

## Written Answers.

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

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*Questions Nos. 1 to 12, inclusive, answered orally.*

*Questions Nos. 13 to 25, inclusive, resubmitted.*

### **Defence Forces Remuneration**

26. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to address the issues of pay and conditions in the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10742/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** Rates of pay and conditions of employment in the Irish public service have traditionally been set by, amongst other things, reference to levels of pay across the various sectors of the Irish public service. The Government's economic policy has led to economic recovery and a resumption of economic growth. This has provided the fiscal resources to provide for a sustainable and fair recovery in public service payscales.

Defence Forces pay is increasing in accordance with public sector pay agreements. The focus of these increases is weighted in favour of those on lower pay. Members of the Permanent Defence Force have received the pay increases due under the Lansdowne Road Agreement.

In addition, following negotiations with PDFORRA on behalf of their members, improved payscales for general service recruits and privates who joined the Permanent Defence Force post 1 January 2013, were backdated to 1 July 2016 and paid in August 2017.

The Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020 provides for further increases in pay ranging from 6.2% to 7.4% over the lifetime of the Agreement with the focus of the agreement once again being on the lower paid.

Both RACO and PDFORRA attended the negotiations which led to the Agreement, which were held under the auspices of the Workplace Relations Commission. They were afforded equal standing to other public sector trade unions and representative associations during the negotiations.

A 1% in annualised salaries due from 1 January 2018 was included in the weekly pay for enlisted personnel on 7 February 2018. The increase is being applied to officers monthly salaries in the February payments.

Following these revisions in pay, the starting pay for a newly qualified three star private, and their Naval Service equivalent, (inclusive of military service allowance) is €27,257, gross

annual earnings, with scope for further income from duty allowances. This is a significant increase on the €21,800 per annum which was the annual amount prior to the implementation of the increases in pay received through recent pay agreements.

The starting pay for a Corporal, including Military Service Allowance, is over €37,000 per annum. The first point on the payscale for a Sergeant, including Military Service Allowance, is €40,000 per annum.

A newly qualified non-graduate entry 2nd Lieutenant can expect a minimum of €35,000 (inclusive of military service allowance) per annum after 15 months of training, while a graduate entry Lieutenant can expect a minimum of €40,000 per annum (inclusive of military service allowance) after 15 months of training.

In 2017, under my direction, the Department of Defence raised recruitment and retention issues as part of the submission to the Public Service Pay Commission. In a further acknowledgement of these issues the Government tasked the Public Service Pay Commission with examining these challenges in the Defence Sector in more detail.

The Public Service Pay Commission has commenced this work and has requested detailed information from the Department of Defence. Defence management are preparing their submission which will be sent to the Commission in the coming weeks. I understand that both PDFORRA and RACO have made submissions to the Commission.

The Public Service Pay Commission is due to complete this exercise in the second half of 2018. The findings and proposals arising will be considered at that time.

I am satisfied that the processes I have outlined are appropriate for consideration of the matters raised by the Deputy.

### **Overseas Missions Data**

**27. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the level of deployment and location of Irish troops overseas on UN or EU related missions; the extent to which further missions are planned or required; the extent to which the need for upgrading of equipment has been noted arising from such deployment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10722/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** As of 01 February 2018, Ireland is contributing 586 Defence Forces personnel to 9 different missions throughout the world and also to a range of international organisations and National representations.

The main overseas missions in which the Defence Forces personnel are currently deployed are the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) with 375 personnel and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in Syria with 136 personnel.

The 375 personnel in UNIFIL serve alongside Finnish Armed Forces as a part of a joint battalion of which Ireland took over command in November 2016. As a consequence of taking over command, an additional Company of some 150 personnel were deployed as part of Ireland's contribution to this mission.

Ireland has a long and continuous record of contributing to peacekeeping missions. Participation in these missions demonstrates Ireland's strong support for the role of the United Nations in international peacekeeping. The current contribution of some 586 personnel to overseas

missions reflects the Government's continued commitment to our responsibilities in this area.

At the Government Meeting earlier this week, I secured approval for the deployment in 2018 of a contingent of the Permanent Defence Force to serve once again as part of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy naval mission in the Mediterranean, Operation Sophia. Arrangements are currently being made for two Irish naval vessels to deploy consecutively under rotation for a period of approximately 32 weeks in total.

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.

Defence Forces personnel serving on all overseas missions are equipped with the most modern and effective equipment. This equipment enables troops to carry out the mission assigned, as well as providing the required protection specific to the mission. Ongoing threat assessments are carried out in mission areas and we continually review both equipment and force assets, to ensure that Defence Forces personnel are appropriately equipped to fulfil their roles. I am satisfied that all appropriate security measures are in place to ensure the safety of all Defence Forces personnel serving overseas.

Full details of all personnel currently serving overseas are listed in the following table.

**MEMBERS OF THE PERMANENT DEFENCE FORCE SERVING OVERSEAS AS OF 01 FEBRUARY 2018**

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| UN MISSIONS   |        |
| UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) HQUNIFIL 111th Infantry BattalionUNIFIL Sector West HQ                           | 303378 |
| UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation) Israel and Syria  | 12     |
| MINURSO (United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara)   | 3      |
| MONUSCO (United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic of the Congo)   | 4      |
| UNDOF (FHQ Staff, Camp Ziouani - Alpha side)UNDOF (COS Staff - Camp Faouar - Bravo side) UNDOF 56th Infantry Group (Camp Ziouani) | 62128  |
| TOTAL   | 530    |
| UN MANDATED MISSIONS  |        |
| EUFOR (EU-led Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina)  | 5      |
| EUTM Mali (EU-led Training Mission)   | 20     |
| KFOR (International Security Presence in Kosovo) HQ   | 12     |
| Operational HQ/Floating HQ (Operation Sophia HQ)  | 4      |
| TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONNEL SERVING WITH UN MISSIONS  | 571    |
| ORGANISATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)   |        |
| Staff Officer, High Level Planning Group, Vienna  | 1      |
| TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONNEL SERVING WITH OSCE   | 1      |
| EU MILITARY STAFF   |        |
| Brussels  | 4      |
| MILITARY REPRESENTATIVES/ADVISERS/STAFF   |        |
| Military Adviser, Permanent Mission to UN, New York   | 1      |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| UN MISSIONS   |     |
| Military Adviser, Irish Delegation to OSCE, Vienna                      | 1   |
| Military Representative to EU (Brussels)                                | 4   |
| Liaison Officer of Ireland, NATO/PfP (Brussels)                         | 2   |
| EU OHQ Operation Althea, Mons, Belgium                                  | 1   |
| Irish Liaison Officer to SHAPE & Military Co-Op Division, Mons, Belgium | 1   |
| TOTAL NUMBER OF DEFENCE FORCES PERSONNEL SERVING OVERSEAS               | 586 |

### Defence Forces Training

28. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which Army, Naval Service and Air Corps training continues to be in line modern and international best practice; if particular procedures are in need of updating; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10723/18]

31. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the degree to which ongoing training of the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps, including Reserves, is scheduled in the course of the next two years; the extent to which such ongoing training meets international best practice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10726/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 28 and 31 together.

The primary function of training and education in the Defence Forces is to develop and maintain the capabilities necessary to enable it to fulfil the roles laid down by Government.

The Defence Forces conduct training and education under four broad categories namely; Leadership, skills, career and collective training. Leadership training is the medium through which the Defence Forces ensure that personnel are prepared for exercising command authority across the full range of military functions both at home and overseas in International operations. Skills training is the medium through which the Defence Forces ensure that its personnel have the requisite individual, specialist, and crew skills. Career training and education provides the organisation with the necessary pool of leaders and commanders at all levels. Collective Training allows military personnel to use their individual, crew, specialist and career training together, to develop integrated and coherent combat forces.

The scheduling of training in the Defence Forces, including the Reserve, is underpinned by an analysis of training needed to meet operational output requirements and capability development needs. A long term strategy is adopted with current planning horizons out to 2021.

I am advised that the Defence Forces seek to constantly benchmark training across all three arms against best military and academic practice. Military best practice is ensured by implementing a policy of standardisation that is in line with EU and NATO/Partnership for Peace partners. Academic best practice is ensured by benchmarking courses through accreditation under the National Framework of Qualifications which is validated by Quality and Qualifications Ireland.

The Defence Forces deliver military programmes and modules meeting national and international standards. The Defence Forces also engage with external educational institutions in order to facilitate organisational learning. This engagement with national and international educational institutions, military and civilian, aims to ensure that the Defence Forces retain currency

with regards to best international practice and employ all relevant modern training methods.

I am committed to ensuring that the personnel of the Defence Forces continue to be trained to appropriate standards.

### **Defence Forces Equipment**

29. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which military equipment, including transport, communications and procedures in the Army, continues to be upgraded and improved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10724/18]

**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 and equipment upgrades for the Defence Forces remains a clear focus for me, and future equipment priorities for the Defence Forces are being considered in the context of the lifetime of the White Paper on Defence as part of the capability development and equipment planning process.

The National Development Plan provides for a Capital allocation of €541m for Defence for the five year period 2018-2022. This allocation will facilitate the investment necessary to ensure that the Defence Forces have the equipment and infrastructure to deliver on all their roles as set out in the White Paper.

The White Paper provides that the Army will continue to retain all-arms conventional military capabilities, and the principal aim over the period of the White Paper will be to replace and upgrade, as required, existing capabilities in order to retain a flexible response for a wide range of operational requirements both at home and overseas.

There is focus on the essential force protection provided by armoured vehicles, and in this regard a maintenance and upgrade programme has commenced for the current fleet of 80 Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) which will seek to ensure viability of the fleet out to 2030. 24 armoured utility vehicles have recently been procured for force protection, and a small number of armoured logistical vehicles are also being procured.

There will be continued investment in the development of suitable network enabled communications in order to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex operational environment. This is also a priority area for investment if additional funding, beyond that required to maintain existing capabilities, is made available.

I am satisfied that the current provisions, together with the courses of action in the White Paper, will ensure that the Army is suitably equipped to fulfil all roles assigned by Government.

### **Defence Forces Strength**

30. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the strength of the Defence Forces, including Reserves, Army, Naval Service and Air Corps; the number of women in each branch of the services; the likelihood of recruitment following retirements now and over the next ten years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10725/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table:

| -                     | Males (WTE) | Females (WTE) | Total |
|-----------------------|-------------|---------------|-------|
| Army                  | 6,870       | 482           | 7,352 |
| Air Corps             | 700         | 35            | 735   |
| Naval Service         | 981         | 70            | 1,052 |
| Army Reserve          | 1,421*      | 232*          | 1,653 |
| Naval Service Reserve | 103*        | 21*           | 124   |

**WTE - Whole Time Equivalent**

**\* - Effective Personnel**

The 2015 White Paper on Defence commits to maintaining the strength of the PDF at 9,500 personnel. I can confirm that recruitment to the PDF will take place in 2018. Plans for this are currently being finalised. Recruitment in 2018 will be for General Service Recruits, Cadets, Apprentices and Direct Entry Officers. At this point it is not possible to predict precise numbers that will be recruited, but it is anticipated that this will be in the region of 800 PDF personnel. It is also planned to launch a General Service Recruitment campaign for the Reserve Defence Force in April / May 2018.

With the support of the Chief of Staff I am committed to ensuring that there is on-going recruitment to the Defence Forces and that the Permanent Defence Force can continue to operate effectively across all roles assigned by Government, both at home and overseas.

*Question No. 31 answered with Question No. 28.*

### **Defence Forces Reserve Strength**

32. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which membership of the local Defence Forces continues to be maintained at a required level; the extent to which ongoing training standards and requirements are met; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10727/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The White Paper on Defence provides for a combined establishment of 4,169 personnel for the Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve (inclusive of the proposal to increase the Naval Service Reserve establishment from 200 to 300 personnel). I am aware of the shortfall between this figure and the current combined strength of the Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve which, as of 31st January 2018, is 1,777 effective personnel. However, given the competing recruitment demands at present, where PDF recruitment is and should remain a priority, recruitment to the Reserve is continuing. A total of 139 new recruits were inducted into the RDF in 2017 and there is on-going engagement with applicants from the 2017 recruitment campaign that should yield further inductions. In addition a new recruitment campaign will be launched in 2018.

In terms of ongoing training standards for the Reserve, the White Paper sets out a developmental path for the organisation. On a day to day basis, the Reserve undertakes training in preparation to assist the PDF, when required. Training across all three arms of the Defence Forces is constantly benchmarked against best military and academic practice. Training procedures are constantly reviewed in order to ensure that the men and women of Oglagh na hÉireann are fully prepared to meet the challenges of the ever changing security environment.



With regard to RDF training, for the current year, Subhead A.5 provides for a budget of €2.15 million of which €2.068 million is allocated for Paid Training Mandays for members of the Reserve. This allocation will provide seven days annual paid training for all effective members of the Reserve, fourteen days paid training for all additional personnel recruited to the Reserve in 2018 and provide for career and specialist courses for selected members of the Reserve in line with Reserve priorities. This provision is sufficient having regard to the existing strength of the RDF and the voluntary nature of Reserve training

I would like to assure the Deputy that I remain committed to the ongoing development of the RDF within the framework set out in the White Paper on Defence.

### **Defence Forces Strength**

33. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which the Defence Forces are adequately equipped to deal with emergencies in respect of which they might be called upon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10728/18]

34. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which the Defence Forces can be mobilised in the event of natural disasters, including flooding, in view of the need for early deployment and use of specified equipment in such situations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10729/18]

37. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if deficiencies in the Defence Forces will be augmented in the context of a terrorist attack; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10732/18]

38. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which he is confident that facilities such as advanced training, state-of-the-art technology and specific military equipment is available throughout the Defence Forces with a view to ensuring a competence to deal with national or international security incidents; if he remains satisfied that the Defence Forces have adequate liaison with other defence forces throughout Europe in the context of a potential threat to national security; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10733/18]

40. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which specialist skills in dealing with security threats remain available to the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10735/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 33, 34, 37, 38 and 40 together.

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 to enable the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service to carry out their roles as assigned by Government.

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.

In accordance with the Framework for Major Emergency Management, primary responsibility for responding to emergencies such as severe weather events or terrorist attacks 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 an emergency situation in its Aid to the Civil Authority and Aid to the Civil Power (ATCP) roles. Major Emergency Plans have been developed by local and regional authorities and these Plans identify the procedures for requesting assistance from the Defence Forces.

In respect of terrorism, responsibility for the internal security of the State rests with the Department of Justice and Equality and An Garda Síochána. In that regard, among the roles assigned to the Defence Forces in the White Paper on Defence (2015) is the provision of ATCP which, in practice, means to provide assistance and support to An Garda Síochána when requested to do so. There is on-going and close liaison between An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces regarding security matters, including ATCP deployments and a wide variety of military training activities are specifically designed to counter or respond to possible security emergencies. Regular coordination and liaison meetings also take place between the Defence Forces and An Garda Síochána in relation to ATCP issues. The Defence Forces also participate in counter-terrorism training initiatives with international forces on an on-going basis.

I also wish to assure you that the Defence Forces retain a wide range of specialist skills and equipment. The full spectrum of Defence Forces personnel and equipment are available for deployment in response to any emergencies that may arise. The Operations Directorate in Defence Forces Headquarters manages the necessary cross-service coordination in responding to requests for support. These arrangements have proved effective in all emergencies encountered to date.

The acquisition of new equipment for the Defence Forces remains a clear focus for me. Future equipment priorities for the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service is considered in the context of the White Paper on Defence as part of the capability development and equipment priorities planning process and I wish to assure you that significant investment in equipment is taking place in the coming years in this context.

With regard to training, the primary function of training and education in the Defence Forces is to develop and maintain the necessary capabilities. The Defence Forces deliver military training programmes and modules meeting national and international standards. They also engage with external educational institutions in order to facilitate organisational learning. This engagement with national and international educational institutions, military and civilian, aims to ensure that the Defence Forces retain currency with regards to best international practice and employ all relevant modern training methods.

I am committed to ensuring that the personnel of the Defence Forces continue to be equipped and trained to best international standards and I can confirm that the Defence Forces keep their operational plans and response capabilities for dealing with a wide range of threats under constant review. I am satisfied that the Defence Forces are equipped and resourced to respond, as appropriate, to any such events were they to occur in this State.

### **Search and Rescue Service Provision**

**35. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which the Air Corps and the Naval Service continue to co-operate in air and sea rescue missions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10730/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The Defence Organisation provides a broad range of services in accordance with its primary security role while



it also undertakes a diverse range of non security related tasks.

With reference to Search and Rescue, since 2004 the Irish Coast Guard has overall responsibility for the provision of Search and Rescue services within the Irish Search and Rescue region. Both the Naval Service and the Air Corps provide support to the Irish Coast Guard in maritime Search and Rescue operations on an “as available” basis. A Service Level Agreement is in place setting out their roles and responsibilities in this regard.

The Defence Organisation will continue to provide support, as available, to the Irish Coast Guard in respect of Coast Guard Search and Rescue operations.

### **Defence Forces Recruitment**

36. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which young unemployed persons have been able to join the Defence Forces; if a specific programme exists in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10731/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The Defence Forces accept applications from all individuals who meet the requisite criteria for the various competitions that are advertised. There is no specific advertising or recruitment aimed at those who are unemployed. The Defence Forces require men and women from all backgrounds that possess a strong sense of duty, enjoy working as part of a team, and are looking for a rewarding yet challenging career.

The White Paper on Defence committed the Government to putting in place a new employment support scheme with the direct involvement of the Defence Forces. The objective of this scheme, which involves a 10 week training programme, is to help to develop a path to economic independence for participants, aged between 18 and 24 years, who are at a serious disadvantage owing to their current socio-economic situation. The scheme is designed with the specific aim of equipping participants with life and other marketable and certifiable skills which will assist them both in their capacity to participate fully in society as well as their ability to enter the workforce and or to pursue further education for this purpose.

Participants retain any Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection benefits that they are currently entitled to for the duration of the Scheme. Participation on the scheme is wholly voluntary for the relevant cohort of jobseekers and there is no penalty applied for non-participation or engagement in the programme. Participants do not receive any payment from the Department of Defence.

Two iterations of the training programme, in Limerick and in Meath, were conducted in 2017. The next iteration of the programme is scheduled to commence in Cork in June this year. An interim review of the roll out of the scheme is also scheduled to commence later this year.

*Questions Nos. 37 and 38 answered with Question No. 33.*

### **Air Corps Strength**

39. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which the Air Corps is adequately equipped to detect and or intercept activity posing a threat to national security; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10734/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The Air Corps is

not tasked or equipped to monitor aircraft overflying the entirety of Irish airspace. However, on a routine basis, the Air Corps monitors and communicates with foreign military aircraft where such aircraft are flying in the airspace in the vicinity of Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnell, where air traffic control is provided by the Defence Forces.

The Government's White Paper on Defence (2015) provides the defence policy framework over a ten year planning horizon. This includes provision for periodic updates to consider progress with implementation and any revisions required. As stated in the White Paper, should additional funding beyond that required to maintain existing Air Corps' capabilities become available, the development of a radar surveillance capability for the Air Corps is a priority. Funding for this is not provided in the current resource envelope and any future decisions in this regard will be in the context of the ongoing security environment and any associated developments.

The Air Corps' existing Pilatus PC9 aircraft provide a very limited air to air and air to ground intercept capacity. Whilst the development of a more capable air combat intercept capability will be considered as part of the White Paper update, at this stage there are no plans in this regard. However, these matters are kept under constant review.

*Question No. 40 answered with Question No. 33.*

### Departmental Advertising Campaigns

41. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the details of each instance of advertorial content commissioned by his Department and agencies under its remit in the past 12 months; the date this content was published; the purpose of this content; the cost of its publication; the publication or platform on which it was published, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10770/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** Advertorial content was commissioned by my Department and the Defence Forces in relation to the Be Winter Ready campaign and Defence Forces' recruitment as outlined below. The content was published as per the Advertising Standards Authority of Ireland regulations governing advertorial content, which state that articles must note that they are sponsored by a given organisation or brand.

