will drive efficiency and increase transparency in the provision of high quality services for patients.

Transfer of Entitlements Application

173. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the processing of an application for the transfer of entitlements submitted by a person (details supplied) in County Galway will be completed; the reason for the delay in processing the application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33882/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted a 2016 Transfer of Entitlements application to my Department seeking the transfer of entitlements by sale as Transferee. The application was successful and acceptance letters issued to the person named and to the transferor on the 26th October 2016.

The transferor in this case had also submitted a separate 2016 Transfer of Entitlements application seeking the transfer of entitlements to a third party which required to be completed before payment could issue to the person named. Following the successful processing of both applications, payment under the Basic Payment Scheme will be issued to the person named in the coming days.

Imports Data

174. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of lambs that were imported from Northern Ireland in October 2016; the way this compares to the number of lambs imported in October 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33909/16]

175. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of lambs that were imported from the United Kingdom in October 2016; the way this compares to the number of lambs imported in October 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33910/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 174 and 175 together.

The intra EU movement of animals is recorded on the Trade Control and Expert System (TRACES), which is the EU wide online management tool for all sanitary requirements on intra-EU trade and importation of animals, semen and embryo, food, feed and plants. Movements are recorded at the level of Member State only on TRACES. Figures from TRACES show that in October of this year, 44,072 sheep of all ages were imported from the United Kingdom, compared to 39,424 in October 2015. The vast majority of these animals came from Northern Ireland, though no further geographic breakdown is available at this time. There are no category breakdowns available to specify for lambs, however the animals are categorised as breeding, fattening and or those for direct slaughter.

For October 2016 these figures are 129 for breeding, 4,963 for fattening and 38,980 for direct slaughter. In October 2015 the corresponding figures were 193 for breeding, 766 for fattening and 38,465 for slaughter.

This government is acutely aware of the importance of the sheep sector in Ireland and the vital contribution it makes to both the agri-food industry and rural life in Ireland. In recognition of this, the Programme for Government commits to the introduction of a scheme for sheep farmers under the Rural Development Programme with a budget of some €25 million to be provided in Budget 2017. This scheme, in addition to the existing supports available to sheep farmers under the BPS, GLAS, ANC and TAMS, will make a vital contribution to ensuring the continuing viability and sustainability of the sheep sector in Ireland.

Basic Payment Scheme Appeals

176. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if and when a payment will be made to a person (details supplied) on the basis of an appeal which has been lodged to the basic payment schemes appeals committee; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33928/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted applications under the ‘young farmer’ category of the 2015 National Reserve and the Young Farmers Scheme. The Terms and Conditions governing the operation of these schemes state that in order to qualify as a ‘young farmer’, a person must be setting up an agricultural holding for the first time in his/her name or have set up such a holding during the five years preceding the first submission of the BPS application. The applications were not successful as the applicant was deemed to have commenced farming more than five years before the submission of the BPS application. The applicant was notified of this decision and was offered the opportunity to submit an appeal.

My Department subsequently received an appeal from the person named in relation to the National Reserve and Young Farmers Scheme applications. This appeal was considered based on the information set out by the applicant and the original decision was upheld. The person named was notified of the outcome of the appeal and offered the opportunity to submit a further appeal to the Basic Payment Scheme Appeals Committee in respect of the National Reserve application and to the Agriculture Appeals Office in respect of the Young Farmers Scheme application. The person named will be notified of the outcome of his appeal as soon as possible.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Payments

177. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a farm payment in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33943/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted a 2016 Areas of Natural Constraint scheme application on 30 March 2016. EU Regulations governing the administration of this scheme require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases remote sensing (i.e. satellite) inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a remote sensing inspection. This inspection is currently being processed with the intention of issuing any payments due as soon as possible. In the event that any queries arise, officials in my Department will be in contact with the person named.

Agriculture Scheme Payments

178. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a farm payment in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33954/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named submitted a 2016 Basic Payment Scheme/Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme application on 13 April 2016. EU Regulations governing the administration of these schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including in some cases on-farm inspections, be completed before any payments issue.

The application of the person named was selected for a ground eligibility inspection. The outcome of this inspection is currently being finalised with the intention of issuing any payments due as soon as possible. In the event that any queries arise, officials in my Department will be in contact with the person named.

Animal Welfare

179. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the obligations of the Turf Club to ensure animal welfare standards are met; the role and obligations of the Turf Club in investigating breaches of those standards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33958/16]

180. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the obligations of the Turf Club to ensure animal welfare standards are met and its role and obligations in investigating breaches of those standards have changed since 2011. [33959/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 179 and 180 together.

Horse Racing Ireland (HRI) is a commercial state body responsible for the overall administration, promotion and development of the horse racing industry. The Racing Regulatory Body (Irish Turf Club) is a private body charged under legislation with responsibility for the integrity and the reputation of Irish racing in Ireland and Internationally.

The questions raised by the Deputy are an operational matter for the Turf Club.

The Turf Club has assured me that attention to horse welfare is threaded throughout its Rules and processes. Rules were changed in July 2013 to now make the trainer responsible for everything connected with the welfare, training and running of all horses under the care of that trainer.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Payments

181. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of payments in respect of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33966/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Payments under the Areas of Natural Constraints (ANC) scheme commenced during the week commencing 19 September and are continuing on a twice weekly basis. To date almost €184 million has been paid to 85,000 applicants. It is expected that some 97,000 applicants will qualify for payment under the scheme.

A number of applications are not yet clear for payment under the scheme; the applicants are aware of the scheme requirements and what is required to fulfil them. In particular, many farmers have yet to satisfy the annual average stocking density of 0.15 livestock units per forage hectare for the calendar year. However, farmers have until 31 Dec 2016 to do so. Such cases will clear for payment once compliance with this requirement has been confirmed.

The total number of applicants with entitlements allocated under the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) is currently just over 128,000. Only valid applications under the BPS that fully comply with the requirements of the EU legislation are paid. Each year a number of cases are found to be “in error” - errors include over-claims, dual claims and incomplete application forms. In order to resolve these issues, the Department enters into correspondence with farmers. The aim is to issue such query letters as early as possible in the process although this is not always possible as error cases will continue to arise as cases are processed.

This year the Department introduced the concept of preliminary checks for BPS online applicants. This involved the Department notifying online BPS applicants of non-compliance in the areas of overclaims, dualclaims, and overlaps in the weeks following the closing date for BPS (16 May). Applicants were then given an opportunity to rectify any identified non-compliance before 20 June and there was no penalty or reduction where such non-compliance was fully rectified.

In total, some 12,000 BPS error notifications have issued to applicants. In response to requests from stakeholder groups, text messages also issue in these cases to inform the farmer that an error has arisen.

Payments under the BPS commenced on 17th October, which is the earliest possible date allowable under regulation, and to date in excess of €772m has issued to over 117,000 applicants. Regular payment runs are continuing in order to clear to payment all applicants whose applications are fully processed and who have no outstanding errors.