The first table below shows advertorial content commissioned by the Office of Emergency Planning under the remit of my Department.

| Date Published | Purpose of Content                        | Cost      | Media outlet                          |
|----------------|---|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| November 2017  | Be Winter Ready Campaign two page article | €6,150.00 | Independent Newspapers Marketing Ltd. |

The second table shows advertorial content commissioned by the Defence Forces.

| Date Published     | Purpose of Content          | Cost   | Media outlet |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|--------|--------------|
| 9th March 2017     | General Service Recruitment | €2,500 | Joe.ie       |
| 2nd September 2017 | Reserve Recruitment         | €2,500 | Joe.ie       |
| 10th October 2017  | General Service Recruitment | €2,500 | Joe.ie       |
| 9th March 2017     | General Service Recruitment | €2,500 | Her.ie       |
| 11th October 2017  | General Service Recruitment | €2,500 | Her.ie       |

## Passport Applications

42. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of an application for a passport by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10519/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** All passport applications are subject to the provisions of the Passports Act 2008 (“the Act”) which provides, among other things, that a person must be an Irish citizen before a passport can be issued to him or her. The question of the applicant’s entitlement to Irish citizenship must be looked at with reference to Irish law, and in particular, the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956, as amended, (the 1956 Act). In respect of the applicant in question, the Passport Service, via the Embassy of Ireland, Germany, has requested supporting documents from the applicant’s parents to establish the Irish citizenship of the applicant. To date, the requested documents have not been submitted. As the requested documentation has not yet been submitted, an entitlement to citizenship and therefore eligibility for an Irish passport, has not yet been established. The passport application cannot proceed any further until entitlement to citizenship has been established.

## Syrian Conflict

43. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the recent discussions he has had at European Union and or United Nations level on the ongoing massacre of innocent persons in Syria and the need to have a meaningful and lasting ceasefire; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10750/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I am extremely concerned by the recent increase in violence in Syria, and in particular the vicious siege of Eastern Ghouta, which has cost the lives of hundreds of civilians in recent weeks. The barbarity of the attacks by the Syrian regime on its own people, the deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure, including homes, hospitals and schools, and the refusal of the Assad regime to allow humanitarian aid in, or injured civilians to leave, has been shocking, even by the standards of the Syria conflict to date. I can only imagine how terrifying this is for the people there, who have no way to protect themselves or their children, and no way to leave. On numerous occasions in this House, I have condemned the violence in Syria and I reiterate that condemnation in the strongest terms today.

I attended a UN Security Council briefing on this issue in New York two weeks ago, where UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres appealed for an immediate suspension of violence in Eastern Ghouta to allow for the delivery of humanitarian aid, and for evacuations. Ireland strongly endorsed this call.

I welcome the adoption of a UN Security Council resolution that called for an immediate ceasefire and unimpeded humanitarian access. However, the bombardment of Eastern Ghouta has continued in defiance of this resolution. The international community must redouble its efforts to press for a full and immediate ceasefire, and unhindered humanitarian access to besieged populations in Syria.

EU Foreign Ministers discussed the situation in Syria at their informal meeting on 15 February and again at the Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 26 February where Ireland added its voice to calls for the immediate and full implementation of the ceasefire demanded by the UN Security Council.

Ireland has consistently supported EU sanctions targeting the regime and its supporters, and will continue to do so as long as the situation on the ground justifies these measures.

Ultimately, a long term, sustainable, Syrian-owned and Syrian-led solution to this conflict is needed. Ireland fully supports the UN-led political negotiations to end the conflict based on the 2012 Geneva Communiqué and UN Security Council resolution 2254, which call for an end to violence; full humanitarian access, a democratic political transition and accountability and transitional justice.

The EU provides direct assistance to the UN-brokered talks in Geneva and has launched, in coordination with the UN, an initiative to develop political dialogue with key actors from the region to identify common ground.

The EU and its Member States have to date mobilised more than €10.4 billion for humanitarian, stabilisation and resilience assistance inside Syria and in neighbouring countries, making the EU the largest single donor to the effort. The EU hosted a donors' conference for Syria in April 2017 at which pledges totalling €5.6 billion were made, and will host another donors' conference for Syria in April 2018.

Since 2012, Ireland has contributed over €90 million to the humanitarian effort in response to the conflict in Syria, including €25 million in 2017 alone. Through our annual contributions to EU Institutions, Ireland also supports the EU's humanitarian response to the Syria crisis. Ireland also supports a broad range of efforts to ensure full legal accountability for all war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria.

### **Syrian Conflict**

44. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the discussions he has had at European Union and United Nations level on the need to provide humanitarian aid to the persons most in need in Syria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10751/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** The humanitarian situation in Syria remains of utmost concern. The conflict continues to have a devastating impact on civilians and the suffering in Eastern Ghouta in particular is appalling. Over 13 million people require humanitarian assistance inside Syria alone and over 5.5 million have fled to neighbouring countries and the wider region. In 2018, the UN estimates that \$7.9 billion is required to meet the needs of the most vulnerable within Syria and across the region – the highest appeal worldwide for a single crisis. Ireland is committed to providing ongoing humanitarian assistance in response to the Syria crisis and has contributed over €90 million to the international humanitarian response since 2012, including over €25 million in 2017. Ireland also supports the EU's humanitarian response. The largest response to the crisis has been from the EU and its Member States, who together have mobilised more than €10.4 billion for humanitarian, stabilisation and resilience assistance inside Syria and in neighbouring countries.

In April this year, the EU will host, in close cooperation with the UN, a second donors' conference for Syria and the region, focused on sustaining political and financial commitments in response to the crisis. At an informal meeting of EU Foreign Ministers in mid-February, at which Ireland was represented by the Minister of European Affairs, there was broad agreement that a key focus of the conference should be on humanitarian efforts and access in Syria.

At the most recent EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 26 February, Ireland joined

Member States in calling for an immediate ceasefire, and unhindered humanitarian access in Syria. Ireland will continue to raise the importance of sustained and unhindered humanitarian aid as part of overall efforts to respond to the crisis in Syria in relevant EU and UN fora.

Ultimately, an end to violence is urgently needed in order to relieve the suffering of the Syrian people. Ireland and the EU fully support the UN-led political negotiations to end the conflict based on the 2012 Geneva Communiqué and UN Security Council resolution 2254, which call for an end to violence; full humanitarian access; a democratic political transition, and accountability and transitional justice.

### **Good Friday Agreement**

45. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when talks will resume between the Irish and British Governments and the political parties in Northern Ireland on the need to have the Stormont Assembly and Executive restored; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10752/18]

47. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to convene the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10818/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take questions 45 and 47 together.

As co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement, the Government, working with the British Government, has spared no effort in supporting and facilitating talks on the formation of a new Executive, over many months.

Fully functioning, devolved, power-sharing Institutions are the only way forward for Northern Ireland, and are urgently required.

Recent developments in Stormont are of serious concern to all of us who want to see the establishment of a functioning, power-sharing Executive in Northern Ireland, and the other Institutions of the Good Friday Agreement.

The Government is working with the British Government to see if there is any prospect of re-engagement with the parties in the period ahead.

The Taoiseach has spoken with Prime Minister May to emphasise the Government's full commitment to the Good Friday Agreement, and its determination to secure the effective operation of all its institutions.

I spoke with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland again last week and will remain in very regular contact as we seek a way forward from the current impasse in the discussions to secure the formation of a new Executive.

As co-guarantor of the Agreement, the Government will continue to engage with the British Government and the political parties in Northern Ireland to support the urgent formation of a new Executive by the mandated political parties. The functioning of the power-sharing devolved institutions is crucial for the Good Friday Agreement.

The Government's firm position is that the Good Friday Agreement and subsequent Agreements must be implemented in full, and in this context the Taoiseach and I have been clear that the Government does not want to see the introduction of direct rule in Northern Ireland. In the



event that the devolved power-sharing institutions are unable to operate, both Governments will seek ways to ensure that the North/South and East/West dimensions of the Agreement operate in accordance with our respective responsibilities.

If there is no Executive and Assembly, decisions about the internal governance of Northern Ireland are for the UK Government. However, the Irish Government has a very clear and established role in the functioning of various institutions of the Good Friday Agreement and the Government is committed to the effective operation of all of the institutions of the Agreement.

The British Irish Intergovernmental Conference (BIIGC) is an institution of the Agreement, which can meet at any stage, although it has usually been convened when the devolved institutions are not operating. The Conference is an important institution which brings together the British and Irish Governments under Strand Three of the Good Friday Agreement. The Agreement confirms that there is no derogation from the sovereignty of either Government. The Government is continuing to keep under review a convening of the Conference.

The Good Friday Agreement is the indispensable framework for providing stable, inclusive, power-sharing government for all the people of Northern Ireland and for sustaining our interlocking relationships – within Northern Ireland, on the island of Ireland and between the UK and Ireland.

As co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement, the British and Irish Governments have an obligation to uphold and protect the letter and spirit of that Agreement, and we are considering how best to do so in the current situation.

### **Departmental Advertising Campaigns**

46. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the details of each instance of advertorial content commissioned by his Department and agencies under its remit in the past 12 months; the date this content was published; the purpose of this content; the cost of its publication; the publication or platform on which it was published, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10774/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department has not commissioned any advertorial content in the past 12 months and there are no agencies under the remit of my Department. *Question No. 47 answered with Question No. 45.*

### **Brexit Documents**

48. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the withdrawal agreement pertaining to Britain leaving the EU as published by the EU; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10819/18]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Guidelines adopted by the European Council last December called upon the Union negotiator and the United Kingdom to complete the work on all withdrawal issues, including those not yet addressed in the first phase, in conformity with the European Council guidelines of 29 April 2017, to consolidate the results obtained, and to start drafting the relevant parts of the Withdrawal Agreement. The publication last week by the European Commission of a draft Withdrawal Agreement is fully in line with this mandate. This is an EU draft which will now be considered internally by EU Member States before being subject to negotiations between the

EU Task Force and the UK. The EU has made it clear that negotiations in phase two can only progress as long as all commitments undertaken in the first phase are respected in full and translated into legal terms as quickly as possible. The draft text reflects the principles and commitments set out in the Joint Report from the EU and UK negotiators published on 8 December 2017, including on citizens' rights, the financial settlement and on the Irish specific issues.

I welcome the draft protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland, which is an integral part of the proposed withdrawal agreement. The draft protocol gives legal effect to the commitments on avoiding a hard border and protecting the Good Friday Agreement in all its parts. It also includes elements on rights and on the Common Travel Area. Since they were agreed in December, we have been working closely with the Task Force to ensure the implementation of the principles and commitments through the Withdrawal Agreement. We are fully satisfied with how this process was managed.

The Government has always been clear that our preference is to resolve the Irish-specific issues through the wider future relationship agreement between the EU and the UK, a view we share with the UK government. We also stand ready to consider proposals from the UK on specific solutions. At the same time, it is necessary to have legal certainty on the backstop as part of the Withdrawal Agreement. This is a default and will only be triggered if the commitments made by the UK in phase one cannot be delivered through the wider future relationship agreement or specific solutions.

It is intended that the eventual Withdrawal Agreement will also include transition arrangements, the draft legal text on which is separately under negotiation between the EU and UK. Appropriate transitional arrangements would be hugely important for Ireland in giving certainty to individuals and businesses. We welcome that the EU has proposed that the whole of the EU *acquis* will apply during the transition, which means that the status quo will be preserved with the aim of avoiding any gaps or cliff edge effects between the UK leaving the EU and when a future relationship agreement enters into force.

### **Financial Services Regulation**

49. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of credit servicing firms that have completed the authorisation process in view of the passing of the Consumer Protection (Regulation of Credit Servicing Firms) Act 2015; the number that were refused; the number still pending authorisation but operating under the transitional measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10463/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Central Bank has authorised 9 credit servicing firms since the enactment of the Consumer Protection (Regulation of Credit Servicing Firms) Act 2015, with a further 2 firms still availing of the relevant transitional provisions provided for by virtue of the legislation. Details of these firms are available on the Register of Authorised Credit Servicing Firms on the Central Bank website.

There were 10 other firms who originally notified the Central Bank that they wished to avail of the relevant transitional arrangements. Further to the Bank's engagements with these firms, they subsequently withdrew their applications for authorisation.

Following the enactment of the Consumer Protection (Regulation of Credit Servicing Firms) Act 2015 (the 2015 Act), the Central Bank focused on developing a robust regime for this new category of regulated firm. As part of this regime, the Central Bank developed detailed Authorisation Requirements and Standards for credit servicing firms which set appropriately high

requirements on applicant firms. These include requirements on how these firms deal with their loan owner in order to ensure that borrowers receive the full protections of Irish financial services legislation, including Central Bank codes.

The Central Bank seeks to process each application for authorisation as expeditiously as possible, while meeting its obligation to operate a rigorous and effective gatekeeper function in order to ensure that only firms that demonstrate compliance with the Authorisation Requirements and Standards are authorised.

## **EU Directives**

50. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Finance the status of payment service directives which govern the application of a surcharge by a trader exactly equal to the charge applied by a bank to that trader for all debit and credit card transactions under €12; his views on whether this practice is acceptable and legal under the payment services directives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10464/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I understand this question to relate to the prohibition on surcharging - the practice where a merchant charges an extra fee for receiving a payment made using a payment card - contained in Article 62 of the revised EU Payment Services Directive (PSD2). That Article provides that a payee shall not request charges for the use of a payment instrument for which interchange fees are regulated under Chapter II of the EU Interchange Fee Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2015/751).

PSD2 was transposed into Irish law by the European Union (Payment Services) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 6 of 2018) and Regulation 86 of the transposing Regulations gives effect to this prohibition, meaning that a merchant cannot surcharge on the vast majority of consumer credit and debit cards.

It should be noted that the prohibition on surcharging does not cover transactions with commercial cards or transactions with payment cards issued by three party payment card schemes. Where surcharges are allowed, the European Union (Payment Services) Regulations 2018 provide that they must not exceed the direct costs borne by the payee to accept the card.

PSD2 and the EU Interchange Fee Regulation form part of a legislative package. The EU Interchange Fee Regulation halved the interchange fee charged to retailers to 30 basis points for credit cards, and the corresponding fee for domestic consumer debit cards was reduced to 10 basis points with effect from 9 December 2015. These changes significantly reduced the costs of accepting card payments, as interchange fees make up part of the overall charges collected by acquirers from retailers.

## **Tax Exemptions**

51. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance if exemptions from exit tax are available for persons who are permanently incapacitated due to mental or physical disability. [10492/18]

52. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Finance the reason exit tax for wards of court, who are exempt from exit tax, is deducted at source and then refunded rather than an exemption being applied. [10493/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 51

and 52 together.

I am informed by Revenue that the following persons may be entitled to a repayment of life assurance exit tax -

- a permanently incapacitated individual who is exempt from income tax under section 189 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 ("TCA 1997") in respect of income arising from the investment of compensation payments in respect of personal injuries,

- the trustees of a "qualifying trust" within section 189A TCA 1997 where the life policy is held as part of the trust fund of the qualifying trust, provided that income from the trust or investment returns from the investment of the trust funds is the sole or main income of the incapacitated individual, and

- a thalidomide victim who is exempt from income tax under section 192 TCA 1997 in respect of income from the investment of compensation payments made by the Minister for Health and Children or by the foundation known as Conterganstiftung für behinderte Menschen.

The life assurance exit tax will be deducted in the normal manner but the individual or trust may be entitled to a repayment of the exit tax under section 730GA TCA 1997. The same procedure applies for a Ward of Court who is exempt from income tax under section 189 TCA 1997.

In contrast to the above for other exit taxes, such as Deposit Interest Retention Tax (DIRT), persons who are permanently incapacitated or who are trustees of a special trust for permanently incapacitated individuals where the income is exempt from tax can make a declaration to Revenue (Form DE2 2018) that they would be entitled to a refund of the entire amount of DIRT if so deducted. The financial institution on receipt of notification from Revenue that no DIRT is to apply will pay interest without the deduction of DIRT.

### **Fitness and Probity Regime**

53. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 86 of 21 February 2018, if the one disqualification listed for 2018 was an active employee in a company or if the disqualification related to historic behaviour; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10518/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am informed by the Central Bank of Ireland that the 2018 disqualification from performing senior management roles in regulated firms, under the Fitness & Probity regime, relates to Mr Michael Walsh. Mr Walsh admitted participation as a non-executive director in certain prescribed contraventions of financial services law by Irish Nationwide Building Society during the period from 1 August 2004 to 30 September 2008.

The full details of Mr Walsh's disqualification are outlined in the Central Bank's public statement on the matter which was published on 12 February 2018.

As the Inquiry into 'Persons Concerned in INBS' is still ongoing, the Central Bank does not intend to make any further comment, nor would it be appropriate for me to comment on the matter at this time.

The public statement is available at the following link:

<https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/news-and-media/legal-notice/settlement-agreements/public-statement-relating-to-settlement-agreement-between-central-bank-of-ireland-and-michael-p.-walsh.pdf?sfvrsn=4>

## Insurance Coverage

54. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the implications that have been imposed on homeowners, landowners and in particular homeowners whose home insurance has substantially increased whereby other insurance providers will not quote homeowners who have now seen their homes brought under the possible 100-year flood map following CFRAM's recent revised national flood hazard maps; his plans to deal with this in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10521/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am conscious of the difficulties that the absence or withdrawal of flood insurance cover can cause to homeowners and businesses, and that is one of the reasons the Government has been prioritising investment in flood defences over the last number of years.

However, you should be aware that the provision of insurance is a commercial matter for insurance companies, which has to be based on a proper assessment of the risks they are willing to accept. Consequently, neither the Government nor the Central Bank can interfere in the provision or pricing of insurance products or have the power to direct insurance companies to provide flood cover to specific individuals or businesses.

Government policy in relation to flooding is focused on the development of a sustainable, planned and risk-based approach to dealing with flooding problems. This in turn should lead to the increased availability of flood insurance. To achieve this aim, there is a focus on:

- prioritising spending on flood relief measures by the Office of Public Works (OPW) and relevant local authorities,
- development and implementation of plans by the OPW to implement flood relief schemes, and
- improving channels of communication between the OPW and the insurance industry, in order to reach a better understanding about the provision of flood cover in marginal areas.

The core strategy for addressing areas at potentially significant risk from flooding is the OPW Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme. The CFRAM Programme focussed on 300 Areas for Further Assessment (AFAs) including 90 coastal areas, mainly in urban locations nationwide, identified as being at potentially significant risk of flooding. The proposed feasible measures, both structural and non-structural, identified for AFAs are outlined in Flood Risk Management Plans.

I am advised by the OPW that the finalised Flood Risk Management Plans were submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in Summer 2017 for an independent review of the environmental assessments. Having now received the outcomes of the independent review, the Commissioners of Public Works expect in the coming weeks to formally submit the Flood Risk Management Plans for my approval.

It is important to note that the flood maps are community based maps and provide a useful resource for planning and emergency response and cannot be used for commercial purposes. The insurance industry uses its own flood modelling tools for assessing the level of risk to in-



dividual properties.

Finally, you should be aware that a consumer can make a complaint to the Financial Services Ombudsman in relation to any dealings with a Financial Services or Insurance provider during which they feel they have been unfairly treated. In addition, individuals who are experiencing difficulty in obtaining flood insurance or believe that they are being treated unfairly may contact Insurance Ireland which operates a free Insurance Information Service for those who have queries, complaints or difficulties in relation to insurance.

### Tax Reliefs Data

55. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance the number of applications made and amount of tax relief generated under section 848A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, as amended by the Finance Act 2013 in each of the years 2013 to 2017. [10694/18]

56. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance the number of applications made and amount of tax relief generated under section 848A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, in each of the years 2010 to 2013. [10695/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 55 and 56 together.

I am advised by Revenue that the number of donors and the Exchequer cost of donations to Approved Bodies for the years 2010 to 2015 (the latest year for which data is available), are published in the ‘Cost of Tax Expenditures’ table which is available on Revenue’s website at:

*<https://www.revenue.ie/en/corporate/information-about-revenue/statistics/tax-expenditures/costs-expenditures.aspx>.*

A summary of the information is set out in the following table:

| Year | Exchequer cost of donations (€million) | Number of applications |
|------|--|------------------------|
| 2010 | €51.1                                  | 146,800                |
| 2011 | €47.1                                  | 140,400                |
| 2012 | €46.8                                  | 138,000                |
| 2013 | €45                                    | 135,200                |
| 2014 | €27.6                                  | 124,600                |
| 2015 | €38.1                                  | 148,300                |

### Stamp Duty

57. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the status of an application for a reduced rate of stamp duty on certain farm consolidation transactions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10739/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The measure to allow a farmer to claim relief from stamp duty where he or she sells and purchases land for the purposes of consolidating an existing farm holding has been introduced, subject to a commencement order after a full consideration of any administrative or EU state-aid requirements.

For the relief to operate, there must be both a sale and a purchase of land within a period of 24 months of each other. Where other qualifying conditions are satisfied, stamp duty will only

be paid to the extent that the value of the land that is purchased exceeds the value of the land that is sold. A reduced rate of 1% will be charged on the excess, if any, of the purchase value. If the sale takes place before the purchase, then relief will be given at the time of purchase. However, if the purchase takes place first, then stamp duty will have to be paid but can subsequently be refunded when the sale takes place.

A number of qualifying conditions must be satisfied before the relief can apply. The most important condition is that Teagasc must issue a certificate stating that a sale and purchase or an exchange of farmland was made for farm consolidation purposes. This is the certificate that is currently required in relation to the capital gains tax relief. The criteria to be used by Teagasc for this purpose and the information to be supplied to Teagasc are contained in guidelines published by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

A purchaser of farmland must retain ownership of the farmland for a period of five years and must use the land for farming. Where any part of the land is disposed of before the end of this five-year holding period, the stamp duty relieved can subsequently be recovered by Revenue, or partly recovered as appropriate.

The Deputy may wish to note that the measure will apply to all transactions which took place after 01 January 2018, so farmers who consolidate their holdings prior to the commencement of the relief will still be eligible.

My Department is continuing to explore the potential State Aid aspects of the measure and this may take a little time.

### **Tax Reliefs Abolition**

58. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Finance the steps he will take to restore tax allowance in respect of trade union subscriptions for persons who are affiliated to recognised trade unions (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10743/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** In October 2016 my Department published a report on Tax Expenditures which included a review of the appropriate treatment for tax purposes of trade union subscriptions and professional body fees. The review found that a scheme of tax reliefs for trade union subscriptions would fail to meet the evaluation threshold laid down by the Department's Tax Expenditure Guidelines. The review stated that:

“The reinstatement of this tax relief would have no justifiable policy rationale and does not express a defined policy objective. Given that individuals join trade unions largely for the well-known benefits of membership, and the potential value of the relief to an individual would equate to just over €1 per week, this scheme would have little to no incentive effect on the numbers choosing to join. There is no specific market failure that needs to be addressed by such a scheme, and it would consist largely of deadweight.”

Given the conclusion of the review, I have no plans to reintroduce such a relief.

### **Departmental Advertising Campaigns**

59. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the details of each instance of advertorial content commissioned by his Department and agencies under its remit in the past 12 months; the date this content was published; the purpose of this content; the cost of its publication; the publication or platform on which it was published, in tabular form; and if he will make

a statement on the matter. [10773/18]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Details of the advertorial content commissioned by my Department and by the bodies under the aegis of my Department in the past 12 months are in the following table.

Of the seventeen bodies under the aegis of my Department, I am informed that thirteen did not commission advertorial content in the period requested. It was not possible for one body to respond to this information request in the time available and therefore I will make arrangements to provide a response in line with Standing Orders.

### **Brexit Issues**

60. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the financial commitments that are in place from Britain regarding the PEACE and INTERREG programmes post Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10511/18]

61. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the financial commitments that are in place from the EU regarding the PEACE and INTERREG programmes post Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10512/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 60 and 61 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Irish Government is committed to the successful implementation of the current PEACE and INTERREG Programmes and to successor programmes post-2020.

I am pleased to be able to advise the House that this ambition is now reflected in the terms of the joint progress report on the Brexit negotiations that was agreed between the EU and UK in December. Both parties agreed to honour their commitments to the current programmes and to examine the possibilities for future support favourably.

Moreover, in its Communication to the European Council that accompanied the joint progress report, the Commission committed itself to proposing the continuation of the programmes in its proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework, expected in May.

### **National Lottery Funding Disbursement**

62. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the reason under the new licence for the national lottery, all unclaimed money does not revert to the prize fund; the value of these moneys since the new licence came into place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10513/18]

63. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the €16 million noted in the regulator of the national lottery's report relating to unclaimed prizes before 31 December 2016 will be added to the prizes available as per the old licence or if it will be used by the new licensee for advertising purposes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10514/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 62 and 63 together.

The National Lottery was established under the National Lottery Act 1986 and continues in accordance with the National Lottery Act 2013. A competition for the award of the twenty year licence to operate the National Lottery took place between May and October 2013. On 27 February 2014 the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform granted the new licence to Premier Lotteries Ireland (PLI) Limited who then entered into a transition phase with the previous operator, An Post National Lottery Company. Premier Lotteries Ireland Ltd was incorporated on 22 May 2013 and began operations as Operator of the National Lottery on 30 November 2014. A fee of €405m was received into the Exchequer for the National Lottery licence in 2014.

In addition, the following amounts have been transferred to the Exchequer from the National Lottery in each of the years 2008 to 2017:

2008 €265m

2009 €275m

2010 €250m

2011 €230m

2012 €220m

2013 €210m

2014 €178m

2015 €193m

2016 €219m

2017 €227m

The current Licence, which was agreed in February 2014, defines an “expired unclaimed prize” as any prize not claimed within the time frame and in the manner specified in the relevant Lottery Game rules. Clause 6.9.2 of the Licence provides that any expired Unclaimed Prizes shall be forfeited in favour of the Licensee, provided that such Expired Unclaimed Prizes shall be used: solely for the promotion of the National Lottery and/or the Lottery Games (excluding Base Marketing), in a manner determined by the Licensee, which shall include the funding of special draws and additional or top-up prizes; and which may include Incremental Marketing and advertising of the National Lottery and/or Lottery Games; or such other activities to promote the National Lottery and/or Lottery Games as specifically agreed in writing with the Regulator from time to time; and no later than within three hundred and sixty five (365) days from the day on which they were forfeited in favour of the Licensee.

The Licence is available to read on the website of the Regulator of the National Lottery: <http://www.rnl.ie/publications-and-research/legislation-licence/>.

I have been advised by the Regulator of the National Lottery that the information sought regarding the value of expired unclaimed prizes since the new licence came into place is the Licensee’s confidential information and under Clause 20.6.1 of the Licence cannot be disclosed by the Regulator. I am further advised that the Regulator has asked the Licensee’s permission to disclose this confidential information and the Licensee is considering this request.

In regards the €16.092 million in respect of expired unclaimed prizes arising under the previous Licence with An Post National Lottery Company, it should be noted that this is a complex legal matter requiring consideration of detailed technical and legal argument. Officials in

my Department are consulting with the parties involved with a view to bringing the matter to a timely conclusion.

### **Community Employment Schemes Supervisors**

64. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to introduce a contributory pension scheme for community employment supervisors who could contribute to such a scheme (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10447/18]

65. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if a gratuity or redundancy scheme for community employment supervisors (details supplied) will be introduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10448/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 64 and 65 together.

I refer the Deputy to my reply to Parliamentary Question No. 262 answered on 16 January 2018.

### **Community Employment Schemes Supervisors**

66. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to improve the salary scale for community employment supervisors (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10449/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As the Deputy will appreciate, I have no direct responsibility for the pay arrangements for this cohort of workers who are not public servants.

### **Ministerial Meetings**

67. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will report on the meeting on 28 February 2018 with a group (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10450/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Deputy will appreciate that it is not possible to report on the meeting in question having regard to the fact that, at the time of the actual finalisation of the reply to this written question, it has yet to take place.

### **Public Private Partnerships**

68. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when the review of public private partnerships will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10510/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** A senior-level Inter-Departmental / Agency Group was established last year to review Ireland's experience of PPPs and to make recommendations on the future role of PPPs, in the context of the



development of the new 10 year National Development Plan (NDP).

The work of the Review Group is now substantially complete and the key findings and recommendations of the PPP review are summarised in section 2.2 and detailed in section 6.7 of the NDP.

I expect the final report of the PPP Review Group to be published in the coming weeks.

### **Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Programme**

69. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform when the action plan deriving from the national river basin management plan will be put in place (details supplied) [10692/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The core strategy for addressing areas at potentially significant risk from flooding is the Office of Public Works (OPW) Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme. The Programme, which is being undertaken by engineering consultants on behalf of the OPW working in partnership with the local authorities, involves the production of predictive flood mapping for each location, the development of preliminary flood risk management options and the production of Flood Risk Management Plans.

The CFRAM Programme is focussing on 300 Areas for Further Assessment (AFAs) including 90 coastal areas, mainly in urban locations nationwide, designated in 2012 as being at potentially significant risk of flooding. The flood risk for each of these areas has been assessed, through detailed engineering techniques to assess their risk and impact from flooding. This risk and the proposed feasible measures, both structural and non-structural, identified to manage that risk are outlined in the Flood Risk Management Plans.

The area referred to by the Deputy is an AFA and is being assessed by the South Western CFRAM Study. A proposed measure has been identified for the area in question, namely to progress the project level development and assessment of a Flood Relief Scheme, including environmental assessment as necessary and further public consultation, for refinement and preparation for planning/exhibition and, if and as appropriate, implementation.

In summer 2017, the OPW finalised all Plans and each Plan was submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for an independent review of the environmental assessments. Having now received the outcomes of the independent review of the environmental assessments for the Flood Risk Management Plans, the Commissioners of Public Works will in the coming weeks submit the Flood Risk Management Plans to the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform for approval, in accordance with the statutory requirements.

The final Plans, approved measures and national programme for implementation will be announced after the Plans have been approved.

### **Departmental Advertising Campaigns**

70. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the details of each instance of advertorial content commissioned by his Department and agencies under its remit in the past 12 months; the date this content was published; the purpose of this content; the cost of its publication; the publication or platform on which it was published, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10778/18]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** My Department or the bodies under its aegis have not commissioned advertorial content in the past 12 months. It should be noted that the Office of Public Works will respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Autism Support Services**

71. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an application by a school (details supplied) for an autistic spectrum disorders, ASD, unit; if this application has been refused; if so, the reason therefore; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10461/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for organising and planning provision for children with Special Educational Needs, including the establishment of special classes in mainstream primary and post primary schools.

Special classes offer a supportive learning environment to students with ASD who are unable to access the curriculum in a mainstream class, even with support, for most or all of their school day. Special classes are for students who have a recommendation for a special class placement in their professional reports.

Schools may apply to the NCSE to open a special class where a need has been identified in their area i.e. a number of students have professional reports indicating they require the support of a special class.

The NCSE, in looking to open special classes, must take into account the present and future potential need for such classes, taking particular account of the educational needs of the children concerned. The NCSE will also take account of location and sustainability in looking to establish special classes in certain areas.

In addition, the NCSE will consider:

- the school's accommodation and accessibility
- the number of special classes, if any, already in the school.

The NCSE has advised officials in my Department that an application has been received from the school referred to by the Deputy.

As the application is currently being considered by the NCSE, I will arrange for the Deputy's question to be forwarded to NCSE for direct reply.

My Department continues to work with the NCSE to ensure that there is appropriate planning in place to ensure that all children who require special class placements can access such placements in schools within their communities.

### **School Accommodation Provision**

72. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an application by a school (details supplied) for additional building units will be re-examined with a view to providing additional funding to link these new buildings to the existing school building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10470/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The school to which the Deputy refers was allocated devolved funding under my Department's Additional Accommodation Scheme 2017 to provide 1 stand-alone mainstream classroom with en-suite toilets 1 WC for assisted users and 2 resource rooms.

The school submitted an application for significant additional funding for works outside the scope of the approved project in February 2018. Following assessment by my Department this application was refused and the school were advised to arrange for and submit a design consistent with the works approved by my Department.

My Department have now received a further submission from the school. This submission is currently being examined and my Department will revert to the School Authority directly once a decision has been made.

### **DEIS Status**

73. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a school's (details supplied) DEIS status was not changed from DEIS 2 to DEIS 1; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10471/18]

74. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the DEIS status of a school (details supplied) will be changed from DEIS 2 to DEIS 1. [10472/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 73 and 74 together.

We have, for the first time, introduced an objective, statistics based model for deciding which schools merit inclusion in the DEIS Programme, so that all stakeholders can have confidence that we are targeting extra resources at those schools with the highest concentrated levels of disadvantage. The methodology adopted to assess levels of disadvantage in schools is based on centrally held data with a uniform application across the entire school system to assess levels of disadvantage in Primary and Post-Primary schools.

A detailed document explaining the methodology used in the Identification process is available on the Department's website at

*[www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Identification-Process.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/DEIS-Identification-Process.pdf)*.

The concentration of disadvantage varies significantly between schools. It is important to note that the Department's assessment is not based on the location of the school but on the CSO small areas statistics from which a school derives its pupil cohort. Accordingly, the demographics of neighbouring schools can differ in terms of assessed levels of need which are based on the pupil cohort within each school.

It should be noted that the additional funding due to the school under DEIS is based on the identified level of disadvantage of the school. The amount of DEIS funding due to the school has been allocated for the current school year in addition to all basic funding to which this school is entitled.

An update of the identification model is currently underway. This will take account of updated school data as provided by schools for the current school year combined with the Pobal HP Index of Deprivation, based on CSO Small Area Population statistics derived from the 2016 National Census. It is envisaged that this process will be completed by the end of Quarter 1

this year.

Should this exercise reveal that any school, including the school referred to by the Deputy, which did not qualify for DEIS in 2017 meets the criteria applicable to schools with the highest concentration of disadvantage based on the updated information then additional schools may be included subject to available resources.

### **DEIS Applications**

**75. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of an appeal by a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10473/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that DES Circular 0013/2017 for primary schools and 0014/2017 for post primary schools were published on 7th March 2017.

These Circulars set out the details of the new model for allocating special education teachers to schools.

The revised allocation process replaces the generalised allocation process at primary and post primary school level for learning support and high incidence special educational needs, and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) allocation process which provided additional resource teaching supports to schools, to support pupils assessed as having Low Incidence disabilities.

The new Special Education Teaching allocation provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on each school's educational profile.

Allocations based on the school profiles were issued to all schools on 7th March.

The aim of this new model is to deliver better outcomes for children with special educational needs. Substantial research, analysis, consultation with service users and stakeholders, and piloting have gone in to the development of this model and all of the evidence points to the fact that this new system will deliver better outcomes for children.

No school, has lost supports as a result of the implementation of the new model. In addition, no school received an allocation, for the support of pupils with complex needs, less than the allocation they received to support such pupils during the 2016/17 school year.

An additional 900 teaching posts have been provided to support the introduction of this new allocation model. The provision of an additional 900 teaching posts is a very significant investment in the provision of additional teaching support for pupils with special educational needs in our schools.

The additional funding provided additional supports to over 1300 schools who identified as needing additional supports as a result of the new model while ensuring that no school received a reduced allocation.

The new funding will ensure that all schools receive a sufficient allocation of special education needs resources to provide additional teaching support to all pupils, including pupils who have yet to enrol in their school, who require such support.

In relation to the school referred to by the Deputy, the profiling model had indicated a pro-

filed special educational need for this school of 45 teaching hours.

However, as no school received an allocation, on the introduction of the new model, which was less than the allocation they received in the previous school year, the school maintained an allocation of 46.03 hours and it was indicated that within this allocation there was a retained element of 1.03 hrs.

The new Special Education Teaching allocation provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on each school's educational profile.

Under the new allocation model, schools have been provided with a total allocation for special education needs support based on their school profile.

Included within this is an allocation for:

- A school educational profile component; which includes:
- An allocation for pupils with complex needs
- The learning support needs in schools as evidenced by attainment levels in standardised test results
- The social context of the school including disadvantage and gender
- Baseline component provided to every mainstream school to support inclusion, prevention of learning difficulties and early intervention.

The provision of a profiled allocation is designed to give a fairer allocation for each school which recognises that all schools need an allocation for special needs support, but which provides a graduated allocation which takes into account the actual level of need in each school.

It is acknowledged and accepted that schools will have some additional pupils with special educational needs enrolling to their school subsequent to the profiles having been developed.

However, for the most part these will be balanced by the fact that some students who had additional teaching needs in the previous year will have left the school. The baseline is also designed to ensure that schools have some capacity to provide additional support to pupils.

Where a school profile significantly changes following the allocation process e.g. a developing school where the net enrolment numbers significantly increase year on year additional allocations may be made.

The criteria for qualification for mainstream school developing school posts are set out in DES Circular 17/2017 (Primary School Staffing Schedule) and DES 10,11,12/2017 (Post Primary School Staffing Schedule).

Schools who qualified for additional mainstream developing school posts in accordance with these criteria also qualified for additional Special Education Teaching Allocations to take account of this developing status.

It is also acknowledged that there will be some schools where exceptional circumstances may arise.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) will be available to support schools where schools have developed and implemented appropriate plans for the deployment of their special education needs teaching resources, but the school considers that further support may



be required. This support may involve Continuing Professional Development or further training for school staff, advice in relation to the support plans that are in place, and possibly a review process once schools can clearly demonstrate that exceptional circumstances have arisen in the school.

The NCSE has also now published details of how schools can seek a review of their allocations, including the utilisation of their allocations, in circumstances where a school considers that very exceptional circumstances have arisen subsequent to the development of the profile.

Should schools consider that they fulfil the criteria for a review on the grounds of exceptional circumstances, details of this review process are available at:

*<http://ncse.ie/review-of-special-education-teacher-supports-where-there-are-exceptional-circumstances-or-needs-arising-in-a-school>.*

The NCSE has advised that the school referred to by the Deputy has made an application to the NCSE for a review on this basis. The NCSE considered this application and has advised that following a review of the application submitted by the school, the NCSE has concluded that the school does not fulfil the criteria for review, in accordance with the qualification criteria set out for the scheme.

The reason advised for this is that requests for reviews based on comparisons between allocations under the new allocation model, and the previous allocation model, or consideration of the allocations that may have applied to schools had the previous allocation model stayed in place, if certain factors such as new assessments arising subsequent to the new allocations being made to schools were considered, do not qualify as a basis for review under this process.

A review on the grounds of exceptional circumstances arising should only be conducted where the school profile changes very significantly, beyond which the school profile is provided to cater for, or where very exceptional circumstances have arisen in a school beyond a schools capacity to provide additional teaching support once their allocations are utilised effectively.

The NCSE has advised, however, that they will be in a position to provide additional guidance or support for this school and to discuss any issues which the school may have in managing their available resources, and to assist the school in managing the utilisation of their allocation to support all children who need additional teaching support in the school, should the school wish to avail of such support.

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

76. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of the new secondary school for Monasterevin, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10490/18]

77. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason there have been delays in securing a new second level school for Monasterevin, County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10491/18]

83. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 206 of 20 February 2018, when the tendering process will begin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10689/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions

Nos. 76, 77 and 83 together.

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.