Departmental Records

182. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide a list of all contingent assets in his Department and in agencies under his Depart-

ment where amounts can be owed but are not listed in the national accounts as an asset; if he will further provide a full breakdown of each category of contingent assets and the estimated amounts in the category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34069/16]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I can confirm to the Deputy that my Department has no contingent assets.

As regards the twelve State Bodies under the aegis of my Department, I have requested that the relevant information is forwarded directly to the Deputy.

Electricity Generation

183. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if a strategic environmental assessment is required for a process that would involve the administration of connections to the electricity grid where a new connection process is being proposed; if the current gate 3 process which was finalised in December 2008 is in line with the current planning legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33942/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): As has been outlined to the Deputy on a number of occasions, while the Minister for Communication Climate Action and the Environment has no function in this matter, I can confirm that the Gate 3 process is an administrative grid connection process managed by the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) which is independent in the execution of its functions. As such, this is an operational matter for the CER. It is my understanding that no Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was required on the Gate 3 connection process. However, an SEA was carried out on EirGrid's Grid 25 strategic plan for development of the national grid. I understand that a copy of this SEA is available on the EirGrid website at www.eirgrid.ie.

Mobile Telephony Services

184. **Deputy Pat The Cope Gallagher** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the terms of reference for the newly established Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce; the timeframe for delivery of its recommendations; the status the taskforce recommendations will have; if rural areas currently not availing of mobile phone coverage will be favourably looked at as part of the task force recommendations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33900/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I am critically aware of the frustration currently being experienced across Ireland, where mobile networks are not always delivering the services people expect. Mobile operators have, however, invested significantly in rolling out improved services, following ComReg's multi-band spectrum auction. At least one operator now has in excess of 90% 4G population coverage. The rate of demand for data services has however increased by 500% in the last four years and this presents a continuing challenge for mobile operators, regulators and policy makers both in Ireland and internationally.

Recognising this challenge, I specifically included in the Programme for Government, a commitment to a Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce. In July, I established the Taskforce, together with Minister Humphreys, which aims to unlock barriers to investment in mobile and broadband services. The Terms of Reference of the Taskforce state that it will identify and recommend practical actions that can be taken to improve mobile reception and broadband access.

The Taskforce has met several times, with a number of helpful initiatives emerging in the areas of planning, local authority engagement, and consumer information and engagement.

The Taskforce involves Government Departments and agencies, as well as engagement with ComReg and telecoms operators. I anticipate that we will bring a report to Government by end 2016, on foot of its work. This report will set out proposed timelines for the prompt delivery of the recommendations and actions.

Under the Programme for Government, Minister Humphreys is also establishing two regional action groups to work with Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Offices, LEADER Groups and other relevant agencies in helping accelerate the rollout of broadband and mobile services at local level.

In addition, I recently signed Regulations allowing ComReg to proceed with an early 2017 auction of the 3.6GHz radio spectrum band, to provide an 86% increase in total spectrum available for mobile and fixed wireless services.

In my Department's estimates for 2017 I have secured an €8m provision for RTÉ to allow it to free up the 700MHz spectrum band. ComReg in turn will make plans to auction this spectrum, to provide for significantly enhanced mobile coverage. The 700 MHz band is particularly suited to rural environments where the signal can travel long distances.

These initiatives should assist in enhancing the quality of mobile phone and data services across Ireland, and particularly in rural Ireland.

In parallel, the National Broadband Plan aims to deliver high speed services to every city, town, village and individual premises in Ireland, through private investment and a State intervention in areas where commercial investment have not been fully demonstrated.

The procurement process is underway and the three bidders in the process have indicated that they are proposing a predominantly fibre-to-the-home solution for rural Ireland. Intensive dialogue with bidders is ongoing, with a view to putting in place contract(s) that will deliver the NBP network and put Ireland to the forefront internationally in terms of connectivity.

Broadband Service Provision

185. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the proposals there are to upgrade the broadband telecommunications infrastructure in an area (details supplied); if the requests of local residents and local business to have an adequate and modern broadband service provided in that area without further delay will be given urgent and favourable consideration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33931/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The National Broadband Plan (NBP) aims to deliver high speed services to every city, town, village and individual premises in Ireland. The Programme for Government commits to the delivery of the NBP as a matter of priority. This is being achieved through a combination of commercial investment by the telecommunications sector and a State intervention in those areas where commercial investment has not been fully demonstrated. The formal procurement process for the State Intervention commenced in December 2015.

To date, the commercial telecommunications sector has invested over €2bn in upgrading and modernising networks which support the provision of high speed broadband and mobile

telecoms services.

Approximately 1.3m premises in Ireland can now get high speed broadband and at least one mobile operator is delivering 4G services to over 90% of the population. It is estimated that up to 42% of premises in Co. Monaghan will have access to commercial high speed broadband services provided by telecommunications operators, while the remaining 58% consisting of just over 19,000 premises in Co. Monaghan will fall within the proposed State led intervention under the National Broadband Plan.

The High Speed Broadband Map, which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie shows the extent of the State Intervention area and provides information on a county by county basis with a breakdown of coverage across the townlands in every county including Co Monaghan.

The maps shows that Latton in the townland of Lisdrumcleve falls within the AMBER area and will therefore be included in the State intervention procurement process. Individuals can check whether their premises is in a BLUE or an AMBER area by scrolling through the map online or entering their Eircode. The Department also has a dedicated mailbox and anyone with a query in relation to the Map should email the Department, quoting their Eircode, to broadband@dccae.gov.ie.

The Department is now in a formal procurement process to select a company or companies who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network within the State Intervention Area comprising over 750,000 premises, covering 100,000km of road network and 96% of the land area of Ireland.

Intensive dialogue with bidders is continuing and the three bidders have indicated that they are proposing a predominantly fibre-to-the-home solution. Householders and businesses may get speeds not just of 30Megabits per second but potentially up to 1000 megabits per second with businesses potentially availing of symmetrical upload and download speeds.

Earlier this year, before I came into office, the Department announced that it would be June 2017 before contract(s) were awarded under the NBP. The bidders in the process have recently indicated that they may need more time to conclude the procurement process. The timing of each stage of the procurement continues to be dependent on a range of factors including the complexities that may be encountered by the procurement team, and bidders, during the procurement process. Bidders need adequate time to prepare detailed proposals and their final formal bids and get the relevant shareholder and funding approvals at key stages of the process. It is also important to ensure that risks in this multi-million euro procurement are carefully managed. I do not propose to comment any further at this juncture, given that discussions are ongoing in the procurement process. I can assure the Deputy however, that the procurement process is being intensively managed, to ensure an outcome that delivers a future-proofed network that serves homes and businesses across Ireland, for at least 25 years. The Government considers the NBP to be one of the most significant investments in rural Ireland for decades, and one which will transform society, akin to rural electrification in the last century.