The Design Team is currently finalising the stage 2b documentation and expects to submit the finalised Stage 2b Report to my Department shortly.

Upon receipt and review of this outstanding documentation and providing no other issues arise, my Department will then revert to the Board of Management with authorisation to complete pre-qualification of Contractors. When the pre-qualification process has been completed the project will then be progressed to tender stage.

A tender stage normally takes between 7 and 8 months to complete. A letter has recently issued from my Department to the school with a timeframe for further progression of the project.

### **School Staff Appeals Mechanism**

78. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a staffing appeal application by a school (details supplied) will be approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10522/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The criteria used for the allocation of teaching posts is published annually on the Department website. The key factor for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level is the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and pupil enrolments on the previous 30 September.

The staffing schedule operates in a clear and transparent manner and treats all similar types of schools equally irrespective of location.

The staffing schedule also includes an appeals mechanism for schools to submit a staffing appeal under certain criteria to an independent Appeals Board.

There is provision within the appeals process, under the Small Schools criteria, for schools with 4 teachers or less to appeal on the basis of projected enrolment for the coming September. In the case of the school referred to by the Deputy, a projected enrolment of 81 for September 2018 is required to fulfil the appeal criteria. Details of the appeal process and application form are available in Circular 0010/2018, “Staffing Arrangements in Primary Schools for the 2018/19 School Year”, which is published on the Department website.

The Primary Staffing Appeals Board operates independently of the Department and its decision is final.

### **Grant Payments**

79. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost of restoring the grant given to student primary teachers on a Gaeltacht placement. [10685/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Arising from budgetary considerations and the Comprehensive Expenditure Review carried out in 2011, it was decided

that this grant would cease for new entrants - both at undergraduate and postgraduate level - from the 2012/13 academic year.

The decision to stop the Gaeltacht placement grants was taken during the economic crisis when, unfortunately, very difficult decisions had to be made to stabilise the nation's finances. Priority was given to protecting resources for front line education services as far as possible, which remains particularly challenging with rising numbers of school-going children.

The annual cost of fully funding the reconfigured Gaeltacht Placement for 1,200 student teachers would be in the region of €1.8m.

It should be noted that, to assist with the costs of the Gaeltacht placement, students who are in receipt of a student grant which includes a 100% fee grant, or who would have qualified for a full fee grant but for the Free Fees Schemes, can apply for funding towards travel and accommodation costs under the field trip element of a fee grant, subject to the normal terms and conditions of the student grant scheme.

Apart from this, in circumstances of particular need, students may apply for support under the Student Assistance Fund. Information in relation to this fund is available through the Access Officer in the third level institution attended.

### **Student Grant Scheme Appeals**

80. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of a SUSI appeal by a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10686/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I've been advised that the SUSI appeal to which the Deputy refers was recently received by the statutory independent Student Grants Appeals Board. Under the Student Support Act 2011, the Board has 60 days from the making of an appeal, to make a determination.

I understand that the 60 day appeal period will end on 19 April 2018. Subject to no issues arising, the student can expect a determination on or before 19 April.

### **Autism Support Services**

81. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if funding for an, autistic spectrum disorders, ASD, unit in a school (details supplied) will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10687/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I can confirm that my Department recently received an application for an ASD Unit from the school referred to by the Deputy.

The application will be assessed and a decision will be conveyed to the school authority as soon as the assessment process has been completed.

### **Schools Site Acquisitions**

82. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a site (details supplied) in County Kildare has been signed over to his Department or the board of manage-

ment for development of a new school. [10688/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department is in the process of acquiring a site at the property to which the Deputy refers in order to construct a new school. My Department's officials are currently involved in ongoing engagement with the Chief State Solicitor's Office and the vendor's solicitors, in order to finalise this legal transaction. Every effort is being made to expedite the process.

*Question No. 83 answered with Question No. 76.*

### **Schools Building Projects Status**

84. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 206 of 20 February 2018, if the site has been acquired. [10690/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department is in the process of acquiring a site at the property to which the Deputy refers, in order to construct the new school. My Department's officials are currently involved in ongoing engagement with the Chief State Solicitor's Office and the vendor's solicitors, in order to finalise this legal transaction. Every effort is being made to expedite the process.

### **Health Promotion**

85. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a matter (details supplied) will be addressed regarding the Healthy Ireland Smart Start programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10738/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Healthy Ireland Smart Start programme is funded by the HSE for use in pre-schools. I understand that a range of materials are already available to pre-schools in this regard. The use of materials as part of the programmes is a matter for the HSE.

My Department is working with DCYA and the NCCA to implement the National Siolta Aistear Initiative, which is providing a range of nationally approved materials, resources and CPD/mentoring in both the Siolta national quality assurance framework and the Aistear national curriculum framework. These materials were developed last year by the two national co-ordinators. Further resources are available for services and practitioners on [www.aistearsiolta.ie](http://www.aistearsiolta.ie).

### **Schools Site Acquisitions**

86. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps an existing school authority must take in order to apply for a new school building on a site which is available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10746/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that it is open to the school authority in question to submit an application to my Department. An application form may be accessed on my Department's website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

### **Departmental Advertising Campaigns**

87. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the details of each instance of advertorial content commissioned by his Department and agencies under its remit in the past 12 months; the date this content was published; the purpose of this content; the cost of its publication; the publication or platform on which it was published, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10771/18]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Government approved a number of priority information campaigns which included the Action Plan for Education 2018. In launching the Action Plan for Education, a special pull-out was produced by a national daily newspaper in partnership with the government. While the cost was not met by my Department, I understand it amounted to €8,600 excluding vat. The material produced in the pull-out included: preparing students for a changing world with foreign language skills, preparing for Brexit, learning in a digital age, and information about the growing popularity of apprenticeship and traineeship as an exciting career option. It was published on Wednesday 14th February 2018.

With regard to bodies under the aegis of the Department, the information sought is a matter for each agency and is not collated centrally. However, my officials are aware of published content paid for by SOLAS and information in relation to this is contained in the following table.

| Description   | Date of publication | Publication details                             | Cost          |
|---|---------------------|---|---------------|
| Detailing opportunities in Further Education and Training for females wishing to pursue a career in STEM. The government are committed to increasing the number of women considering a career in STEM.  | June 2017           | Irish Independent, Female STEM Supplement       | €7,000 ex VAT |
| Detailing the opportunities and recent developments in the apprenticeship system in Ireland. The government intend to double the number of apprenticeships and treble the number of traineeships, as well as expanding this model into a range of new sectors. It is important for employers to consider becoming involved in offering new apprenticeship opportunities, as well as for students to be aware of this exciting career pathway. | February 2018       | Sunday Business Post, Apprenticeship Supplement | €2,335 ex VAT |



## **Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal**

88. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the case of a person (details supplied) will be dealt with by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10451/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal administers the Scheme of Compensation for Personal Injuries Criminally Inflicted on Prison Officers. Under the terms of the Scheme, the Tribunal is entirely independent in the matter of individual decisions on applications for compensation under the Scheme. The Deputy will appreciate that in these circumstances I cannot comment on individual cases.

If the Deputy or the applicant contacts the Tribunal directly with further details, they will be able to provide an update.

## **Garda Strength**

89. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in County Kildare by station in 2016 and 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10452/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the distribution of resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

I am informed by the Commissioner that the strength of the Kildare Division on 31 January 2018, the latest date for which information is currently available, was 357. There are also 20 Garda Reserves and 29 Garda civilian staff attached to the Kildare Division. When appropriate, the work of local Gardaí is supported by a number of Garda national units such as the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Armed Support Units, the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. To achieve this the Government has put in place a plan for an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. We are making real, tangible progress on achieving this goal.

I am informed by the Commissioner that since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, just under 1,600 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, of whom 80 have been assigned to the Kildare Division. I am pleased to say that Garda numbers, taking account of retirements, increased to 13,551 at the end of 2017 - a net increase of over 600 since the end of 2016.

I am also pleased that funding is in place to maintain this high level of investment in the Garda workforce to ensure that the vision of an overall workforce of 21,000 by 2021 remains on track. This year a further 800 new Garda Recruits will enter the Garda College. Also 800 Garda

trainees are scheduled to attest during the year which will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, reach 14,000 by the end of 2018.

In addition, a further 500 civilians will also be recruited to fill critical skills gaps across the organisation and to facilitate the redeployment of Gardaí from administrative and technical duties to front-line operational duties. There are plans to strengthen the Garda Reserve with new Reserves expected to commence training in 2018.

This focus on investment in personnel is critical. The moratorium on recruitment introduced in 2010 resulted in a significant reduction in the strength of An Garda Síochána. We are now rebuilding the organisation and providing the Commissioner with the resources needed to deploy increasing numbers of Gardaí across every Division, including the Kildare Division.

The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the strength of An Garda Síochána by county is not readily available as Gardaí are assigned to Divisions which do not necessarily accord with county boundaries. For the Deputy's information I have attached in tabular form the Garda strength by station of the Kildare Division for 2016 - 2018 (as of 31 January).

#### **STRENGTH OF KILDARE DIVISION 2016-2018**

| District      | Station      | 31 December 2016 | 31 December 2017 | 31 January 2018 |
|---------------|--------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| KILDARE       | ATHY         | 26               | 30               | 31              |
|               | CASTLEDERMOT | 4                | 4                | 4               |
|               | KILDARE      | 38               | 38               | 37              |
|               | MONASTEREVIN | 4                | 5                | 5               |
|               | NEWBRIDGE    | 46               | 52               | 52              |
|               | RATHANGAN    | 3                | 3                | 3               |
|               | TOTAL        | 121              | 132              | 132             |
| LEIXLIP       | CARBURY      | 7                | 7                | 7               |
|               | CELBRIDGE    | 11               | 11               | 11              |
|               | KILCOCK      | 9                | 10               | 10              |
|               | LEIXLIP      | 43               | 59               | 60              |
|               | MAYNOOTH     | 13               | 13               | 13              |
|               | TOTAL        | 83               | 100              | 101             |
| NAAS          | CLANE        | 7                | 7                | 8               |
|               | KILCULLEN    | 2                | 1                | 1               |
|               | NAAS         | 100              | 118              | 113             |
|               | ROBERTSTOWN  | 3                | 2                | 2               |
|               | TOTAL        | 112              | 128              | 124             |
| KILDARE TOTAL |              | 316              | 360              | 357             |

#### **Disability Act Employment Targets**

90. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005 will be amended to allow for a greater number of persons with disabilities to work in the public service; if the public service employment target of 6% of persons with disabilities takes into account the existing rates of disabilities associated with an ageing workforce; if graduates with disabilities that have yet to enter the workforce will also be targeted in

this measure in view of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10453/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Under Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005, public bodies are expected to achieve a statutory target of 3% for the number of staff employed with disabilities.

Implementation of Part 5 of the Act is monitored on an ongoing basis by the National Disability Authority. The Authority reports each year on progress made towards the statutory target for employment in the public sector.

The Authority's most recently published report shows that at the end of 2015, 3.6% of staff employed in public sector bodies were people with disabilities. This is an increase from 3.5% in 2014 and is the fourth successive year of exceeding the 3% target.

The provisions under Part 5 of the Act are strengthened in the context of the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People with Disabilities.

The Strategy sets out a ten-year approach to ensuring that people with disabilities who are able to, and want to, work are supported and enabled to do so. It is a cross-government approach that brings together actions by different Departments and State agencies in a concerted effort to address the barriers and challenges that impact on employment of people with disabilities.

One of the key priorities in the Strategy is to increase the statutory target from 3% to 6% on a phased basis by January 2024. This target was further underpinned in the National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 which I launched last year. I can inform the Deputy that Department of Justice and Equality officials are preparing legislation to amend the 2005 Act to provide for this increased statutory target. Issues such as the categories of person to be included in the target have yet to be examined in that context. It is my intention that these provisions will be included in the Disability (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2016 during its passage through the Oireachtas.

### **Immigrant Investor Programme Data**

91. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the details of the operation of the Irish diaspora loan fund; the number of applications since 2012; the number of successful applications to the fund since 2012; the number of residency applications from those successful applicants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10516/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The operation of the Irish Diaspora Loan Fund (IDLF) is not a matter for my Department. I presume, however, that the Deputy is referring to applications submitted by the IDLF to the Immigrant Investor Programme (IIP) which was introduced by the Government in April 2012 to encourage inward investment so as to create business and employment opportunities in the State, and which is administered by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department.

I am unable to provide the Deputy with the details of the operation of the IDLF or the specific projects submitted by the IDLF due to the commercially sensitive nature of the information provided, which was received on the basis of strict confidentiality. However, I am advised that the IDLF commenced submitting applications to the IIP in 2016. Five applications have been submitted to date, of which three have been approved, for approximately 10 individuals. The other two are currently at the final stages of processing.

## **Migrant Integration**

92. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if grants or funding are available to community groups to assist in the area of tackling isolation and loneliness; if there are any grants or funding available to assist promoting integration among different groups; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10693/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** As the Deputy is aware, I launched the Communities Integration Fund in 2017 which provides small grants for community groups to assist in promoting the integration of migrants. 131 projects were grant-aided across the country last year under this initiative.

I plan to announce this year's call for applications for funding under this grant scheme later this month. I hope that the initiative will act as a catalyst for groups across the country to take action to promote community integration among migrants and non-migrants.

## **Wards of Court**

93. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has been provided with a copy of the findings of the external audit of the management of wards funds recently conducted by the Courts Service; and if so, if he will provide a copy of same. [10710/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will be aware, the High Court has jurisdiction in wards of court matters and management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions under the Courts Service Act 1998.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that the external audit of the management of wards' funds recently conducted has now been completed and will be published shortly. The Courts Service has advised that copies of the report will be furnished to my Department, the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality, the Public Accounts Committee, and the Justice for Wards Group.

## **Garda Investigations**

94. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the reports of attacks submitted by a person (details supplied) have been investigated; if action is being taken; if the family will be assured of their safety; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10712/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will appreciate that it is An Garda Síochána who are responsible for the investigation into any suspected criminal activity in the first instance and I, as Minister for Justice and Equality, have no direct role in such matters.

However, to be of assistance I have made arrangements for the Deputy's concerns to be brought to the attention of the Garda authorities for whatever action they deem necessary.

This notwithstanding, if anyone has concerns in relation to their personal safety, I would strongly encourage them to contact their local/nearest Garda station as soon as possible. Mem-

bers of An Garda Síochána will be best placed to advise them on how best to proceed in such instances.

Alternatively, information can be provided to An Garda Síochána by way of the Garda confidential line, Tel: 1800 666 111, which is a monitored freephone line that allows members of the public to contact An Garda Síochána with information of a confidential nature.

### **Naturalisation Applications**

95. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current or expected status of an application for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10713/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that they have received a request for permission to remain in the State from the person concerned.

This case is among a number of such cases which are currently being held by my Department pending the outcome of the appeal to the Supreme Court of the Court of Appeal judgment in *Luximon v. Minister for Justice and Equality* which was heard in the Supreme Court on 30 November 2017. A decision will issue in this case when the matters before the Courts have been finalised.

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

### **Residency Permits**

96. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if residency in the case of a person (details supplied) has been examined; if the bona fides of the case have been established; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10716/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I have been informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned was refused a residence card on 6 April 2017 as they were not in compliance with the provisions of the European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2015.

I also understand that INIS received a request for a review of that decision on 15 May 2017. The Deputy will appreciate that review applications are dealt with in strict chronological order and there will be no avoidable delay in issuing a decision.

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



## Immigration Status

97. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current and or expected status, including eligibility for long-term residency, naturalisation and stamp 4 in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10717/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order made on 16 December 2010. That Order remains valid and in place.

The person concerned made a request, pursuant to the provisions of section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), to have that Order revoked. Following the detailed consideration of the request made, a decision was taken to affirm the Order and that decision was communicated to the person by letter dated 16 June 2017.

The person concerned lodged judicial review proceedings in the High Court, challenging the decision to affirm the Deportation Order. The High Court gave its Judgment in the matter on 23 January 2018. The Deputy might wish to note that the High Court did not set aside the decision to affirm the Deportation Order but instead directed that certain specified matters be re-examined. I am advised that this Judgment is being examined by the relevant personnel in the INIS at the present time. Once this process has been completed, the case of the person concerned can be given more detailed consideration.

I am also advised that, separately, the person concerned applied in November 2015 to be readmitted to the protection process. This application, following careful consideration, was refused. The person has sought a review of the refusal of that application and this is under consideration at present. The Deputy might wish to note that the decision to arise from consideration of this request will be to either grant or refuse permission to make another application for international protection.

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

## Residency Permits

98. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status and eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10718/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I have been informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned was refused a residence card on 31 March, 2017 as they were not in compliance with the provisions of the European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2015.

I am also informed that the person concerned sought a review of the decision to refuse the residence card on 19 April, 2017. The Deputy will appreciate that applications for review are dealt with in strict chronological order. I understand that there will be no avoidable delay in

making a decision.

Insofar as the person's eligibility for naturalisation is concerned, I am informed that INIS has no record of an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to. It is, however, open to any individual to lodge an application for a certificate of naturalisation if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, which governs the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation.

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

### **Immigration Status**

99. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when consideration will be given to the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10719/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that, in response to a notification pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), written representations have been submitted on behalf of the person concerned.

These representations, together with all other information and documentation on file, will be fully considered, under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and all other applicable legislation, in advance of a final decision being made.

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

### **Statutory Instruments**

100. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to introduce amendments to SI 646/2017 in view of the concerns of members of an association (details supplied) with the time lock aspect of this law and the effects on its members; if the association will be provided representation at the firearms consultative panel; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10749/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that Statutory Instrument 646 of 2017, entitled Firearms (Storage of Firearms and Ammunition by Firearms Dealers) Regulations 2017, was recently signed into law by me and has recently been circulated to firearms dealers.

These Regulations give effect to minimum standards for the safe and secure storage of fire-

arms and ammunition in the premises of firearms dealers. They recognise that firearms dealers are entitled to be in possession of large quantities of firearms but require them to conduct business from a premises that has been constructed to a high standard. The Regulations also recognise the different categories of firearms dealers and scales the requirements depending on the quantities of ammunition and firearms being stored. For example, the time lock requirement does not apply to those dealers who deal only in small quantities of ammunition.

The Regulations were developed following consultation with a sub-group of the Firearms Consultative Panel (FCP) consisting of registered firearms dealers. The inclusion of the requirement for time locks was originally suggested by this sub-group to act as a significant deterrent and discouragement to criminal attack. The Commissioner of An Garda Síochána has endorsed the security measures contained in this Regulation and has advised that the inclusion of a requirement for a time-lock on the strong room door will deter criminal activity and require the use of greater resources by any person attempting to access firearms or ammunition illegally. Similar security measures have been applied successfully elsewhere, e.g. in banks, pharmacies and the jewellery sector.

In order to minimise the financial impact, a lead-in time of twelve months for compliance has been included in the Regulation in order to permit dealers sufficient time to comply with the legislation.

I wish to advise the Deputy that I have no plans to amend these regulations which have been introduced as a public safety measure.

Finally, I am currently reviewing membership of the Firearms Consultative Panel and contact will be made in the near future with groups who have previously communicated with the Department on this matter.

### **Immigration Controls**

101. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the treatment of persons in custody regulations apply to persons detained at all ports of entry; if not, the protections available to persons detained by An Garda Síochána at all ports of entry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10753/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The provisions of the Criminal Justice Act, 1984 (Treatment of Persons in Custody in Garda Síochána Stations) Regulations, 1987 and 2006 provide rules and procedures regarding how a person must be treated whilst in custody in Garda Síochána stations. Thus, the said Regulations of 1987 and 2006, apply to persons who have been arrested at ports of entry to the State and are subsequently detained at a Garda Síochána station.

Section 5 of the Immigration Act 2003 (as amended) addresses the issue of removal from the State of persons refused leave to land. In particular, section 5(2)(a) of the Immigration Act 2003 as amended by Section 80 of the International Protection Act 2015 applies to persons who have been arrested and are detained pending their removal from the State. A person arrested pursuant to the said section 5 may be brought to a prescribed place, including a Garda Síochána station. However, section 5, as amended, also provides for particular circumstances where a person arrested for the purpose of removal from the State is detained for a period not exceeding 12 hours, within a port or in a vehicle, for the purposes of bringing the person to the port from which the ship, railway train, road vehicle or aircraft on board which they are to be removed from the State is due to depart.

Detentions under the provisions of section 5 of the Act of 2003 are subject to the provisions of section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996 and section 4 of Criminal Justice (United Nations Convention against Torture) Act 2000.

### **Gambling Legislation**

102. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the timeframe for his planned reforms to the gambling control laws; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10755/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** The Government, on 10 January, 2018, approved the updating of the 2013 General Scheme of the Gambling Control Bill. The proposed updating follows on from the review work undertaken in the Department of Justice and Equality and consultations with interested stakeholders. Changes to the Scheme will be subject to further consultations with the Office of the Attorney General and other relevant Departments.

The critical update approved by the Government was for the establishment of an independent regulatory authority for gambling. This decision was taken on the basis that such a body would be best placed to conduct the complex range of licensing, regulating, monitoring, inspecting and enforcement tasks, etc. of the growing gambling industry in all of its facets. This independent approach would also mirror the approach taken in most EU Member States and beyond.

In the context of reviewing and updating the General Scheme in all necessary aspects, I received Government approval to establish a Working Group, chaired by myself, comprising all stakeholder Departments, relevant Offices and the Office of the Attorney General. The Working Group held its first meeting on 2 February 2018, with a further meeting scheduled for 28 February. I hope that the Group can submit a final report to Government in mid to late 2018, with a revised General Scheme to follow thereafter.

The Deputy may also be aware that the General Scheme of the Civil Law and Courts (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017 received Government approval in July 2017. This Bill will, inter alia, provide for a number of specific changes to the current antiquated Gaming and Lotteries Act 1956. These changes are limited in nature and primarily address the better regulation of fund raising activities at local level for charitable and philanthropic purposes.

### **Cross-Border Co-operation**

103. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the work of the joint agency task force dealing with cross-Border criminality; the number of initiatives undertaken to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10756/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** In November 2015, the British and Irish Governments and the Northern Ireland Executive agreed a series of measures in the agreement A Fresh Start, The Stormont Agreement and Implementation Plan, as part of a concerted and enhanced effort to tackle organised and cross jurisdictional crime. These measures included the creation of a Joint Agency Task Force.

This Task Force is led by senior officers from An Garda Síochána, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Revenue Commissioners and HM Revenue and Customs. A number of

other organisations, including the National Crime Agency and the Criminal Assets Bureau are also involved in operational activity. The objective of the Task Force is to build on existing law enforcement frameworks and to increase the collective effectiveness of operational law enforcement actions.

The Strategic Oversight Group of the Task Force is chaired jointly at senior management level by the two police services in order to provide strong strategic direction and oversight to front-line operational activities. This group also includes senior revenue and other personnel from relevant agencies.

Following the establishment of the Strategic Oversight Group, a Cross Border Strategic Assessment was conducted with input from the multi-agency partners to review the extent and impact of organised crime.

Senior officers from An Garda Síochána and the Police Service of Northern Ireland jointly chair the Task Force Operations Co-ordination Group which is bringing forward the operation actions in six priority areas that have been the focus of the work of the task force: Rural Crime; Immigration-related Crime; Excise Fraud; Drugs; Financial Crime, and Human Trafficking. These priorities are, of course, kept under review. There has been very considerable operational activity, with a variety of different operations undertaken across all of the priority areas since the establishment of the Task Force.

Under the provisions of the Agreement, a report of the work of the Task Force is provided by the Strategic Oversight Group to the six monthly meetings of Justice Ministers in the framework of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Co-operation on Criminal Justice Matters. Two such reports covering the first twelve months of the operation of the Task Force have been prepared and submitted to the two Justice Ministers over the course of 2016.

While there has been a hiatus in the normal reporting arrangements given the current impasse in the Northern Ireland institutions, the Deputy will be reassured to note that this has not impacted on the operational work of the Task Force which maintains its focus on tackling serious cross-Border crime.

### **Legal Aid Applications Data**

104. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the waiting times and numbers of persons on the waiting list at each of the free legal aid centres, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10758/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The provision of civil legal aid in the State is delivered by the Legal Aid Board pursuant to the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 and the Civil Legal Aid Regulations 1996 to 2017.

I am conscious that there are significant demands on the Board and that this gives rise to waiting times for certain services at most of the Board's law centres. However, waiting times have been markedly reduced over the past couple of years due to measures introduced by the Board and the Deputy will be glad to know that the Board's budget was increased to €40.275m in 2018.

The Board is extremely conscious that delays in service can lead to difficulties not just for the client but also for children, the wider family and the community, as well as the courts system. In this regard, the Board provides a priority service in respect of a number of areas such as domestic violence, child abduction, child care, and asylum and related matters. All other



applications are placed on the waiting list.

I would advise the Deputy that the details of waiting times in each law centre are published on a monthly basis on the Legal Aid Board website. However, to be of assistance, I have included these figures in my response.

**Legal Aid Board waiting times – 31 December 2017**

|                      | Waiting for 1st Consultation |        | Waiting for 2nd Consultation |        |
|----------------------|------------------------------|--------|------------------------------|--------|
| Law Centre           | Max Waiting Time (wks)       | Number | Max Waiting Time (wks)       | Number |
| Athlone              | 8                            | 21     | 17                           | 33     |
| Blanchardstown       | 8                            | 29     | 0                            | 0      |
| Castlebar            | 10                           | 40     | 0                            | 0      |
| Cavan                | 9                            | 20     | 0                            | 0      |
| Clondalkin           | 25                           | 57     | 0                            | 0      |
| Cork Popes Quay      | 20                           | 69     | 0                            | 0      |
| Cork South Mall      | 23                           | 82     | 18                           | 68     |
| Dundalk              | 16                           | 41     | 0                            | 0      |
| Ennis                | 17                           | 49     | 20                           | 28     |
| Finglas              | 16                           | 57     | 0                            | 0      |
| Galway Francis St    | 22                           | 64     | 0                            | 0      |
| Galway Seville House | 8                            | 17     | 7                            | 15     |
| Jervis Street        | 5                            | 20     | 26                           | 69     |
| Kilkenny             | 13                           | 35     | 0                            | 0      |
| Letterkenny          | 12                           | 51     | 0                            | 0      |
| Limerick             | 16                           | 61     | 0                            | 0      |
| Longford             | 20                           | 44     | 15                           | 23     |
| Monaghan             | 22                           | 52     | 0                            | 0      |
| Navan                | 24                           | 81     | 4                            | 7      |
| Nenagh               | 18                           | 52     | 0                            | 0      |
| Newbridge            | 17                           | 33     | 0                            | 0      |
| Portlaoise           | 19                           | 79     | 0                            | 0      |
| Sligo                | 9                            | 20     | 0                            | 0      |
| Smithfield           | 14                           | 93     | 0                            | 0      |
| Tallaght             | 21                           | 56     | 9                            | 3      |
| Tralee               | 34                           | 128    | 0                            | 0      |
| Tullamore            | 5                            | 10     | 0                            | 0      |
| Waterford            | 10                           | 38     | 0                            | 0      |
| Wexford              | 26                           | 74     | 0                            | 0      |
| Wicklow              | 12                           | 45     | 0                            | 0      |

I am informed that some law centres operate a ‘triage’ approach, which involves giving an applicant a short consultation (45 minutes) for legal advice. Those persons remain on the Board’s waiting list if they require further legal services and the wait time for this is indicated by the second column (waiting for 2nd consultation).

## Legal Aid Service

105. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will request the Legal Aid Board to clarify the position regarding the future of a centre (details supplied); and if this service will continue in the local area in view of its large case load. [10759/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** In accordance with the provisions of the Civil Legal Aid Act, 1995, the Legal Aid Board is independent in the exercise of its functions. In particular, Section 30 of the Act provides that responsibility for determining how legal services should be provided, is solely a matter for the Legal Aid Board. Their responsibility in this regard includes decisions in relation to the location of law centres.

I am, however, advised by the Board that it has, for a number of years, sought alternative accommodation in the local area for the Law Centre in question, which is currently located in a rented premises, with a view to providing a facility appropriate to the needs of all its clients, including having particular regard to the provisions of the Disability Act 2005. However, no suitable alternative premises has been found to date. Should further accommodation opportunities in the area concerned arise in the short term, I understand that the Legal Aid Board will give these due consideration. I am further advised that other accommodation options are also being explored in the event that suitable accommodation cannot be secured in the immediate area.

## Court Orders

106. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of parental supervision orders, as provided for by section 11 of the Children Act 2001, issued by the courts in each of the past ten years, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10761/18]

107. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of instances of non-compliance with parental supervision order, as provided for by section 112 of the Children Act 2001, recorded by the courts in each of the past ten years; the penalties imposed, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10762/18]

108. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of compensation orders, as provided for by section 113 of the Children Act 2001, issued by the courts in each of the past ten years, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10763/18]

109. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of instances of binding over parents or guardians, as provided for by section 114 of the Children Act 2001, issued by the courts in each of the past ten years, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10764/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 106 to 109, inclusive, together.

As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of information on the courts system.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has advised that courts statistics are not compiled in such a way as to provide the information sought by the Deputy. The Courts Service has further advised that this information

could only be obtained by the examination of individual court files in court offices around the country, which would require the expenditure of a disproportionate amount of staff time and resources.

### Departmental Advertising Campaigns

110. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the details of each instance of advertorial content commissioned by his Department and agencies under its remit in the past 12 months; the date this content was published; the purpose of this content; the cost of its publication; the publication or platform on which it was published, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10777/18]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The following table details relevant content commissioned by my Department and agencies under its remit in the last 12 months. The use of these platforms has allowed valuable public attention to be drawn to the often hidden issues of human trafficking and domestic violence.

| Date                         | Name of Campaign/Purpose  | Platform                             | Cost        |
|------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| 15 August 2017               | Human trafficking awareness raising article (Blue Blindfold campaign) | Metro Éireann (hard copy and online) | €1,291.50   |
| March & August 2017          | Promoting the 'What would you do?' campaign on domestic violence      | Mummypages.ie                        | See below   |
| March & August 2017          | Promoting the 'What would you do?' campaign on domestic violence      | Shemazing.ie                         | See below   |
| March & August 2017          | Promoting the 'What would you do?' campaign on domestic violence      | Magicmum.ie                          | See below   |
| September 2017               | Promoting the 'What would you do?' campaign on domestic violence      | The Journal                          | See below   |
| November 2017                | Promoting the 'What would you do?' campaign on domestic violence      | The Public Sector Magazine           | See below   |
| December 2017 & January 2018 | Promoting the 'What would you do?' campaign on domestic violence      | Irish Times (Print and online)       | €61,808.00* |
| Total Cost                   |   |                                      | €63,099.50  |

\*I am informed that for reasons of commercial sensitivity it is not proposed to provide a breakdown of the cost per publication/platform in relation to the promotion of the 'What Would You Do?' campaign as highlighted in the table - this figure comprises the total spent on the six publications/platforms named above.

### Departmental Advertising Campaigns

111. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation

the details of each instance of advertorial content commissioned by her Department and agencies under its remit in the past 12 months; the date this content was published; the purpose of this content; the cost of its publication; the publication or platform on which it was published, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10766/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** My Department and its Offices have not commissioned any advertorial content in the past 12 months.

Any decisions by the agencies under the aegis of my Department to engage with the media are taken by those agencies as part of their ongoing communications planning. I have asked the agencies to inform me of any advertorial content commissioned by them over the last twelve months and I will provide these details, if any, to the Deputy once received.

### **Local Enterprise Offices Data**

112. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 152 and 153 of 18 January 2018, if the final 2017 data is available as per the outstanding data indicated in the reply. [10820/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The results of the annual employment survey of LEO clients is now complete and the 2017 data will be published on the 7th March 2018.

### **Brexit Supports**

113. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if her Department requested at EU level a Brexit adjustment support fund within the EU's structural and investment funds to mitigate the negative exposure of companies from a hard Brexit. [10821/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** In November 2017, the then Tánaiste met with Commissioner Vestager, the European Commissioner for Competition who has responsibility for EU State aid policy to discuss, amongst other things, the impact of Brexit on Irish businesses. An outcome from this meeting was the establishment of a Working Group comprising representatives from DG Competition, the Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation, Enterprise Ireland and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The objective of the Group is to scope and design schemes to support enterprises impacted by Brexit in line with State Aid rules. The Working Group has met three times and in between these meetings, there has been engagement on specific issues in order to continue to progress matters. Should issues arise that require an approach that does not fit within the existing State Aid rules, this will be raised as part of the Working Group discussions.

My Department is carrying out extensive work to prepare for all Brexit eventualities. Informed by detailed research, my Department is putting in place a package of measures that will allow us to respond to the needs of businesses including the Brexit Loan Scheme which was announced in Budget 2018 which will provide affordable working capital financing to eligible businesses that are either currently impacted by Brexit or will be in the future.

The recent signing of the counter guarantee from the EIB group (through its InnovFin Guarantee) means that the €24 million exchequer funding announced in the 2018 Budget (€14 mil-

lion from my Department and €9 million from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine) can be leveraged to provide a fund of €300 million. The Brexit Loan Scheme will be open to businesses of fewer than 500 employees which can demonstrate that they are significantly exposed to the impact (or potential impact) of Brexit. They must be a viable business, doing business in Ireland, and they must have a business development strategy demonstrating that they plan to innovate or adapt in response to Brexit. This scheme will be operated within De Minimis State Aid Regulation.

My officials are also examining policy proposals for a new longer-term Business Investment Loan Scheme to support businesses to invest strategically for a post-Brexit environment and a new Business Finance Advisory Hub service which would focus on business development.

The Agencies of my Department are at the forefront in working with firms to ensure they are equipped to deal with Brexit and to enhance their performances in an increasingly competitive global trading environment through lean programmes, skills development and reducing business costs.

Enterprise Ireland (EI) has launched the 'Brexit SME Scorecard', an interactive online tool which can be used by all Irish companies to self-assess their exposure to Brexit. EI is also offering a 'Be Prepared Grant' of up to €5,000 to support clients to develop a Brexit Action Plan and it continues to support clients to improve their competitiveness, acquire new markets and enhance management skills.

The Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) are organising workshops, seminars and training to assist companies to better understand the challenges of Brexit and have a range of supports to help clients to respond to those challenges, to become more competitive and to source new markets.

InterTrade Ireland is also working to minimise the impact of Brexit on north-south trade.

### **Action Plan for Jobs**

114. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation when the 2018 Action Plan for Jobs will be published. [10822/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Action Plan for Jobs is one of the Government's key instruments to support job creation. Since the first Plan was launched in early 2012, there are almost 313,000 more people at work bringing total employment in the State to almost 2,192,000 (seasonally adjusted) by end of Quarter 3, 2017. Four out of every five additional jobs created since the Government was formed are based outside Dublin.

While unemployment has fallen significantly and employment continues to grow strongly, this Government's goal is to have an additional 200,000 people at work by 2020, including 135,000 jobs outside of Dublin.

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation commenced the process to develop the Action Plan for Jobs 2018 in July 2017 and has received submissions from a wide range of stakeholders. The APJ 2018 will intensify efforts to enhance and improve competitiveness and focus on structural reforms to improve productivity across the economy and reduce unnecessary administrative burdens. We will develop, nurture and attract world class talent and drive investment in innovation to sustain a competitive advantage, particularly in strategically important areas.



Following recent approval by Government, the 2018 Action Plan for Jobs will be published on 9 March 2018.

### Employment Data

115. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the details of the latest employment projections for the 2020 to 2025 period at national and regional level for the remaining period of Enterprise 2025. [10823/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Enterprise 2025 renewed is due to be launched on 9th March. The review of our national enterprise policy was undertaken in the context of recent global developments, including Brexit, international tax policy developments, US policies and the pervasive impact of new and emerging technologies.

The national jobs target set out in Enterprise 2025 was for 2.18 million to be in employment by the end of 2020. This ambition has been achieved and has been updated in the review while the ambition for each NUTS III region remains in place - that is, to ensure that the unemployment rate for each region is no more than one percentage point above the national average. The level of uncertainty and confluence of global drivers of change makes it challenging to forecast beyond the next few years with any degree of confidence.

Between June 2015 and January 2016, my Department published eight Regional Action Plans for Jobs, aimed at raising employment levels in the regions and facilitating them to achieve their economic potential. Each plan contains a series of actions with timelines for delivery between 2015-2017, through improved collaboration between enterprise agencies and other stakeholders supporting enterprise development in the regions. A key objective of each of the plans is to have a further 10 to 15 per cent at work in each region by 2020. The attached table shows our progress towards these employment targets up to Quarter 2 2017.

On 16th January 2018, the Central Statistics Office released the Labour Force Survey for Quarter 3 2018, which has replaced the Quarterly National Household Survey as the official source of data for employment and unemployment in Ireland. The data presented in the report incorporates adjustments to previous releases to take account of revisions to population estimates arising from the 2016 Census of Population. Due to the break in the time-series of regional employment data, comparisons that span Quarter 2 to Quarter 3 2017 cannot be reliably made. As a result, the data presented in the table attached spans Q1 2015 - Q2 2017.

#### Regional Employment Performance Q1 2015 – Q2 2017 (thousand):

##### Total Change since Q1 2015

| Region                | Q1 2015 | Q2 2017 | Total Change since Q1 2015 Number % |       |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|-------------------------------------|-------|
| North East/North West | 207.3   | 219.3   | 12                                  | 5.7%  |
| Midland               | 116.8   | 126.3   | 9.5                                 | 8.1%  |
| West                  | 184.5   | 200     | 15.5                                | 8.4%  |
| Dublin                | 612.7   | 660.9   | 48.2                                | 7.8%  |
| Mid-East              | 241.2   | 260.5   | 19.3                                | 8.0%  |
| Mid-West              | 156.4   | 173     | 16.6                                | 10.6% |

| Region     | Q1 2015 | Q2 2017 | Total Change since Q1 2015 Number % |       |
|------------|---------|---------|-------------------------------------|-------|
| South-East | 205     | 221.2   | 16.2                                | 7.9%  |
| South-West | 290.5   | 319.9   | 29.4                                | 10.1% |
| State      | 2014.4  | 2181.2  | 166.8                               | 8.2%  |

Target: increase of 10 to 15 per cent at work in each region by 2020

Source: Labour Force Survey Quarter 3 2017, CSO.

### Trade Promotion

116. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if her Department has a strategy in place to increase south-east Asia investment and export opportunities and increasing enterprise opportunities in the region; the details of all trade missions to the region by her Department in each of the years 2011 to 2017; and the trips planned in 2018, in tabular form. [10824/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** My Department recognises the many opportunities that exist for Irish businesses in South East Asia. Total exports of goods and services from Ireland to the Asia Pacific region exceeded €25 billion in 2015 and are continuing to grow.

My Department is actively engaging in the upcoming whole-of-government strategy for the Asia-Pacific Region. This strategy will chart a path for increased economic activity within the region. Led by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and set out in the Programme for Government, the AsiaPac strategy is broad in scope, incorporating the development of opportunities and links relating to cultural, diaspora, research and education as well as trade.

In addition, my Department has trade and investment strategies aimed at ensuring that Irish enterprises can take advantage of existing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) between the EU and Asia Pacific regions. We are working with EU partners to expand the portfolio of FTAs, with current priorities including Japan, Indonesia and Vietnam.