In parallel, and in accordance with commitments in the Programme for Government, Minister Humphreys is leading on the establishment of two regional action groups to help accelerate the broadband network build in rural Ireland, once a contract(s) has been awarded.

In July, I established a Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce with my colleague Minister Humphreys to address immediate issues in relation to the quality of mobile phone and broadband coverage. I expect the Taskforce to report by end 2016.

I have also secured €8m for RTE which will allow it to free up the 700MHz spectrum band.

In addition, I recently signed Regulations allowing ComReg to proceed with an early 2017 auction of the 3.6GHz radio spectrum band, to provide an 86% increase in total spectrum available for mobile and fixed wireless services.

These initiatives should assist in significantly improving the quality of broadband and mobile phone services across Ireland, putting Ireland to the forefront internationally in terms of connectivity.

Electricity Transmission Network

186. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has been informed or given any indication of non-compliance with the strategic environmental assessment directive regarding the gate 3 decision by the Commission for Energy Regulation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34010/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The regulation of the electricity network is a matter for the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) which is an independent statutory body and I have no function in the matter.

The Gate process, including the Gate 3 process, is an administrative grid connection process managed by the CER in accordance with its regulatory functions. I am informed by the CER that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was not required in regard to Gate 3 and therefore the issue of non-compliance does not arise. However, as is the case with all Directions issued by the CER, the Gate 3 Direction was subject to public consultation before being finalised in December 2008.

Departmental Functions

187. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has official responsibility for bodies under the aegis of his Department in respect of Government policy, including responsibility for regulatory corporate governance and based on the code of governance this requires bodies under the remit of his Department to adhere to all statutory obligations; if, in view of this, an agency (details supplied) complied with all statutory obligations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34011/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): My Departmental remit includes complex policy areas and oversight of State regulation, as well as the provision of key strategic areas such as energy, communications, climate action and public broadcasting. There are 6 Commercial State Bodies, 8 Non-Commercial State Bodies and 3 Regulators, under the aegis of my Department.

With regard to the commercial and non-commercial State Bodies, my Department currently oversees the governance of those bodies to ensure they are fully compliant with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and the governance functions included in the statutory framework underpinning individual bodies. My Department also ensures that the State Bodies act in a manner consistent with current Government policy and that compliance obligations, reporting procedures and assurance arrangements are all adhered to.

The Department is supported by NewEra in exercising corporate governance functions in respect of the bodies designated under the National Treasury Management Agency (Amendment) Act, 2014.

With regard to the regulators, they have all been established on a statutory basis and are independent in the exercise of their respective functions, including functions that are necessary to ensure compliance with EU directives. Appropriate corporate governance arrangements are in place to ensure that the regulators comply with, insofar as applicable and having regard to the binding requirements of EU and national law, the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, related Government policy and all other governance functions within the various statutory frameworks underpinning them.

In order to enhance oversight of the bodies and regulators under the remit of my Department and bring a more coherent approach to governance activity, the corporate governance function for all of these bodies is being centralised in the Department to ensure consistency and standardisation of approach.

The Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) is Ireland's independent energy regulator. The CER was established in 1999 and has a range of economic, customer protection and safety responsibilities in the energy sector. The CER is also Ireland's economic regulator of the public water and wastewater sector.

The CER was assigned responsibility for the regulation of the Irish electricity sector following the enactment of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999 and subsequent legislation. Its regulation of the gas market is legally underpinned by the Gas (Interim) (Regulation) Act, 2002, as amended. The CER regulates water services under the Water Services Act 2013 and the Water Services Act 2014.

The Electricity Regulation Act, 1999 provides for CER's regulatory independence and accountability for the performance of its functions to a Joint Committee of the Oireachtas.

Wind Energy Generation

188. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on whether sufficient offshore wind energy could be constructed in the Irish Sea by 2020 to reach the 2020 renewable energy target. [34064/16]

189. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his Department has commenced a cost benefit analysis on offshore wind; the scope of this report; his plans for engaging with Irish and international companies seeking to invest in offshore wind energy here and the timescale for completion of the report. [34065/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I propose to take Questions Nos. 188 and 189 together.

The Government's policy in relation to the sustainable development of our indigenous offshore wind, wave and tidal energy resources is set out in the 2014 Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan (OREDPA). The Strategic Environmental Assessment that underpinned the plan found that 4,500 MW of offshore wind generation could be sustainably developed in Irish waters. I understand that consents have been issued in respect of a number of offshore wind projects in the Irish sea. Investment decisions are commercial matters for developers.

My officials engage with the offshore wind energy industry on an on-going basis, including through meetings with the Offshore Renewable Energy Steering Group, which was established to implement the OREDPA and is chaired by my Department.

As regards the legally binding target set by the EU Renewable Energy Directive of meet-

ing 16% of our energy demand from renewable sources by 2020, the Government has adopted a range of policy measures and schemes to incentivise the use of renewable energy. Good progress has been made to date, but the target remains challenging. Figures provided by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) for 2015 indicate that 9.1% of the overall 16% target was met by renewable sources.

The primary support mechanism in the electricity sector is the Renewable Energy Feed-In-Tariff (REFIT) schemes, which support the development of a range of renewable electricity technologies including hydro, biomass combustion, biomass combined heat and power, landfill gas and onshore wind.

My Department is currently developing a proposed new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS). In-depth economic analysis is underway to inform the actual cost of a new scheme and, while no decision has been taken on the precise renewable technologies to be supported, the cost and technical viability of solar photovoltaic (PV), bio-energy and offshore wind are being examined as part of the assessment process.

Once this analysis is complete, a public consultation on the new scheme will be published. This consultation is expected in the first half of 2017 and it is expected that the new scheme will be announced in late 2017 subject to Government approval and State aid clearance from the European Commission.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

190. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if taxpayers will be expected to carry the cost of EU penalties for not complying with our targets for greenhouse gas reduction and required share of energy from renewable sources by 2020. [34066/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The EU's 2020 targets for emissions reductions, energy efficiency and renewable energy form a cornerstone of EU climate and energy policy. The EU aims to deliver a 20% reduction in Green House Gas (GHG) emissions, a 20% improvement in energy efficiency, and 20% of energy from renewable sources by 2020.

In relation to GHG emissions, for each year between 2013 and 2020, Ireland has an emissions reduction target under the 2009 Effort Sharing Decision (ESD) No. 406/2009/EC. For the year 2020 itself, the target set for Ireland is that emissions should be 20% below their value in 2005. This is jointly the most demanding 2020 reduction target allocated under the ESD and one shared only by Denmark and Luxembourg. The 2013 target is based on the average of emissions for the years 2008-2010. The target for each of the years 2014 through 2019 is on a straight-line trajectory between the targets for 2013 and 2020, and surpluses in one year can be used to cover deficits in any subsequent year. The average incidence of these targets is a 12% reduction relative to 2005.

In March 2016, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published projected emissions for 2020 which indicate that Ireland's emissions at that stage could be in the range of 6 - 11% below 2005 levels. On a cumulative basis over the period 2013 - 2020, Ireland is projected to have a deficit of between 3 and 12 Megatonnes Carbon Dioxide Equivalent (MtCO₂e).

The extent of the challenge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, in line with our EU and international commitments, is well understood by the Government, as reflected in the *National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development*, published in April 2014, and

now underpinned by the *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, 2015*, which was enacted in December 2015. The *National Policy Position* provides a high-level policy direction for the adoption and implementation by Government of plans to enable the State to move to a low carbon economy by 2050. Statutory authority for the plans is set out in the Act.

In accordance with Section 4 of the Act, and in line with responsibilities assigned to me as Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, I intend to make a draft National Mitigation Plan available for public consultation by the end of the year followed by submission of a final plan to Government for approval by June 2017. Work is well underway on the development of the National Mitigation Plan, the primary objective of which will be to track implementation of measures already underway, identify additional measures in the longer term to reduce GHG emissions, and progress the overall national low carbon transition agenda to 2050. The first iteration of the National Mitigation Plan will place particular focus on putting the necessary measures in place to address the challenge to 2020, but also in terms of planning ahead to ensure that appropriate policies and measures will be in place beyond that.

Notwithstanding the efforts outlined above to address the challenge to comply with the 2020 targets, in the event that a gap to target still exists in 2020, retirement of Annual Emissions Allocations and units from the Kyoto Protocol Flexibility Mechanisms carried forward from 2008-2012 can be offset against the deficit. In the event that this would not fully address any potential deficit, further carbon units could be purchased. It is not possible to accurately quantify the cost to purchase notional carbon units at this stage as the cost is dependent on both the quantum and price of carbon units to be purchased at the time. Should the need to purchase carbon units arise, funding options will be considered in due course and will have regard to a number of matters, including the need to comply with the fiscal rules.

In relation to renewable energy, the 2009 EU Renewable Energy Directive set Ireland a legally binding target of meeting 16% of our overall energy requirements from renewable sources by 2020. Ireland is committed to achieving this target through meeting 40% of electricity demand, 12% of heat and 10% of transport from renewable sources. The Government has a range of policy measures and schemes to incentivise the use of renewable energy and good progress is being made. Nevertheless, meeting our 2020 targets remains very challenging.

While the cost of any shortfall in Ireland's target of 16% has yet to be established, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) has estimated that the cost to Ireland may be in the range of €100 million to €150 million for each percentage point Ireland falls short of the overall 16% renewable energy target.

Departmental Data

191. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will provide a list of all contingent assets in his Department and in agencies under his Department where amounts can be owed but are not listed in the national accounts as an asset; if he will further provide a full breakdown of each category of contingent assets and the estimated amounts in the category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34072/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): While Public Financial Procedures provide that Government Departments can recognise contingent liabilities in their accounts in certain very limited circumstances, there is no existing requirement to maintain a list of contingent assets; my Department does not, therefore, maintain such a list.

I will ask the agencies under the aegis of my Department to supply any relevant information directly to the Deputy.

Programme for Government Implementation

192. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the progress made on the programme for Government commitment on addressing long-term challenges such as broadband and climate change. [33805/16]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The Government's National Broadband Plan, which was published in August 2012, aims to radically change the broadband landscape in Ireland by ensuring that high speed broadband is available to all citizens and businesses. The Programme for Government commits to the delivery of the NBP as a matter of priority. This is being achieved through private investment by commercial telecommunications companies and through a State intervention in areas where commercial investment has not been fully demonstrated.

A key principle of the NBP is to support and stimulate commercial investment through policy and regulatory measures. Commercial investment since the publication of the NBP has considerably exceeded expectations. To date, the commercial telecommunications sector has invested over €2bn in upgrading and modernising networks which support the provision of high speed broadband and mobile telecoms services.

Approximately 1.3m premises in Ireland can now get high speed broadband and at least one mobile operator is delivering 4G services to over 90% of the population. It is estimated that up to 70% of premises in Ireland will have access to commercial high speed broadband services provided by telecommunications operators, while the remaining 30% consisting of over 750,000 premises will fall within the proposed State led intervention under the National Broadband Plan.

The High Speed Broadband Map, which is available at www.broadband.gov.ie shows the extent of the State Intervention area and provides information on a county by county basis with a breakdown of coverage across the townlands in every county. Individuals can check whether their premises is in a BLUE or an AMBER area by scrolling through the map online or entering their Eircode. The Department also has a dedicated mailbox and anyone with a query in relation to the Map should email the Department, quoting their Eircode, to roadband@dccae.gov.ie.

The rollout of services by commercial operators in the BLUE area is being kept under constant review by the Department to ensure that all premises can get access to services, either through commercial investment or the State intervention.

The Department is now in a formal procurement process to select a company or companies who will roll-out a new high speed broadband network within the State Intervention Area comprising over 750,000 premises, covering 100,000km of road network and 96% of the land area of Ireland.

Intensive dialogue with bidders is continuing and the three bidders have indicated that they are proposing a predominantly fibre-to-the-home solution. Householders and businesses may get speeds not just of 30 Megabits per second but potentially up to 1000 Megabits per second with businesses potentially availing of symmetrical upload and download speeds.

Earlier this year, before I came into office, the Department announced that it would be June

2017 before contract(s) were awarded under the NBP. The bidders in the process have recently indicated that they may need more time to conclude the procurement process. The timing of each stage of the procurement continues to be dependent on a range of factors including the complexities that may be encountered by the procurement team, and bidders, during the procurement process. Bidders need adequate time to prepare detailed proposals and their final formal bids and get the relevant shareholder and funding approvals at key stages of the process. It is also important to ensure that risks in this multi-million euro procurement are carefully managed. I do not propose to comment any further at this juncture, given that discussions are ongoing in the procurement process. I can assure the Deputy however, that the procurement process is being intensively managed, to ensure an outcome that delivers a future-proofed network that serves homes and businesses across Ireland, for at least 25 years. The Government considers the NBP to be one of the most significant investments in rural Ireland for decades, and one which will transform society, akin to rural electrification in the last century.

In parallel, and in accordance with commitments in the Programme for Government, Minister Humphreys is leading on the establishment of two regional action groups to help accelerate the broadband network build in rural Ireland, once a contract(s) has been awarded.

In July, I established a Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce with Minister Humphreys to address immediate issues in relation to the quality of mobile phone and broadband coverage. I expect the Taskforce to report by the end of this year.

In addition, I recently signed Regulations allowing ComReg to proceed with an early 2017 auction of the 3.6GHz radio spectrum band, to provide an 86% increase in total spectrum available for mobile and fixed wireless services. I have also secured €8m for RTÉ which will allow it to free up the 700 MHz spectrum band.

Through the implementation of the Programme for Government we are committed to increasing the availability of high speed broadband and mobile services, with a view to ensuring that all citizens and businesses can participate fully in a digitally enabled society.