Enterprise Ireland (EI) is the Government agency responsible for the development and growth of Irish enterprises in global markets. EI's Singapore office is the regional headquarters for the ASEAN region, comprising of 10 countries and leads the strategy to grow Irish exports to this important growth region.

There are currently 300 EI client companies exporting to the ASEAN region, with 128 of these having a local market presence. Indigenous exports to the region have grown by over 50% since 2011 and are now valued at €312M (2016).

Singapore remains the gateway for many Irish companies with regional opportunities in the following growth sectors:

- Aviation/Aerospace/Travel Technologies;
- Digital Technologies including Fintech, Telecoms and IOT;
- Construction, Energy, Green Build and Manufacturing
- Healthcare, including Digital Health

- Education, EduTech and HRTech

In response to the growing opportunities for Irish companies in the ASEAN region, Enterprise Ireland has increased the numbers of executives in the region from 2 to 7 over the last four years and continually reviews its strategy and resourcing for the region.

In respect of IDA Ireland, its Growth Markets Division was established in 2009 to explore and develop new markets in Growth Market Regions, including the sourcing of investment from South East Asia/ASEAN markets (Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Brunei).

IDA Ireland has a Director in Singapore who oversees IDA Ireland's strategy in relation to developing and winning investment from countries in that area, including regular visits to target companies.

- IDA Ireland is targeting investment from the region, across a broad range of sectors such as ICT,

- Digital Media, Life Sciences, Financial Services, Engineering, Aerospace, Cleantech, and new emerging internet companies as appropriate to each market.

With regard to trade missions, there have been 18 Ministerial and Presidential visits to the region over the past six years. The following table is the complete list of high level visits since 2011. Each of these visits would have included a trade component.

| Year | Led by Minister:   | Markets Covered      |
|------|--|----------------------|
| 2018 | Mr Michael D'Arcy, Minister of State at the Department of Finance                          | Singapore            |
| 2017 | Mr Richard Bruton, Minister for Education & Skills   | Vietnam              |
| 2017 | Mr Michael Noonan, Minister for Finance  | Singapore & Malaysia |
| 2017 | Mr David Stanton, Minister Justice and Equality  | Indonesia            |
| 2017 | Minister Frances Fitzgerald, Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation | Singapore            |
| 2017 | Minister Halligan, Minister of State for Training and Skills                               | Thailand             |
| 2016 | Mr Eoghan Murphy, Minister for Financial Services, eGovernment, & Public Procurement       | Singapore            |
| 2016 | Mr Michael Creed, Minister for Agriculture, Food, and the Marine                           | Singapore            |
| 2016 | Mr Andrew Doyle, Minister for Food, Forestry and Horticulture                              | Vietnam              |
| 2016 | President Higgins  | Vietnam              |
| 2015 | Ms Francis Fitzgerald, Minister for Justice and Equality                                   | Singapore            |
| 2014 | Mr Richard Bruton, Minister for Business, Enterprise and Jobs                              | Singapore & Malaysia |
| 2014 | Mr Joe Costello, Minister for Trade and Development  | Singapore            |
| 2014 | Mr Jimmy Deenihan, Minister for the Diaspora   | Malaysia             |

| Year | Led by Minister:  | Markets Covered                       |
|------|---|---------------------------------------|
| 2013 | Mr Brendan Howlin, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform | Indonesia, Singapore, The Philippines |
| 2012 | Mr Brendan Howlin, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform | Singapore                             |
| 2012 | Ms Lucinda Creighton, Minister for European Affairs           | Singapore                             |
| 2012 | Mr Fergus O'Dowd, Minister of State for the NewEra project    | Singapore & Malaysia                  |

Enterprise Ireland will announce its 2018 Trade Mission Schedule over the coming weeks.

### Jobs Protection

117. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the actions she has taken to protect jobs at a company (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10825/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I am disappointed with the announced redundancies at the company. At a time when the country as a whole is moving towards full employment, that does not make it any easier for any person who finds themselves in such a difficult situation. It also underlines that though the economy overall is performing well, there are challenges out there that require every company to make sure it is competitive and is capable of satisfying the needs of their customers.

According to the company, the objective of the announcement is to improve the overall competitiveness of the site and to future proof it so that it can continue to operate effectively.

The company envisages that post this process, the site will be better prepared to continue to supply and sustain their commercial opportunities in the market place where they currently have a strong position. The formal consultation process began a month ago and is ongoing. The company envisages that the redundancies will be achieved on a voluntary basis.

I would strongly urge the parties to continue their extensive engagement locally with a view to reaching a resolution to the satisfaction of both employees and the company.

I will certainly work with my colleague, Minister for Employment and Social Protection, Regina Doherty, to ensure that redundant workers are given the support they need to find alternative employment. I would hope that alternative employment can be found quickly in the region. My own objective, as Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation and as a local representative, is to ensure that new job opportunities are created in the local area.

The national economic picture is strong and in fact the numbers on the live register in Monaghan are down by 15% in the last year alone.

The North-East/North-West Regional Action Plan for Jobs is the key policy response for supporting employment growth in the region. The core objective of the Plan is to have a further 28,000 at work in the region by 2020. Importantly, the Plan has been embraced by public and private sector bodies in the region and over 90% of the Plan's actions are on track to be delivered. In terms of impact, more than 12,000 more people are in employment in the Border region since the Plan commenced.

Knowing the considerable challenges that companies in the region are facing, Enterprise

Ireland continues to engage on a one-to-one basis with established client companies in County Monaghan. Since 2014, Enterprise Ireland has invested in the range of €18 million in client companies in Monaghan.

But I am very conscious that more needs to be done. I will be working, together with my Department and agencies to ensure there is an even greater focus on the border and in particular on counties like Monaghan and Cavan.

In December last year I announced an allocation of €30.5 million in funding to support enterprise capability in the regions, with 21 projects from all over the country receiving funding. Three projects from the Border region were successful:

a network of three Digital and Innovation Hubs (incl. in Co. Leitrim);

a new Digital Innovation Hub and enterprise capacity building program in Co. Donegal;

and a Regional Food Centre of Excellence in Co. Monaghan.

In order to pursue this policy of growing new and existing businesses across the regions, I look forward to launching a second call under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund in the coming weeks to allocate the balance of the €60m earmarked for this Scheme.

### **Enterprise 2025**

118. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the status of the review of Enterprise 2025 in view of Brexit and potential policy changes under the new American administration; and when the review will be completed and published. [10826/18]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The review of Enterprise 2025 takes account of developments in the economy and in the international economic and policy environment since the original strategy was launched in 2015. The review has now been completed and approved by Government. I intend to launch Enterprise 2025 Renewed this Friday 9th March 2018.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists Data**

119. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the waiting list for scoliosis surgery in Galway University Hospital for 6, 12, 18, 24 and 48 months respectively. [10428/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I acknowledge that waiting times are often unacceptably long and I am conscious of the burden that this places on patients and their families.

Reducing waiting times for the longest waiting patients is one of this Government's key priorities. Consequently, Budget 2017 allocated €20 million to the NTPF, rising to €55 million in 2018.

October's Budget announced a total 2018 allocation of €55m for the NTPF for 2018. This significant increase in funding more than doubles the 2017 total allocation of €20m. The NTPF and HSE are in the process of finalising Waiting List Action Plans and Initiatives for 2018.

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

### **Cross-Border Health Initiatives**

120. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the number of treatments that were reimbursed by the HSE under the cross-Border directive in each of the years 2014 to 2017; the amount for each year; the number awaiting payment; if payments are classified by type of treatment, that is, hip replacement; the numerical breakdown by classification in each of the years; the cost by classification in each of the years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10429/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the HSE has responsibility for the administration of the Cross Border Directive, I have asked the HSE to examine the issue raised and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Prescriptions Charges**

121. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of abolishing the prescription charge on a phased basis over four years beginning in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10430/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Drugs Payment Scheme Data**

122. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of reducing the drugs payment scheme threshold to €85 per month on a phased basis over four years commencing in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10431/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Charges**

123. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of abolishing inpatient charges; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10432/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In 2017 inpatient charges of €27.5m were reported by the Health Service Executive. This is the approximate cost to the health system of abolishing the inpatient charges.

### **Medical Card Data**



124. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the number and percentage of the population who hold medical cards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10433/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As of 1 February 2018 there are 1,609,183 (33.6% of the population) Medical Cards in circulation.

### **Health Insurance Data**

125. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the number and percentage of the population who have private health insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10434/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** According to the latest information from the Health Insurance Authority, as of end-December 2017 there were 2,174,430 people (45.1% of the population) holding private health insurance.

The HIA regularly publishes updated information, including the number and percentage of the population that are insured, on their website *www.hia.ie*.

### **Health Services Data**

126. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the number and percentage of the population who have neither a medical card nor private health insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10435/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Health Service Executive (HSE) operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended.

According to the most recent statistics provided by the HSE for 1 February 2018, 33.6% of the population or 1,609,183 people hold medical cards.

Regarding private health insurance, according to the most recent statistics provided by the Health Insurance Authority, as at 31 December 2017, 45.1% of the population or 2,174,430 people hold private health insurance.

At present, there are no statistics collated on the number and percentage of the population that have neither a medical card nor private health insurance.

### **General Medical Services Scheme Data**

127. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the average cost of a medical card per person; the average pharmacy payment per person under the general medical scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10436/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Grant Payments**

128. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health his plans to abolish a grant (details supplied) in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10437/18]

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

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

129. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10438/18]

**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 the Deputy directly.

### **Hospitals Data**

130. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the number of cataract surgeries cancelled nationally by hospital in 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10439/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists Data**

131. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the length of times each person has been on the waiting list for cataract surgery nationally by hospital; the length of time they have been waiting, by month, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10440/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Hospital Services**

132. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the hospitals that are no longer

taking referrals for cataract surgery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10441/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Psychological Services**

133. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of children awaiting a primary care psychology appointment in County Wexford for 3, 6, 12, 18, 24 and 36 months respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10442/18]

134. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the steps he will take to provide primary care psychology appointments to children in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10443/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 133 and 134 together.

As these questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for them to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

### **Eating Disorders**

135. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the advice available to general practitioners who have detected early signs of suffering from eating disorders in persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10444/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** All doctors on the Medical Council's register, including GPs, are required to maintain professional competence by enrolling in professional competence schemes and engaging in maintenance of professional competence activities in relation to their practice. In this context, the Council has established a range of professional competence schemes through formal arrangements with the recognised postgraduate training bodies. Schemes are operated by the postgraduate training bodies and have been developed to drive good professional practice, which is centred on patient safety and quality of patient care.

The Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) is the recognised professional body for general practice and is responsible for post graduate specialist medical education, training and research in the specialty of general practice. The ICGP curriculum for GP training covers competencies relating to the care management of eating disorders under both adolescent health and mental health. GPs in practice have access to ICGP educational resources, publications and seminars in this area of healthcare management.

In addition, Bodywhys, the Eating Disorders Association of Ireland, has published a guide to assist GPs in the identification, assessment and management of patients with eating disorders.

### **Eating Disorders**

136. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the status of a national centre for eating disorders within a children's hospital here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10445/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

137. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10446/18]

**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 the Deputy directly.

### **Outreach Clinics**

138. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Health the number of HSE outreach workers or outreach workers funded by the HSE in County Louth; and the areas that are covered by these persons. [10462/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

### **Ambulance Service Data**

139. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the number of ambulance vehicles by vehicle type and county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10474/18]

140. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the number of ambulance vehicles available per shift nationally by 24-hour period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10475/18]

141. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the number of ambulance vehicles by vehicle type, shift and hospital catchment area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10476/18]

143. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the number of ambulance vehicles in the HSE ambulance service providing emergency services in respect of 911 calls in the eastern region by vehicle type by country; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[10478/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 139 to 141, inclusive, and 143 together.

As the queries raised by the Deputy relate to service issues, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

#### **Ambulance Service Data**

142. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the number of whole-time equivalent staff by emergency ambulance advanced paramedic by vehicle type and county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10477/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

*Question No. 143 answered with Question No. 139.*

#### **Ambulance Service Data**

144. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the number of ambulance vehicles involved in accidents and incidents involving National Ambulance Service vehicles that were on duty at the time by region in each of the years 2010 to 2017 and to date in 2018, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10479/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

#### **Ambulance Service Response Times**

145. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the average response time of a HSE ambulance and emergency ambulance to a residential property in response to a call via the 911 emergency services by vehicle type and county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10480/18]

147. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the response times of a HSE ambulance and emergency ambulance to a residential property in response to a call via the 911 emergency services, by vehicle type and county in the past three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10482/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 145 and 147 together.

As the queries raised by the Deputy relate to service issues, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

#### **Ambulance Service Response Times**

146. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health the longest response times



of a HSE ambulance and emergency ambulance to a residential property in response to a call via the 911 emergency services, by vehicle type and county in the past three years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10481/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

*Question No. 147 answered with Question No. 145.*

### Hospital Beds Data

148. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the cost of a hospital bed; the fully absorbed cost of a hospital bed, including staff, ancillary services and running costs; the capital costs associated with opening new beds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10483/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### HSE Funding

149. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the details of the HSE budget distinguished between current and capital expenditure in each of the years 2018 to 2022. [10484/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The 2018 National Service Plan sets out a revenue budget of over €14.5 billion for the HSE. Future levels of funding will be considered on a yearly basis, as part of the national Estimates and budgetary process. There is no multi-annual funding for current expenditure.

Health capital funding was outlined in the Public Service Estimates for 2018. The following table outlines the Health Service Executive's capital funding from 2018 to 2021.

| -   | Year | -    | -    | -    |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| Health Service Executive Capital Funding                                  | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|   | €m   | €m   | €m   | €m   |
| HSE - Building, equipping and furnishing health facilities (Subhead L2/3) | 418  | 567  | 609  | 645  |

The Health Service Executive's Capital Plan for 2018-2021 is currently the subject of discussion with my Department.

### National Maternity Strategy Expenditure

150. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the allocated funding towards the national maternity strategy, NMS, by current and capital expenditure in each of the years 2018 to 2022. [10485/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Implementation of the National Maternity

Strategy, Creating A Better Future Together 2016 - 2026 will be led by the HSE's National Women & Infants Health Programme. The Strategy will be implemented on a phased basis over the coming years and therefore the funding requirement will vary from year to year. The Programme has developed and published an Implementation Plan and this will inform the annual Estimates process each year.

Development funding of €4.55 million was allocated to the Programme in 2018 to implement the Strategy and to improve waiting times for gynaecology services.

Work to identify the precise capital funding requirement is ongoing. However, I am happy to confirm that funding has been provided within the National Development Plan to co-locate all remaining stand-alone maternity hospitals with adult acute hospitals. This will see the National Maternity Hospital relocate to the St Vincent's University Hospital campus, University Maternity Hospital Limerick to the UHL campus at Dooradoyle, the Rotunda to the Connolly Hospital campus and the Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital to the St James's campus.

The NDP funding will also ensure that we are in a position provide the necessary maternity infrastructure to deliver the new model of care espoused in the Strategy. The infrastructural improvements will extend across the country and include for example Alongside Birth Centres (low tech birth rooms), Early Pregnancy Assessment Units and appropriate patient support rooms. Such developments will underpin the introduction of the new model of maternity care and ensure that care under the new pathways - Supported, Assisted and Specialised – will be provided in comfort and privacy in high-quality settings.

### **National Maternity Strategy Implementation**

151. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health the capital cost of delivering the national maternity strategy. [10486/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The implementation of the National Maternity Strategy will give rise to significant capital costs over the coming years. Work to identify the precise capital requirement, and the timing of the required capital developments, is ongoing.

However, I am happy to confirm that funding has been provided within the National Development Plan to co-locate all remaining stand-alone maternity hospitals with adult acute hospitals. This will see the National Maternity Hospital relocate to the St Vincent's University Hospital campus, University Maternity Hospital Limerick to the UHL campus at Dooradoyle, the Rotunda to the Connolly Hospital campus and the Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital to the St James's campus.

The NDP funding will also ensure that we are in a position provide the necessary maternity infrastructure to deliver the new model of care espoused in the Strategy. The infrastructural improvements will extend across the country and include for example Alongside Birth Centres (low tech birth rooms), Early Pregnancy Assessment Units and appropriate patient support rooms. Such developments will underpin the introduction of the new model of maternity care and ensure that care under the new pathways - Supported, Assisted and Specialised – will be provided in comfort and privacy in high-quality settings.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

152. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10487/18]

**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 the Deputy directly.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

153. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) will be expedited. [10489/18]

**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 the Deputy directly.

### **Hospital Consultant Contracts**

154. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Health if public and private consultants are required to publicise a schedule of their fees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10494/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Consultants are not required to publish a list of their fees.

The level of fees charged by a consultant who sees a patient privately is a matter between the consultant and the patient. The fees arising may be met personally by the patient concerned, by the patient's health insurer, or a combination of the two depending on the extent, if any, to

which the patient has insurance cover for the service provided. I have no authorisation to set or adjust the fees that consultants charge in their private capacity.

### **Nursing Staff Recruitment**

155. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health when a community intellectual disabilities nurse will be appointed for east County Meath. [10495/18]

**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 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.

### **Hospital Services**

156. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 634 of 14 March 2017, if Our Lady's Children's Hospital has recruited nurses to further increase capacity for scoliosis surgery to more than one day per week; if the two theatres are up and running at full capacity; if not, the capacity they are running at; and the number of surgeries taking place in both theatres weekly. [10496/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In relation to the query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to reply to you directly.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

157. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a procedure for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10497/18]

**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 the Deputy directly.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

158. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health the status of an appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10498/18]

**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 the Deputy directly.

### **Psychological Assessments**

159. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of children from County Wexford awaiting a psychologist's autism assessment for more than three, six, nine, 12, 18 and 24 months, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10526/18]

**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 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.

### **Psychological Assessments**

160. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the appointment of a psychologist for autism assessments in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10527/18]

**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 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.

### Health Services Staff Data

161. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the number of consultant orthopaedic surgeons employed in the public health service nationally; the locations in which they work; and if there is a separate level of consultant orthopaedic surgeons for complex scoliosis surgery. [10543/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

### Hospital Waiting Lists Data

162. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons on the most recent active orthopaedic waiting list for scoliosis surgery in Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin for six, 12, 18 and 24 months respectively, by procedure (details supplied). [10544/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The long-term strategy to develop sustainable scoliosis services from 2018 has been prioritised by the Department and the HSE in the 2018 HSE National Service Plan.

Funding of €9 million has been provided in 2018 to improve access to paediatric orthopaedic services and treatments for scoliosis, building on progress already made.

In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, information regarding the active waiting list for scoliosis surgery in Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin as of 1 January 2018 is provided in tabular form below, including the total surgeries carried out this year up to week ending 2nd March 2018.

| Hospital              | Total Surgeries w/e 02/03 | Total Surgeries YTD | Active Waiting List on 1st Jan 2018 | Total Waiting List as of 1st Jan 2018 |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Crumlin Spinal fusion | 2                         | 12                  | 64                                  | 105                                   |
| Crumlin Spinal Other  | 0                         | 20                  | 62                                  | 73                                    |

The HSE has been asked to provide the Deputy with the detailed information sought on patients waiting more than 6, 12, 18, and 24 months, by procedure.

### Hospital Beds Data

163. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of bed and wards in all public and voluntary acute hospitals that were closed on 23 February 2018 or the latest date on which data for validated bed closures at hospital and ward level are available, in tabular form. [10682/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In relation to the particular query raised, as

this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Hospitals Discharges**

164. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of delayed discharges in all public and voluntary acute hospitals at the end of January 2017 or the latest date available; and the number of which have been delayed for zero to ten, ten to 30, 30 to 60, 60 to 100, 100 to 200, 200 to 365 and more than 365 days respectively, in tabular form. [10683/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Health Services Data**

165. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if, when a voluntary cardiac first responder group is dispatched to a cardiac arrest call following an emergency services call on the 911 system, the arrival of the initial voluntary first responder stops the clock as a response count per the HIQA response time requirements (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10684/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Respite Care Services Provision**

166. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health if additional services (details supplied) will be provided in 2018 in view of the inadequate service provision at present; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10702/18]

**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.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

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.