The extent of the long term challenge arising from climate change is well understood by Government. Existing policy is set out in the National Policy Position on Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (2014) which established a high-level policy direction for the adoption and implementation by Government of mitigation and adaptation plans to enable the State to pursue the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050 (known as the '*national transition objective*'). Subsequently, the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 established the national transition objective on a statutory basis and in order to facilitate the transition, provided, inter alia, for the development and submission to Government for approval of national mitigation plans and national adaptation frameworks.

Development work on the first mitigation plan and adaptation framework is progressing. Under the 2015 Act, a draft National Mitigation Plan will be made available for public consultation by the end of the year, followed by submission of a final plan to Government for approval by June 2017. The primary objective of the mitigation plan will be to track implementation of measures already underway and identify additional measures in the longer term to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and progress the overall national low carbon transition agenda to 2050.

Similarly in relation to adaptation, the 2015 Act provides for the making and submission to the Government of iterative national adaptation frameworks which will specify the national strategy for the application of adaptation measures in different sectors and by local authorities in order to reduce the vulnerability of the State to the negative effects of climate change and to

exploit any beneficial opportunities that may arise. Work is progressing in relation to the first adaptation framework, which must be submitted to Government no later than 10 December 2017.

Policy in relation to tackling both the mitigation and adaptation aspects of climate change in Ireland has been in development for a number of years, having regard to EU and international obligations, national policy and the recent legislative provisions referred to earlier. Taken together, these and other measures, including the mainstreaming of climate change considerations into policies and operations across different sectors and the National Dialogue on Climate Change, form part of a long-term strategy to pursue substantial decarbonisation of the energy, transport and built environment sectors and carbon neutrality in the agriculture and land sector. They will also assist our towns and cities to adapt to the future impacts that climate change will bring and ultimately build a level of climate resilience that society will require in the future.

Railway Stations

193. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to move Gormanston train station in County Meath into the same zone which is currently in the medium hop zone in view of Sallins, Naas, and Kilcock train stations being moved into the short hop zone; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33953/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) in conjunction with Iarnród Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

Road Network

194. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to upgrade the N4 from Sligo to Dublin motorway; if, in the context of Brexit and its effects on the Border region, he will prioritise this upgrade in view of the lack of any motorway to the west and north west north of the M6; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33979/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual national road projects is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (formerly known as the NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

The Capital Plan published in September 2015 sets out transport investment priorities to 2022. Decisions on the transport elements of the Capital Plan were framed by the conclusions reached in my Department's Strategic Investment Framework for Land Transport. Based on the findings in that report it is envisaged that maintenance and renewal of the road network will continue to be the main priority over the next period and the bulk of the roads capital budget, over €4 billion, is earmarked for such essential work with a further €600 million allocated for implementation of the PPP road programme which is already underway. The scope for major road upgrade projects within the available capital envelope is, therefore, very limited. Nevertheless provision has been made in the Capital Plan for the upgrade of the N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin road.

Road Safety Strategy

195. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 74 of 2 November 2016, if he has met with the Taoiseach following this Deputy's Leaders' Questions question on 19 October 2016, on the topic of road safety, to correct the Taoiseach's statement (details supplied); and if he has informed the Taoiseach that this technology is not yet in use in road safety enforcement here. [34058/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I have not met with the Taoiseach to specifically discuss road safety and the technology utilised by An Garda Síochána in the enforcement of road traffic legislation. However, my officials regularly brief the Taoiseach on all aspects of road safety and developments in safety technology by my department. In addition, I continue to keep my cabinet colleagues updated on all road safety issues. Like myself, the Taoiseach and my cabinet colleagues are concerned at the increase in road fatalities this year and are working actively to revert this worrying trend.

Any questions relating to the use of such technology by An Garda Síochána are primarily a matter for the Garda Commissioner.

Dublin Bus Fleet

196. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if there are plans to buy new buses for the Dublin Bus fleet; if such buses will give additional capacity or just replace existing buses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34063/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area and for securing the provision of Public Service Obligation (PSO) public transport services.

Funding is provided annually for the renewal of the PSO bus fleet. Under the Capital Plan funding in excess of €500 million is being allocated for the bus replacement programme over the period 2016-2022. The bus replacement programme will ensure a modern, reliable, comfortable and accessible PSO fleet and will help reduce the average age and associated maintenance costs of the fleet.

As part of Budget 2017, I announced that funding would be provided next year that will facilitate the purchase of 110 new buses for the PSO bus fleet for the Dublin region. This will allow for replacement of older vehicles and will also cater for increased demand. The extent to which these buses will be used to replace older vehicles or to expand the current PSO fleet will be determined by the NTA taking account of demand.

Departmental Data

197. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide a list of all contingent assets in his Department and in agencies under his Department where amounts can be owed but are not listed in the national accounts as an asset; if he will further provide a full breakdown of each category of contingent assets and the estimated amounts in the category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34084/16]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Department has

no contingent assets. The position regarding the Agencies under the remit of this Department is a matter for their direct response. I have forwarded a copy of your question to them for direct reply. If you have not heard from them within ten working days, please contact my private office

Departmental Data

198. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if she will provide a list of all contingent assets in her Department and in agencies under her Department where amounts can be owed but are not listed in the national accounts as an asset; if she will further provide a full breakdown of each category of contingent assets and the estimated amounts in the category; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34079/16]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): I wish to confirm to the Deputy that my Department and its Agencies, have no contingent assets where amounts can be owed and are not listed in the national accounts as assets.

Youth Services Funding

199. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the position regarding the application for €1.2 million in capital funding for Scouting Ireland for developments at Larch Hill and Killaloe; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33968/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In 2016 some €2.6m has been allocated to my Department for a capital funding scheme for youth projects and services. The scheme was open to projects that are funded by the Department under the Special Projects for Youth scheme, Young People's Facilities and Services Fund, Local Drugs Task Force Projects scheme and Youth Information Centres scheme. The scheme was also open to national youth organisations in receipt of funding under the Youth Services Grants Scheme.

The scheme was split into two categories, Type One and Type Two. Type One provided for smaller capital projects including the up-grade or replacement of equipment or the purchase of essential equipment to support the running of the project/organisation in the provision of quality services for young people. Type Two provided for health and safety improvements to premises and/or upgrade or refurbishment of premises, including improvements to enable access for young people with disabilities, including those with physical or sensory disabilities. Applicants were limited to one application under Type One and one application under Type Two and the maximum grant payable was €50,000.

Scouting Ireland successfully applied for funding under this scheme and was awarded €49,630 under Type Two to fund the improvement of disability access and security at Scouting Ireland, National Water Activity Centre in Killaloe, Co. Clare. A second Type Two application was received in respect of Scouting Ireland's Larch Hill premises. The application was deemed ineligible by the Youth Capital Scheme 2016/2017 Appraisal Committee as organisations were limited to one Type Two application only. My Department has received no application for funding amounting to €1.2m from Scouting Ireland.