### **Respite Care Services Provision**

167. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the number of places available for the provision of a service (details supplied); his plans to increase the level of service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10703/18]

**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.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

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.

### **Maternity Services Provision**

168. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Health if the national development plan, Project Ireland 2040 funding will be allocated to bring County Donegal's maternity services into alignment with the national maternity strategy and national maternity standards; if not, the reason therefore; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10704/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The implementation of the National Maternity Strategy will give rise to significant capital costs over the coming years. Work to identify the precise capital requirement, and the timing of the required capital developments, is ongoing.

However, I am happy to confirm that funding has been provided within the National Development Plan for maternity services infrastructure and this will facilitate the co-location of all remaining stand-alone maternity hospitals with adult acute hospitals. This will see the National Maternity Hospital relocate to the St Vincent's University Hospital campus, University Maternity Hospital Limerick to the UHL campus at Dooradoyle, the Rotunda to the Connolly Hospital campus and the Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital to the St James's campus.

The NDP funding will also ensure that we are in a position provide the necessary maternity infrastructure to deliver the new model of care espoused in the Strategy. The infrastructural improvements will extend across the country, including in Donegal, and will fund developments such as for example Alongside Birth Centres (low tech birth rooms), Early Pregnancy Assessment Units and appropriate patient support rooms. Such developments will underpin the introduction of the new model of maternity care and ensure that care under the new pathways - Supported, Assisted and Specialised – will be provided in comfort and privacy in high-quality settings.

### **HSE Governance**

169. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health his views on whether all services contracted by the HSE in the midlands region have been awarded as part of a fair tendering process. [10707/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to reply directly to you.

## **Hospital Appointments Status**

170. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the status of the case of a person (details supplied); and when a hospital appointment will be expedited. [10711/18]

**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 the Deputy directly.

## **Health and Social Care Professionals Regulation**

171. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health his plans to regulate chiropractors under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 with a view to permitting the listing of chiropractors as qualified professionals under the European Union (Basic Safety Standards for Protection against Dangers arising from Medical Exposure to Ionising Radiation) Regulations 2018. [10737/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** There are no plans at present to designate Chiropractors for regulation under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act, 2005. The priority is to bring to completion, possibly by 2019, the regulation of the fourteen professions currently designated under the Act, increasing to sixteen professions with the designation of Counsellors and Psychotherapists in the coming weeks. Chiropractors are one of a growing number of professions seeking to be designated for regulation by CORU.

Once all designated professions are regulated, a comprehensive risk assessment will be undertaken to bring forward recommendations to the Minister on the next phase of professions to be regulated and the various regulatory options for consideration based on the need for proportionate regulation and the degree of regulatory force to be applied relative to the degree of risk involved.

The statutory instrument transposing the Basic Safety Standards Directive (BSSD) will designate those who may refer for radiological tests, those who may carry them out and other functions and in this regard I propose to designate nurses, doctors, dentists and radiographers as appropriate.

## **Hospital Services**

172. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health when a service will be restored at hospitals (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10747/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond to you directly.

### **Hospital Services**

173. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health the reason the orthopaedic out-patients department has been discontinued at Ennis General Hospital and transferred to Croom, County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10757/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Departmental Advertising Campaigns**

174. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the details of each instance of advertorial content commissioned by his Department and agencies under its remit in the past 12 months; the date this content was published; the purpose of this content; the cost of its publication; the publication or platform on which it was published, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10775/18]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Healthy Ireland 2018 communications and citizen engagement campaign is being delivered in collaboration with the Strategic Communications Unit (SCU) in Department of an Taoiseach. The SCU commissioned the relevant content and has responsibility for associated costs.

Three sponsored features appeared in the Irish Independent newspaper supplements, viz the Saturday magazine on the 13th, 20th and 27th of January 2018 and there was also a 48-page magazine supplement which accompanied the newspaper on Saturday 3rd February 2018.

The content in the magazine and the three sponsored features was aligned to the key themes and messages of the communications and citizen engagement campaign, ie Healthy Eating, Physical Activity and Mental Well-being

The purpose of the articles and the magazine was to promote awareness for the public of these themes and the campaign which is an essential element of the overall implementation of Healthy Ireland; to provide information and tips about what changes people can make in their daily lives to improve their own health; and signpost to various initiatives and supports such as HSE websites and resources and cross-sectorial initiatives such as Get Ireland Walking, Healthy Ireland At Your Library etc.

### **GLAS Payments**

175. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a GLAS payment for a person (details supplied); the reason for the delay to date; if an issue has been identified regarding the payment; the solution in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10454/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The above named was approved into GLAS 2 with a contract commencement date of January 1st 2016 and has received all payments in respect of 2016.

All GLAS claims must clear validation checks before payment can be made. My Department is working proactively to complete the checks required to allow for the issue of payments. Once this case clears the validations the 2017 advance payment will be processed. GLAS payments are issuing on a weekly basis.

### **Afforestation Programme**

176. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of a forestry plantation (details supplied); if it will be reinspected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10455/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Lands submitted under the afforestation schemes must be capable of establishing a forest crop to full rotation and any site which cannot be adequately drained should not be submitted for preplanting approval or for payment. The owner planted the forest in 2005, consisting of 3 plots on a total site of 15.92ha. Following inspection, Plot 1, consisting of 3.15 ha, was excluded from the eligible payment area because of flooding and drainage problems.

An appeal lodged in January 2006 against the Department's decision to exclude Plot 1 was unsuccessful, with the Appeals Inspector reporting, following a re-inspection, that "Plot 1 is unplantable due to poor drainage evident on site and no obvious potential outlet nearby".

A further inspection in November 2006 reported that Plot 1 was "again under water".

A further appeal was submitted in April 2010 and a further inspection was carried out, but the appeal was unsuccessful, with the Appeals Inspector reporting "no evidence of new drainage works that would alleviate the original flooding problem".

In 2015, a further review of Plot 1 was carried out following a request of the named owner. The original decision to exclude the area from the grant application was upheld during this review. The reason provided for the decision was that lands that have a high water table and cannot be drained to alleviate flooding are not conducive to the successful establishment of trees to maturity.

Another inspection of the area was carried out in February 2018. The results of the inspection report will be communicated to the named person when available.

### **Rural Environment Protection Scheme Applications**

177. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision has been made on a REPS 4 payment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10456/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person concerned commenced in REPS 4 on 1 June 2009 and was paid in respect of 2009. The application was subject to an on-farm inspection on 01 November 2010. As a result of this inspection, issues were identified which required the submission of an adjusted plan by the participant. Despite several requests for this to be submitted, the participant did not submit any adjusted plan and the application was rejected from the Reps 4 scheme on 26 April 2011. No further payments issued or are due to issue.



### **Basic Payment Scheme Applications**

178. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the case of a person (details supplied) will be examined with a view of payment. [10515/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I can confirm that my Department does not have a record of having received an application under the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) from the person named. This case will now be reviewed and an official from my Department will contact the person concerned directly.

In 2018, applications under the BPS must be lodged on-line and paper application forms have not issued as in previous years. However correspondence has issued to all 2017 applicants under the BPS setting out the latest land details available to my Department, the Terms & Conditions of the 2018 BPS and advising applicants how to apply on-line in 2018. I will arrange to have this material resent to the person named.

### **Departmental Staff Data**

179. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons who work at his Department’s offices at Johnstown Castle, Wexford town, County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10524/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** There are some 266 staff of my Department currently located at DAFM office in Johnstown Castle Co Wexford. In addition to these staff, other DAFM officials work in other locations in Co Wexford including food businesses.

### **Aquaculture Licence Applications**

180. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a decision will be made on an application for an aquaculture licence by a person (details supplied); the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10696/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department has received new and renewal aquaculture applications from the person referred to by the Deputy. These applications are in respect of sites located within the Slyne Head Peninsula Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

Slyne Head Peninsula has been designated by the National Parks and Wildlife Service as a Special Area of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive. All applications in such areas are required to be appropriately assessed for the purpose of environmental compliance with the EU Birds and Habitats Directives.

An Appropriate Assessment report has now been completed by the Marine Institute in respect of Slyne Head. My Department is currently examining the general licensing issues that arise for consideration as a result of the Appropriate Assessment report.

While the Appropriate Assessment is carried out on a bay-wide basis, each licence application within the bay must be assessed individually. Factors to be considered include location within the bay, species, scale and intensity of production, potential visual impact, etc. All applications, in compliance with the requirements of the applicable legislation, are advertised in

order to facilitate public consultation, and submissions or observations received must be considered as part of the licence determination process.

Every effort is being made to expedite the determination of aquaculture licence applications in this bay having regard to all the complexities involved.

### **Aquaculture Licence Applications Data**

181. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of applications on hand for aquaculture licences that have not been decided to date, by year of application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10697/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The detailed information requested by the Deputy is not readily available in full. Provision of the information sought will require an extensive examination of my Department's records. The information will be forwarded to the Deputy within 2 weeks.

### **Sugar Quotas Abolition**

182. **Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to reimburse money to sugar beet growers and processors for the years 1991 to 2001 in view of the 2017 judgment of the European Court of Justice on the excess levies paid. [10709/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** On 9 February 2017, the European Court of Justice delivered a judgment declaring invalid the Commission Regulations fixing the production levies and the coefficient for calculating the additional levy in the sugar sector for the marketing year 1999/2000 and for the marketing year 2000/2001. The Court ruled that the Commission was incorrect in calculating the annual levies set for the period in question. The Court also found that the method used by the Commission to fix the levies was incorrect because it led to an over-estimation of the costs to be covered and consequently overcharged to Greencore and the growers. The levies for the marketing years in question, set by EU Regulation, provided for a self-financing system for the sugar sector by means of flexible production levies. Under EU Regulations the common organisation of the markets in the sugar sector was based on the operation of a quota system on the principle that producers should bear full financial responsibility for the losses incurred each marketing year due to disposing of surplus sugar over the production quota allocated.

A new Council Regulation (EU) 2018/264 fixing the production levies and the coefficient for calculating the additional levy in the sugar sector for the 1999/2000 marketing year and fixing the production levies in the sugar sector for the 2000/2001 marketing year, giving effect to the Court decision, were recently approved by the Council of Agriculture Ministers. The former sugar processor, Greencore and the sugar beet growers for the years in question will be reimbursed at a rate yet to be determined. My Department is currently assessing the implications of this decision. No further details are available yet on the level of refund or the number of recipients.

### **Departmental Advertising Campaigns**

183. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the

details of each instance of advertorial content commissioned by his Department and agencies under its remit in the past 12 months; the date this content was published; the purpose of this content; the cost of its publication; the publication or platform on which it was published, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10765/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I can confirm that the practice in my Department is not to utilise advertorials as a communications mechanism.

In one instance during the period referenced, my Department paid for a newspaper supplement detailing information in respect of a key Department scheme, namely the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). The information provided was part of a public information campaign, and was consistent with EU Regulations requiring that all BPS applications be made online in 2018.

The supplement in question was published in April 2017, approaching the deadline for applications to the BPS. It appeared as a dedicated section of the relevant newspaper and was clearly identifiable as part of the Department's information provision in respect of relevant services of significant importance to farmers.

The content was published at a cost of €12,000 (+ VAT). The purpose of the content was to inform farmers on the relevant logistics of the application process and in particular, the benefits in engaging with the process via the applicable online application system.

In relation to the State Bodies under the aegis of this Department, the information requested is an operational matter for the State Bodies themselves. A copy of the question has been forwarded to them for appropriate attention.

### **Beef Exports**

184. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the countries to which beef is exported by country, volume and value in 2016; the final year figures for 2017 of total exports in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10782/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In 2017 Irish agrifood exports recorded their 8th consecutive year of growth to reach an estimated €13.6 billion. Within that, meat exports including beef, sheepmeat, pigmeat and poultry came to a total of over €3.78 billion.

The total value of beef exports, including offal, was more than €2.4 billion in 2017; an increase of 6% overall on the 2016 figures (€2.2 billion). The volume of exports rose by almost 21.5 million tonnes from 532.5 million in 2016 to 554 million in 2017.

The following table of Central Statistics Office (CSO) figures outline the breakdown of Ireland's exports by county. In view of the volume of statistical data collected as part of agrifood trade statistics, some errors in respect of individual products may occur. Where these anomalies are identified, the Department will liaise with the Central Statistics Office to highlight and amend the information as required.

Questions - Written Answers

| BEEF EX-PORTS |                      | Jan-Dec 2016 | Jan-Dec 2016 | Jan-Dec 2017 | Jan-Dec 2017 |
|---------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|               | Country              | € 000        | Tonnes       | € 000        | Tonnes       |
|               | Great Britain        | 1,001,530    | 238,216      | 1,048,822    | 241,867      |
|               | France               | 207,414      | 52,901       | 218,422      | 52,295       |
|               | Netherlands          | 201,652      | 39,726       | 194,661      | 38,588       |
|               | Italy                | 163,532      | 22,269       | 178,214      | 25,011       |
|               | Germany              | 134,299      | 16,927       | 138,182      | 16,996       |
|               | Northern Ireland     | 113,617      | 31,928       | 118,697      | 33,678       |
|               | Sweden               | 96,111       | 26,947       | 97,807       | 23,983       |
|               | Spain                | 58,766       | 10,020       | 60,981       | 10,116       |
|               | Belgium              | 50,854       | 7,375        | 52,664       | 6,780        |
|               | Hong Kong            | 42,883       | 16,035       | 76,641       | 25,570       |
|               | Denmark              | 38,461       | 9,566        | 40,938       | 12,709       |
|               | Switzerland          | 25,027       | 2,121        | 26,835       | 2,311        |
|               | Philippines          | 23,664       | 14,133       | 39,116       | 20,400       |
|               | Czech Republic       | 13,105       | 2,546        | 15,296       | 2,705        |
|               | Portugal             | 12,245       | 2,752        | 17,028       | 3,449        |
|               | Poland               | 11,697       | 4,467        | 12,395       | 4,422        |
|               | United States        | 9,840        | 1,772        | 7,719        | 1,571        |
|               | Ghana                | 7,972        | 8,346        | 9,441        | 9,071        |
|               | Japan                | 7,530        | 1,322        | 6,892        | 1,260        |
|               | Malta                | 6,780        | 933          | 7,505        | 988          |
|               | Vietnam              | 4,042        | 1,741        | 3,504        | 1,194        |
|               | Luxembourg           | 3,705        | 275          | 3,921        | 288          |
|               | Senegal              | 2,693        | 3,379        | 2,291        | 2,850        |
|               | Ivory Coast          | 2,661        | 4,278        | 4,571        | 6,794        |
|               | Austria              | 2,561        | 660          | 2,030        | 499          |
|               | Finland              | 2,412        | 444          | 2,610        | 408          |
|               | Israel               | 2,219        | 353          | 2,143        | 372          |
|               | Slovakia             | 2,101        | 432          | 737          | 125          |
|               | Hungary              | 1,691        | 634          | 1,201        | 492          |
|               | Canada               | 1,687        | 450          | 2,728        | 618          |
|               | South Africa         | 1,591        | 1,792        | 2,456        | 1,997        |
|               | Trinidad & Tabago    | 1,453        | 448          | 1,025        | 216          |
|               | Gabon                | 1,284        | 824          | 351          | 250          |
|               | Liberia              | 1,179        | 1,084        | 579          | 648          |
|               | Australia            | 1,147        | 573          | 140          | 25           |
|               | Togo                 | 875          | 924          | 60           | 76           |
|               | United Arab Emirates | 800          | 62           | 801          | 63           |
|               | Singapore            | 798          | 290          | 1,560        | 624          |
|               | Mozambique           | 573          | 757          | 189          | 254          |
|               | Saudi Arabia         | 518          | 197          | 619          | 258          |

| BEEF EX-PORTS |                      | Jan-Dec 2016 | Jan-Dec 2016 | Jan-Dec 2017 | Jan-Dec 2017 |
|---------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|               | Country              | € 000        | Tonnes       | € 000        | Tonnes       |
|               | Lithuania            | 419          | 357          | 522          | 198          |
|               | Bulgaria             | 346          | 81           | 483          | 78           |
|               | Bahrain              | 329          | 46           | 26           | 1            |
|               | Libya                | 320          | 147          | 362          | 199          |
|               | Greece               | 285          | 78           | 395          | 79           |
|               | Norway               | 243          | 55           | 618          | 110          |
|               | Barbados             | 233          | 74           |              |              |
|               | Guinea               | 207          | 278          | 302          | 381          |
|               | Congo                | 207          | 278          | 12           | 20           |
|               | South Korea          | 188          | 69           | 41           | 25           |
|               | Tunisia              | 161          | 155          | 82           | 79           |
|               | Angola               | 117          | 203          | 38           | 52           |
|               | Thailand             | 116          | 48           | 146          | 76           |
|               | Georgia              | 112          | 171          |              |              |
|               | Sierra Leone         | 102          | 125          | 20           | 25           |
|               | Estonia              | 92           | 33           | 231          | 54           |
|               | Cyprus               | 88           | 15           | 139          | 10           |
|               | Jamaica              | 88           | 17           |              |              |
|               | Venezuela            | 87           | 25           |              |              |
|               | Turkey               | 78           | 78           | 94           | 100          |
|               | French Polynesia     | 72           | 48           |              |              |
|               | Comoros              | 66           | 42           | 58           | 43           |
|               | Gibraltar            | 63           | 16           | 62           | 16           |
|               | Ukraine              | 55           | 9            |              |              |
|               | Equatorial Guinea    | 29           | 25           |              |              |
|               | Romania              | 21           | 20           | 469          | 96           |
|               | Maldives             | 8            | 0            |              |              |
|               | Faroe Islands        | 6            | 1            |              |              |
|               | Ethiopia             | 1            | 0            |              |              |
|               | Afghanistan          |              |              | 18           | 25           |
|               | Congo (Dem Rep)      |              |              | 128          | 152          |
|               | Croatia              |              |              | 129          | 23           |
|               | Egypt                |              |              | 226          | 84           |
|               | French Southern Terr |              |              | 73           | 25           |
|               | Gambia               |              |              | 23           | 25           |
|               | Iceland              |              |              | 47           | 12           |
|               | Iran                 |              |              | 20           | 26           |
|               | Iraq                 |              |              | 0            | 0            |
|               | Latvia               |              |              | 6            | 1            |
|               | Lebanon              |              |              | 61           | 100          |
|               | Slovenia             |              |              | 197          | 19           |

| BEEF EXPORTS |         | Jan-Dec 2016 | Jan-Dec 2016 | Jan-Dec 2017 | Jan-Dec 2017 |
|--------------|---------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|              | Country | € 000        | Tonnes       | € 000        | Tonnes       |
|              | Uganda  |              |              | 37           | 52           |
| Beef Total:  |         | 2,267,383    | 532,544      | 2,406,834    | 554,008      |

### Dairy Sector

185. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the countries to which dairy products are exported by country, volume and value in 2016; the final figures for 2017 of total exports, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10783/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In 2017, Ireland exported dairy products, including dairy ingredients to 147 countries totalling over €4.6 billion worth of produce. The following table, based on CSO data, outlines details in respect of values and tonnage by country.

Irish dairy products have a highly rated and hard earned reputation in terms of quality, safety and sustainability, and this gives them a competitive edge in markets over the world. My Department, in conjunction with other stakeholders, including the Irish dairy companies and agencies such as Bord Bia, are playing a key role in building the market for Irish dairy with intensive Ministerial trade mission programmes and other promotional work. Against the backdrop of our efforts to significantly increase dairy output and grow the sector, export market diversification is of the upmost importance, and this is particularly true in the context of a post-Brexit scenario.