Work on the development of a new capital funding scheme for 2017 is underway. My Department is engaging with each Education and Training Board Youth Officer to identify the capital needs of the youth sector. I hope to announce details of this new capital scheme in the coming months. I do not envisage that my Department will be providing grants of the magni-

tude sought by Scouting Ireland.

Scouting Ireland receives annual funding under my Department's Youth Service Grant Scheme which supports national youth organisations. In 2016, some €835,000 has been allocated to the organisation. In addition, €200,000 is provided to them under the Dormant Accounts Fund.

Child and Family Agency Staff

200. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of total posts and vacant posts in child protection teams broken down by grade and area, including administrative staff, social care workers, access workers and all grade of social workers. [34062/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The information requested is not readily available in my Department. My officials have requested the information from Tusla and I will forward the reply to the Deputy once I have been furnished with it.

Departmental Data

201. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will provide a list of all contingent assets in her Department and in agencies under her Department where amounts can be owed but are not listed in the national accounts as an asset; if she will further provide a full breakdown of each category of contingent assets and the estimated amounts in the category; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [34071/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): There are no contingent assets in my Department. I have also been informed by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, the Ombudsman for Children's Office and the Adoption Authority of Ireland that none of those organisations hold any contingent assets.

Departmental Funding

202. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will make resources available within her Department to support and facilitate a centre (details supplied), in view of the improving economic conditions. [34088/16]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Consideration of financial contributions by my Department over the period 2016 – 2018 for a second Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland (SAVI 2) research project gives rise to a number of issues: the availability of funding, the prioritisation of expenditure, competing demands in the area of research and requisite public procurement considerations.

With regard to funding, I understand that the proposal for a second Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland (SAVI 2) research project envisages a significant level of expenditure over a three year period by my Department and the Departments of Justice and Equality, Health, and Education and Skills, with some €230,000 over the three years being sought from my Department. Apart from the funding of existing commitments relating to the *Growing Up in Ireland* Study, my Department has only a very limited commissioned research budget. The majority of this budget has been committed for 2016, 2017 and 2018.

My Department has recently ascertained from the Child and Family Agency that priority of relevant expenditure by it, at present, is aimed at enhancing its business intelligence around Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence in order to support the planning and commissioning of services. To this end, the Agency is working with funded service provider organisations to implement standard data gathering and reporting mechanisms and address data quality issues.

In implementing its obligations under both the Istanbul Convention and commitments under the Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, the Agency advises that it will be looking at how to address specific research and evidence needs to inform future commissioning and to support measurement of outcomes.

Importantly, there are public procurement considerations, and it remains the case that any commissioned research funded by my Department is subject to a procurement process on foot of a call under our funded research programme or similar, and that it is done in line with Departmental research priorities.

My Department has sought the views of the Child and Family Agency regarding the degree to which it would view a repeat of SAVI as assisting the Agency in the discharge of its functions and also its priorities in terms of supporting policy and practice development in this area.

Defence Forces Medicinal Products

203. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which malaria preventative treatment available to the Defence Forces here meets international health and safety standards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34018/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The United Nations recent Medical Support Manual 2015, which is to serve as a standard reference document on medical support aspects of United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions in the field provides that anti-malarial medicines can be used to prevent malaria. It does not make any recommendations as to which chemoprophylaxis should be used but rather makes reference to the World Health Organisation (WHO) International Travel and Health Handbook for the latest information on malaria chemoprophylaxis. The WHO Handbook provides for a range of anti-malarials. The WHO Handbook notes that there are specific contraindications and possible side-effects for ALL anti-malarial drugs.

I am advised that the Defence Forces Medical Policy on the use of malaria chemoprophylaxis is in line with the United Nations (UN) and World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines.

Question No. 204 answered with Question No. 34.

Defence Forces Training

205. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the degree to which modern training and equipment remains available to each branch of the Defence Forces, namely the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34020/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My priority as Minister with Responsibility for Defence is to ensure that the operational capability of the Defence Forces is maintained to the greatest extent possible so as to enable the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service to carry out their roles as assigned by Government.

The acquisition of new equipment for the Defence Forces remains a clear focus for me, and the White Paper on Defence published in 2015 recognises that there are several new and or enhanced platforms to be procured. Future equipment priorities for the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service are being considered in the context of the lifetime of the White Paper on Defence as part of the capability development and equipment planning priorities planning process.

Training standards in the Defence Forces are constantly benchmarked against international best practice. Participation in overseas operations also necessitates multi-lateral training and assessment. This facilitates ongoing review of Defence Forces training methods and standards within an international military context.

I am satisfied that the Defence Forces training techniques and the most modern methods and effective range of equipment which is line with best international standards are available to ensure that personnel are fully equipped to meet their roles.

Defence Forces Reserve Training

206. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which annual training courses remain available to the FCA; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34021/16]

207. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which updated military training remains available to the Reserve Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34022/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 206 and 207 together.

The White Paper on Defence 2015 provides that the overall establishment of the Army Reserve (AR) and the Naval Service Reserve (NSR) is set at 4,169 personnel, consisting of 3,869 Army Reservists and the expansion of the four Naval Service Reserve Units from 200 to 300 personnel. The White Paper also outlined that the primary role of the Reserve is to augment the PDF in crisis situations. In non-crisis situations, the main focus is on training to prepare for this role.

A key recommendation of the Value for Money Review of the RDF, published in November 2012, was to ensure that all effective members of the Reserve were afforded the opportunity to undertake voluntary annual training. In 2016, Subhead A.5 provides for a budget of €2.150m. of which €2.068m is allocated to paid training. This allocation provides for 30,000 Paid Training Mandays for members of the Reserve. This provision is sufficient having regard to the existing strength of the Reserve and the voluntary nature of Reserve training.

In order to facilitate the voluntary nature of Reserve Service, training continues to be organised both in and out of normal working hours and at weekends. Reserve training is also organised during academic and traditional holiday periods, in order to maximise attendance of Reserve personnel.

In the Army Reserve, recruits undergo varied training in areas such as combat first aid, military law and tactical training. A major part of Recruit training is training in the Steyr 5.56mm Assault Rifle. After recruit training is complete, soldiers are then trained in the operation of basic radio communications, map reading, Nuclear, Biological and Chemical warfare defence and the Light Machine Gun. Each Corps also carries out specialist training in its particular field. For example, the Infantry and Cavalry Corps train in weapons and tactics and the Corps

of Engineers train in engineering tasks, such as demolition, construction and mine warfare.

In the Naval Service Reserve, the two main courses undertaken as a recruit are Sea Survival and Damage Control and Fire Fighting. NSR personnel also undergo training in the operation of various crafts operated by the Naval Service, such as Motor Training Launches and Rigid Inflatable Boats. As in the Army Reserve, NSR personnel are trained in the use of the Steyr 5.56mm Assault Rifle. NSR personnel also receive full training in VHF Radios, including voice procedure at sea and operation of the VHF systems. Courses are also run for NSR personnel on the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System.

I am satisfied that the extensive and professional training provided to the RDF along with other initiatives outlined in the White Paper will be a key motivating factor in encouraging more people to join the RDF as well as making it more attractive for current members to stay.

Defence Forces Personnel Data

208. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of females at all ranks now serving throughout the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34023/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The strength (whole time equivalent) of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) at 30 September 2016, the latest date for which figures are available, was 9,044. This comprises 7,247 Army, 718 Air Corps and 1,079 Naval Service. Of this figure, 551 personnel (6.1%) are women. The following tables contain the above mentioned strengths broken down into Army, Naval Service and Air Corps by gender and rank groupings.

The establishment ceiling of the Permanent Defence Force is 9,500. Recruitment campaigns are under way in order to reach this establishment. Current and previous recruitment campaigns have sought to target potential female candidates.

As has been outlined in previous replies to Parliamentary Questions, the Government is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for men and women throughout the Defence Forces and to the full participation by women in all aspects of Defence Forces activities. A number of specific initiatives have been implemented to increase female participation in the Defence Forces including:

- The introduction of best practices in recruitment, such as the adjustment of physical standards for female applicants,
- Special consideration is paid to women as a target group for recruitment,
- A balanced composition between men and women on recruitment and selection boards,
- All promotions and career courses are open to both sexes on merit,
- A Gender Advisor has been appointed to promote gender equality policies and training within the Defence Forces.

The Defence Forces prides itself on providing a gender neutral working environment. Policies on equality are communicated to all ranks on an ongoing basis. The Military Authorities are alert and vigilant to this issue and are committed to addressing this matter in a continuing and proactive manner when it arises. However, a key impediment in achieving the target gender balance is the lack of female applicants relative to males.

I believe that there is a need to continue to develop and promote strategies that support increased female participation in the Defence Forces. To this end, in all recruitment campaigns for enlisted personnel and the Reserve, specific efforts are made to increase the number of female applicants. These efforts include visits to schools, media engagement including national and local radio, targeting sports clubs and the use of social media. I believe that a key issue in recruiting and retaining female personnel lies in societal perception and attitudes to female soldiers and officers. I am hopeful that through continued engagement and communication, this perception will change over time.

ARMY (PDF)			
Rank	Male	Female	Total
Lt Gen	1	0	1
Maj Gen	2	0	2
Brig Gen	6	0	6
Col	32	1	33
Lt Col	104	2	106
Comdt	226	31	257
Captain	218	42	260
LT	133	20	153
SM	29	0	29
BQMS	32	0	32
CS	101	1	102
CQMS	159	2	161
Sgt	823	57	880
Cpl	1170	114	1284
Pte	3661	175	3836
Cadets	96	9	105
Total	6793	454	7247

AIR CORPS (PDF)			
Rank	Male	Female	Total
Lt Gen	0	0	0
Maj Gen	0	0	0
Brig Gen	1	0	1
Col	3	0	3
Lt Col	12	0	12
Comdt	31	2	33
Captain	45	5	50
LT	22	0	22
SM	7	1	8
BQMS	3	0	3
CS	55	0	55
CQMS	12	1	13
Sgt	110	5	115
Cpl	138	11	149
Pte	218	10	228
Cadets	25	1	26

AIR CORPS (PDF)			
Rank	Male	Female	Total
Total	682	36	718

NAVAL SERVICE (PDF)			
Rank	Male	Female	Total
Lt Gen	0	0	0
Maj Gen	0	0	0
Brig Gen	1	0	1
Col	2	0	2
Lt Col	13	0	13
Comdt	42	9	51
Captain	36	13	49
LT	32	2	34
SM	6	0	6
BQMS	7	0	7
CS	74	0	74
CQMS	15	0	15
Sgt	170	7	177
Cpl	123	8	131
Pte	472	18	490
Cadets	25	4	29
Total	1018	61	1079

Air Corps Equipment

209. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if adequate updating and replacement of military aircraft is ongoing with particular reference to the needs for the Air Corps to meet best international standards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34024/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My priority as Minister with Responsibility for Defence is to ensure that the operational capability of the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service, is maintained to the greatest extent possible so as to enable the Defence Forces to carry out their roles as assigned by Government as set out on the White Paper on Defence.

In that regard, the acquisition of new equipment and equipment upgrades for the Defence Forces remains a clear focus for me. Going forward, the equipment priorities for the Army, Air Corps and the Naval Service will be considered in the context of the lifetime of the White Paper.

The future equipment priorities for the Air Corps are set out in the White Paper, which recognises that there are several new and or enhanced platforms to be procured for the Air Corps. Future capability requirements for the Air Corps are being considered as part of the rigorous capability development and equipment planning priorities process as envisaged in the White Paper. This will define ongoing and future equipment priorities having regard to the evolving security environment and available funding.

In the context of the Air Corps fleet, this will include the replacement of the Cessna fleet with three larger aircraft suitably equipped for Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition

and Reconnaissance tasks. The preparatory work for the tender competition has begun within the Defence organisation, and it is expected that the competition will be initiated by the end of this year. The two CASA 235s Maritime Patrol Aircraft are due for replacement in 2019. The CASAs will be replaced with consideration of their replacement with larger more capable aircraft to enhance maritime surveillance and to provide a greater degree of utility for transport and cargo carrying tasks.

The existing Pilatus PC9 aircraft are not due for replacement until 2025. It should be noted that a decision was made recently to replace a PC-9M aircraft which was written off following a fatal crash in 2009. The replacement PC-9M aircraft scheduled for delivery next year from Pilatus Aircraft in Switzerland at a cost of €5m plus VAT will bring the fleet up to 8 and will assist in a required increase in pilot training in the Air Corps.

Naval Service Vessels

210. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which the Naval Service equipment is upgraded and replaced on a regular basis including communications equipment and sea-going vessels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34025/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The acquisition of new equipment and equipment upgrades for the Defence Forces remains a focus for me as Minister with Responsibility for Defence. I am satisfied that the Defence Forces have a modern and effective range of equipment which is line with best international standards, as required to fulfil all roles that are assigned to them by Government. The future equipment priorities for the Defence Forces, including the Naval Service, are being considered in the context of the lifetime of the White Paper on Defence.

The current Naval Service ship replacement programme has seen the delivery of three new Naval Service vessels in the past three years. In June 2016, agreement was reached with Babcock International for the provision of an additional ship for the Naval Service to be built in their facility in Appledore, Devon. This ship will be the same class as the three newest vessels, LÉ Samuel Beckett which was commissioned in 2014, LÉ James Joyce which was commissioned in 2015, and LÉ William Butler Yeats which was recently commissioned in October 2016. Delivery of the fourth ship is expected within two years. This ties in with the project planning process in place under the White Paper on Defence which will determine the Defence Organisation's maritime capability requirements.

The White Paper also provides for the replacement of the current flagship, LÉ Eithne, by a multi-role vessel (MRV). LÉ Eithne was built in 1984. In addition, the two existing Coastal Patrol Vessels, LÉ Ciara and LÉ Orla are due for replacement in the coming years (also built in 1984). It is outlined in the White Paper that these ships will be replaced with vessels with countermine and counter IED capabilities.

In addition, the White Paper recognises the requirement to maintain and upgrade vessels having regard to emerging operational requirements and changes in technology, including communications equipment.

I am satisfied that the current provisions, together with the courses of action outlined in the White Paper, will ensure that the Naval Service are fully equipped to meet the roles placed on them.

Defence Forces Training

211. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps receive training and equipment upgrades in line with best international practice, with particular reference to the need for a response in the event of a natural disaster or security threat; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34026/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My priority as Minister with Responsibility for Defence is to ensure that the operational capacity of the Defence Forces, including the availability of specialised equipment and trained personnel, is maintained to the greatest extent possible to enable the Defence Forces to carry out their roles both at home and overseas.

In accordance with the Framework for Major Emergency Management, primary responsibility for responding to emergencies caused by severe weather events, such as the storms and flooding, rests with the three designated principal response agencies, namely, the relevant Local Authority, An Garda Síochána, and the Health Service Executive. The Defence Forces provide the fullest possible assistance to the appropriate Lead Department in the event of a natural disaster or emergency situation in its Aid to the Civil Authority (ATCA) role.

At National level, representation on the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning, by both the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces, ensures the fullest coordination and cooperation in the event of an emergency and that the command structure within the Defence Forces is compatible with the requirements in this area.

Primary responsibility for the maintenance of law and order including the protection of the internal security of the State rests with An Garda Síochána. However, one of the roles assigned to the Defence Forces in the White Paper on Defence (2000) is to provide Aid to the Civil Power (ATCP) which, in practice means to assist An Garda Síochána when requested to do so.

A wide variety of military training activities are specifically designed to counter or respond to possible security emergencies and the Defence Forces hold regular coordination and liaison meetings with An Garda Síochána in relation to ATCP issues.

The full spectrum of Defence Forces personnel and equipment, commensurate with operational requirements, is available for deployments in response to natural disasters and security threats. In this regard, the Defence Forces hold a wide range of engineering and transport plant and equipment for military purposes. All such plant and equipment suitable for use in emergency situations is made available as the need arises.

I am satisfied that the Defence Forces are fully equipped and trained in line with best international practice to fulfil all roles that are assigned to them by Government. This includes the provision of relevant assistance as required in the event of a natural disaster or security threat.

Overseas Missions

212. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which he expects Irish troop deployment overseas in respect of EU or UN missions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34027/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): As of 01 November 2016, Ireland is contributing 496 Defence Forces personnel to 11 different missions

throughout the world, along with deployments to two standby Battlegroup Headquarters and a range of international organisations and National Representations.

The main overseas missions in which Defence Forces personnel are currently deployed are the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) with 215 personnel, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in Syria with 135 personnel and the Naval Service humanitarian mission in the Mediterranean with 57 personnel.

Irish soldiers deployed to UNIFIL serve alongside Finnish Armed Forces as part of a joint Battalion which is currently under Finnish command. Ireland takes over command of the Battalion from Finland in November 2016 at which time an additional Company of some 150 personnel will be deployed to UNIFIL bringing Ireland's contribution to this mission to 370 personnel.

The Department of Defence constantly reviews the deployment of Defence Forces personnel overseas. With regard to any future deployments of Defence Forces personnel overseas, Ireland receives requests, from time to time, in relation to participation in various missions and these are considered on a case-by-case basis. When considering any particular request, the existence of realistic objectives and a clear mandate, which has the potential to contribute to a political solution, consideration of how the mission relates to the priorities of Irish foreign policy and the degree of risk involved are amongst the factors considered.

The Government's White Paper on Defence includes a commitment to review Ireland's declared contribution to United Nations Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System (PCRS) (formerly UNSAS) and the EU Headline Goal; to include consideration of the potential deployability of the full range of Defence Forces' capabilities including Army, Air Corps and Naval Service capabilities and assets on peace support and crisis management operations. This review will commence in 2017.

The current contribution of some 496 Defence Forces personnel to overseas missions reflects the Government's continued commitment to our responsibilities in the area of international peace and security.

Full details of all personnel currently serving overseas are as follows:

Members of the Permanent Defence Force Serving Overseas

As of 01 November 2016

1. UN MISSIONS	
(i) UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) HQ	30
UNIFIL 53rd Infantry Group	181
UNIFIL Sector West HQ	4
(ii) UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation) Israel & Syria	13
(iii) MINURSO (United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara)	3
(iv) MONUSCO (United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo)	4
(v) UNOCI (United Nations Mission in Ivory Coast)	1
(vi) UNDOF (United Nations Disengagement Observer Force) HQ,	6
Golan Heights, Syria	
UNDOF 54th Infantry Group	129
TOTAL	371

1. UN MISSIONS	
UN MANDATED MISSIONS	
(vii) EUFOR (EU-led Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina)	7
(viii) EUTM Mali (EU-Led Training Mission)	18
(ix) KFOR (International Security Presence in Kosovo) HQ	12
2. OTHER DEPLOYMENTS	
Naval Service Humanitarian Mission in Mediterranean L.É. Samuel Beckett	57
TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONNEL SERVING WITH UN MISSIONS	465
ORGANISATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)	
(i) OSCE Mission to Bosnia & Herzegovina	1
(ii) Staff Officer, High Level Planning Group, Vienna	1
TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONNEL SERVING WITH OSCE	2
3. EU MILITARY STAFF	
Brussels	4
4. EU BATTLE GROUP	
German-led Battle Group 2016 - HQ, STRASBOURG	10
UK-led Battle Group 2016, UK	5
5. MILITARY REPRESENTATIVES/ADVISERS/STAFF	
(i) Military Adviser, Permanent Mission to UN, New York	1
(ii) Military Adviser, Irish Delegation to OSCE, Vienna	1
(iii) Military Representative to EU (Brussels)	4
(iv) Liaison Officer of Ireland, NATO /PfP (Brussels)	2
(v) EU OHQ Operation Althea, Mons, Belgium	1
(vi) Irish Liaison Officer to SHAPE & Military Co-Op Division, Mons, Belgium	1
TOTAL NUMBER OF DEFENCE FORCES PERSONNEL SERVING OVER-SEAS	496

Departmental Data

213. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he will provide a list of all contingent assets in his Department and in agencies under his Department where amounts can be owed but are not listed in the national accounts as an asset; if he will further provide a full breakdown of each category of contingent assets and the estimated amounts in the category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [34073/16]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My Department is not aware of any future events not under its control which may give rise to a contingent asset and as such does not have the information being sought by the Deputy.

9 November 2016