Aggregate dairy exports in 2017 increased by approx 17.6% in value against 2016, indicating another robust performance by the Irish dairy sector in international markets. In view of the volume of statistical data collected as part of agrifood trade statistics, some errors in respect of individual products may occur. Where these anomalies are identified, the Department will liaise with the Central Statistics Office to highlight and amend the information as required

| Irish Dairy Exports by Country | 2016      | 2016      | 2017      | 2017      |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| COUNTRY                        | € 000     | Tonnes    | € 000     | Tonnes    |
| TOTAL                          | 3,951,941 | 1,210,286 | 4,647,171 | 1,363,771 |
| Great Britain                  | 801,788   | 272,897   | 904,363   | 267,427   |
| China                          | 540,766   | 61,433    | 572,456   | 65,458    |
| Netherlands                    | 367,985   | 137,849   | 514,268   | 167,135   |
| Germany                        | 271,993   | 96,465    | 372,134   | 117,738   |
| France                         | 159,290   | 54,383    | 200,947   | 59,643    |
| United States                  | 172,435   | 33,819    | 189,037   | 37,930    |
| Belgium                        | 84,049    | 25,675    | 154,438   | 30,101    |
| Saudi Arabia                   | 130,774   | 23,584    | 132,683   | 21,663    |
| Nigeria                        | 68,672    | 37,443    | 95,071    | 45,912    |
| Hong Kong                      | 102,354   | 8,196     | 94,782    | 9,084     |
| Poland                         | 107,156   | 31,946    | 93,423    | 33,661    |



| Irish Dairy Ex-ports by Country | 2016   | 2016   | 2017   | 2017    |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| COUNTRY                         | € 000  | Tonnes | € 000  | Tonnes  |
| Northern Ireland                | 54,844 | 64,493 | 91,891 | 115,020 |
| Algeria                         | 42,073 | 16,499 | 70,750 | 21,986  |
| Spain                           | 59,071 | 15,655 | 68,944 | 16,217  |
| United Arab Emir-ates           | 42,370 | 15,844 | 61,048 | 22,237  |
| Russia                          | 53,718 | 16,129 | 52,016 | 14,195  |
| Senegal                         | 46,634 | 25,927 | 51,526 | 24,607  |
| Italy                           | 37,445 | 12,282 | 47,203 | 12,407  |
| Iraq                            | 36,073 | 16,040 | 44,551 | 18,298  |
| Turkey                          | 22,770 | 6,122  | 42,349 | 8,016   |
| Mexico                          | 52,560 | 14,539 | 40,220 | 6,926   |
| Malaysia                        | 39,475 | 13,807 | 35,707 | 15,799  |
| Philippines                     | 13,143 | 3,838  | 32,079 | 10,212  |
| South Africa                    | 18,734 | 7,906  | 30,474 | 10,112  |
| Japan                           | 14,851 | 5,192  | 29,933 | 8,606   |
| Mali                            | 23,783 | 14,116 | 29,099 | 15,742  |
| Israel                          | 27,393 | 3,337  | 26,503 | 3,229   |
| Egypt                           | 37,289 | 14,776 | 22,054 | 7,900   |
| Vietnam                         | 40,780 | 4,932  | 20,271 | 2,768   |
| Taiwan                          | 19,602 | 1,671  | 19,676 | 2,171   |
| Ghana                           | 16,272 | 9,782  | 19,394 | 10,350  |
| Singapore                       | 18,476 | 5,706  | 17,985 | 7,433   |
| Jordan                          | 20,721 | 4,026  | 16,792 | 3,477   |
| Kuwait                          | 24,551 | 3,461  | 15,964 | 1,900   |
| Greece                          | 17,752 | 3,652  | 15,803 | 3,360   |
| Indonesia                       | 20,642 | 10,908 | 15,567 | 6,335   |
| Thailand                        | 8,749  | 5,153  | 15,338 | 6,156   |
| Austria                         | 13,243 | 5,173  | 15,208 | 4,163   |
| Peru                            | 12,469 | 1,864  | 14,977 | 3,352   |
| Congo (Dem Rep)                 | 12,493 | 7,232  | 14,402 | 7,430   |
| Morocco                         | 15,340 | 5,334  | 12,680 | 3,045   |
| Pakistan                        | 8,090  | 3,906  | 12,510 | 6,209   |
| Denmark                         | 12,764 | 5,011  | 12,509 | 4,810   |
| Togo                            | 11,165 | 6,507  | 11,752 | 5,916   |
| Ivory Coast                     | 5,815  | 3,299  | 11,488 | 5,771   |
| Oman                            | 10,088 | 930    | 11,237 | 1,211   |
| Canada                          | 20,685 | 4,267  | 10,503 | 1,361   |
| Iran                            | 6,360  | 2,047  | 10,247 | 2,235   |
| Niger                           | 2,723  | 1,557  | 9,659  | 4,918   |
| Burkina Faso                    | 5,734  | 3,204  | 9,612  | 4,472   |
| Trinidad & Tabago               | 8,228  | 2,795  | 9,195  | 3,044   |
| New Zealand                     | 6,210  | 3,562  | 9,130  | 5,512   |

| Irish Dairy Ex-ports by Country | 2016   | 2016   | 2017  | 2017   |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| COUNTRY                         | € 000  | Tonnes | € 000 | Tonnes |
| Guatemala                       | 9,583  | 1,656  | 9,003 | 2,029  |
| Bahrain                         | 7,430  | 1,798  | 8,606 | 2,166  |
| Congo                           | 4,035  | 1,367  | 8,520 | 3,352  |
| Colombia                        | 16,842 | 1,851  | 8,360 | 1,064  |
| Bangladesh                      | 1,739  | 959    | 8,179 | 3,675  |
| Lebanon                         | 7,970  | 2,726  | 7,484 | 2,093  |
| Angola                          | 5,671  | 2,941  | 7,470 | 3,448  |
| Occupied Pales-tine             | 8,376  | 757    | 6,462 | 585    |
| Afghanistan                     | 4,815  | 3,012  | 6,329 | 3,096  |
| Qatar                           | 5,818  | 668    | 6,319 | 753    |
| Argentina                       |        |        | 6,272 | 2,553  |
| Yemen                           | 4,734  | 2,679  | 6,240 | 2,507  |
| Chile                           | 6,452  | 817    | 5,973 | 890    |
| Tunisia                         | 4,681  | 1,416  | 5,725 | 1,658  |
| Australia                       | 6,938  | 912    | 5,587 | 1,150  |
| Panama                          | 4,518  | 349    | 5,526 | 813    |
| South Korea                     | 3,298  | 1,269  | 5,097 | 1,459  |
| Malta                           | 3,078  | 1,228  | 4,436 | 1,477  |
| Burma                           | 2,007  | 1,275  | 4,290 | 1,518  |
| Malawi                          | 3,469  | 1,833  | 4,260 | 1,818  |
| Czech Republic                  | 3,898  | 1,195  | 4,256 | 1,176  |
| Sweden                          | 3,565  | 900    | 4,081 | 948    |
| Tanzania United Rep             | 2,474  | 1,377  | 3,829 | 1,769  |
| Costa Rica                      | 4,027  | 1,388  | 3,591 | 965    |
| Gambia                          | 1,378  | 802    | 3,481 | 1,738  |
| El Salvador                     | 3,383  | 1,159  | 3,427 | 916    |
| Switzerland                     | 2,580  | 633    | 3,248 | 843    |
| Benin                           | 1,935  | 1,033  | 3,153 | 1,572  |
| Mauritania                      | 664    | 382    | 3,138 | 1,734  |
| Romania                         | 3,059  | 1,056  | 3,131 | 881    |
| Portugal                        | 3,034  | 762    | 3,090 | 747    |
| Guinea                          | 1,216  | 656    | 2,984 | 1,484  |
| Dominican Re-public             | 3,716  | 584    | 2,894 | 415    |
| Kenya                           | 622    | 285    | 2,579 | 1,397  |
| Syria                           | 605    | 692    | 2,212 | 2,555  |
| Ecuador                         | 3,850  | 367    | 1,871 | 208    |
| Mauritius                       | 1,319  | 484    | 1,842 | 635    |
| Gabon                           | 426    | 249    | 1,769 | 860    |
| Brazil                          | 2,020  | 399    | 1,693 | 356    |

| Irish Dairy Ex-ports by Country | 2016  | 2016   | 2017  | 2017   |
|---------------------------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| COUNTRY                         | € 000 | Tonnes | € 000 | Tonnes |
| Bahamas                         | 1,349 | 264    | 1,659 | 300    |
| Cyprus                          | 1,936 | 355    | 1,616 | 275    |
| Libya                           | 6,724 | 2,933  | 1,560 | 641    |
| Cameroon                        | 520   | 234    | 1,485 | 535    |
| Zimbabwe                        | 955   | 565    | 1,421 | 756    |
| Hungary                         | 436   | 99     | 1,322 | 341    |
| Zambia                          | 1,188 | 643    | 1,321 | 743    |
| Norway                          | 1,035 | 189    | 1,262 | 243    |
| Jamaica                         | 97    | 19     | 1,260 | 499    |
| Chad                            | 1,762 | 1,028  | 1,199 | 650    |
| Surinam                         | 144   | 8      | 1,199 | 391    |
| Liberia                         | 1,245 | 765    | 1,108 | 563    |
| Seychelles                      | 1,213 | 200    | 1,039 | 165    |
| Guyana                          | 505   | 177    | 909   | 258    |
| India                           | 215   | 119    | 907   | 648    |
| Sudan                           | 348   | 29     | 900   | 244    |
| Ethiopia                        | 550   | 148    | 729   | 80     |
| Somalia                         | 585   | 107    | 663   | 94     |
| Slovenia                        | 15    | 5      | 604   | 173    |
| Uruguay                         | 269   | 87     | 548   | 147    |
| Slovakia                        | 1,024 | 355    | 546   | 155    |
| Bulgaria                        | 13    | 6      | 509   | 159    |
| Cape Verde                      | 195   | 75     | 458   | 152    |
| Namibia                         | 0     | 0      | 455   | 150    |
| Marshall Islands                | 0     | 0      | 402   | 208    |
| Croatia                         | 0     | 0      | 373   | 111    |
| Madagascar                      | 0     | 0      | 359   | 190    |
| Sierra Leone                    | 0     | 0      | 308   | 74     |
| Ukraine                         | 0     | 0      | 285   | 156    |
| Cayman Islands                  | 184   | 37     | 280   | 47     |
| Cambodia                        | 1,617 | 113    | 275   | 24     |
| Belarus                         | 375   | 78     | 272   | 51     |
| Lithuania                       | 246   | 53     | 235   | 48     |
| New Caledonia                   | 0     | 0      | 207   | 40     |
| Barbados                        | 210   | 42     | 205   | 38     |
| Mozambique                      | 136   | 219    | 190   | 98     |
| Bermuda                         | 156   | 31     | 171   | 29     |
| Dominica                        | 0     | 0      | 168   | 88     |
| Georgia                         | 625   | 266    | 144   | 44     |
| Gibraltar                       | 156   | 32     | 103   | 18     |
| Finland                         | 138   | 51     | 57    | 18     |
| Grenada                         | 0     | 0      | 45    | 16     |

| Irish Dairy Ex-ports by Country | 2016  | 2016   | 2017  | 2017   |
|---------------------------------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| COUNTRY                         | € 000 | Tonnes | € 000 | Tonnes |
| Guinea Bissau                   | 0     | 0      | 35    | 15     |
| Stores & Provi-sions (Intra EU) | 42    | 13     | 35    | 10     |
| Maldives                        | 31    | 45     | 32    | 45     |
| Estonia                         | 0     | 0      | 19    | 50     |
| Nepal                           | 94    | 50     | 16    | 22     |
| Sri Lanka                       | 0     | 0      | 13    | 5      |
| Moldova                         | 0     | 0      | 2     | 0      |
| Saint Helena                    | 0     | 0      | 2     | 0      |
| Unknown (Non-EU)                | 0     | 0      | 1     | 1      |
| Luxembourg                      | 0     | 0      | 0.24  | 0.05   |
| Bosnia & Herze-govina           | 0     | 0      | 0.03  | 0.00   |
| Iceland                         | 0     | 0      | 0.02  | 0.00   |
| Serbia                          | 0     | 0      | 0.00  | 0.01   |
| Haiti                           | 0     | 0      | 0.001 | 0.001  |
| Azerbaijan                      | 235   | 50     | 0     | 0      |
| Central African Republic        | 23    | 14     | 0     | 0      |
| Cuba                            | 338   | 125    | 0     | 0      |
| Guam                            | 1     | 0      | 0     | 0      |
| Honduras                        | 809   | 406    | 0     | 0      |
| Montenegro                      | 7     | 0      | 0     | 0      |
| Rwanda                          | 214   | 150    | 0     | 0      |
| Venezuela                       | 315   | 15     | 0     | 0      |

### Sheepmeat Sector

186. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the countries to which lamb is being exported by country, volume and value in 2016; the final figures for 2017 of total exports, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10784/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In 2017 Irish agrifood exports recorded their 8th consecutive year of growth to reach an estimated €13.6 billion. Within that, meat exports including beef, sheepmeat, pigmeat and poultry came to a total of over €3.78 billion.

The value of Irish sheepmeat exports in 2017 was over €310.8 million in 2017; an increase of 12% on 2016 figures (€277.1 million). The volume of sheepmeat exports rose by 6.8 million tonnes, representing a 12.2% increase, from 55.8 million tonnes in 2016 to 62.6 million tonnes in 2017.

The following table of Central Statistics Office (CSO) figures outline the breakdown of Ireland's exports by country. In view of the volume of statistical data collected as part of agrifood

trade statistics, some errors in respect of individual products may occur. Where these anomalies are identified, the Department will liaise with the Central Statistics Office to highlight and amend the information as required.

| SHEEP-<br>MEAT<br>EXPORTS |                         | Jan-Dec<br>2016 | Jan-Dec<br>2016 | Jan-Dec<br>2017 | Jan-Dec<br>2017 |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                           | Country                 | € 000           | Tonnes          | € 000           | Tonnes          |
|                           | France                  | 100,490         | 19,465          | 108,106         | 21,299          |
|                           | Great Britain           | 51,800          | 13,470          | 55,692          | 14,797          |
|                           | Germany                 | 29,213          | 4,720           | 30,681          | 5,101           |
|                           | Belgium                 | 25,449          | 3,377           | 24,761          | 3,437           |
|                           | Sweden                  | 23,048          | 4,511           | 25,996          | 5,236           |
|                           | Switzerland             | 12,714          | 872             | 19,089          | 1,260           |
|                           | Denmark                 | 9,337           | 1,127           | 10,549          | 1,318           |
|                           | Italy                   | 7,498           | 1,537           | 11,219          | 2,200           |
|                           | Netherlands             | 5,827           | 1,557           | 6,535           | 1,406           |
|                           | Hong Kong               | 2,599           | 1,189           | 6,498           | 2,421           |
|                           | Poland                  | 1,356           | 193             | 602             | 137             |
|                           | Canada                  | 1,285           | 367             | 4,091           | 1,039           |
|                           | Vietnam                 | 1,005           | 422             | 798             | 293             |
|                           | Northern Ire-<br>land   | 619             | 289             | 392             | 144             |
|                           | Austria                 | 574             | 70              | 782             | 83              |
|                           | Ivory Coast             | 523             | 1,001           | 738             | 1,025           |
|                           | South Africa            | 466             | 551             | 541             | 561             |
|                           | Spain                   | 438             | 63              | 713             | 96              |
|                           | Malta                   | 363             | 49              | 313             | 34              |
|                           | Greece                  | 315             | 83              | 1               | 0               |
|                           | China                   | 269             | 150             | 299             | 145             |
|                           | Czech Republic          | 267             | 32              | 261             | 25              |
|                           | Portugal                | 265             | 22              | 244             | 21              |
|                           | Hungary                 | 236             | 49              | 2               | 1               |
|                           | Georgia                 | 226             | 301             |                 |                 |
|                           | Luxembourg              | 190             | 14              | 252             | 23              |
|                           | Bulgaria                | 102             | 23              | 620             | 79              |
|                           | Finland                 | 96              | 16              | 82              | 14              |
|                           | Ghana                   | 92              | 99              | 161             | 120             |
|                           | Norway                  | 80              | 5               |                 |                 |
|                           | United Arab<br>Emirates | 57              | 4               | 107             | 21              |
|                           | Gabon                   | 52              | 22              | 236             | 100             |
|                           | Slovakia                | 45              | 5               | 5               | 1               |
|                           | Comoros                 | 43              | 9               | 39              | 8               |
|                           | India                   | 38              | 24              |                 |                 |
|                           | Liberia                 | 35              | 38              | 19              | 20              |

| SHEEP-MEAT EXPORTS |               | Jan-Dec 2016 | Jan-Dec 2016 | Jan-Dec 2017 | Jan-Dec 2017 |
|--------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|                    | Country       | € 000        | Tonnes       | € 000        | Tonnes       |
|                    | Croatia       | 31           | 2            |              |              |
|                    | Mozambique    | 30           | 50           |              |              |
|                    | Lebanon       | 16           | 25           |              |              |
|                    | Congo         | 11           | 19           | 14           | 20           |
|                    | Romania       | 4            | 1            |              |              |
|                    | Angola        | 3            | 16           | 6            | 31           |
|                    | Maldives      | 3            | 0            |              |              |
|                    | United States | 1            | 0            | 16           | 17           |
|                    | Latvia        |              |              | 36           | 4            |
|                    | Singapore     |              |              | 1            | 0            |
|                    | Taiwan        |              |              | 307          | 96           |
|                    | Turkey        |              |              | 70           | 43           |
| Sheepmeat Total    |               | 277,106      | 55,845       | 310,872      | 62,678       |

### Pork Exports

187. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the countries to which pork is being exported by country, volume and value in 2016; the final year figures for 2017 of total exports, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10785/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In 2017 Irish agrifood exports recorded their 8th consecutive year of growth to reach an estimated €13.6 billion. Within that, meat exports including beef, sheepmeat, pigmeat and poultry came to a total of over €3.78 billion.

The value of total pig meat exports, taking account of all pigment including prepared and preserved, was more than €790 million in 2017; an increase from €733 million in 2016. The volume of exports rose by over 10 million tonnes from 265.3 million tonnes in 2016 to 275.7 million tonnes in 2017.

The following table of Central Statistics Office (CSO) figures outline the breakdown of Ireland's total pigmeat exports (including prepared and preserved) by country. In view of the volume of statistical data collected as part of agrifood trade statistics, some errors in respect of individual products may occur. Where these anomalies are identified, the Department will liaise with the Central Statistics Office to highlight and amend the information as required.

|           | 2016   |        | 2017   |        |
|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Country   | € 000  | Tonnes | € 000  | Tonnes |
| Albania   | 29     | 25     |        |        |
| Angola    |        |        | 9      | 25     |
| Australia | 12,367 | 5,132  | 16,374 | 5,335  |
| Austria   | 1,569  | 620    | 1,126  | 462    |
| Bahamas   | 327    | 126    | 204    | 75     |



|                   | 2016    |        | 2017    |         |
|-------------------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| Bahrain           | 6       | 1      |         |         |
| Barbados          |         |        | 34      | 17      |
| Belgium           | 2,278   | 2,350  | 2,641   | 2,606   |
| Bermuda           | 143     | 47     | 107     | 36      |
| Brazil            |         |        | 25      | 25      |
| Bulgaria          | 59      | 52     | 132     | 72      |
| Canada            | 2,111   | 717    | 5,818   | 1,652   |
| Chile             | 68      | 25     | 100     | 50      |
| China             | 119,286 | 73,090 | 100,294 | 63,443  |
| Colombia          |         |        | 23      | 25      |
| Congo             | 54      | 75     | 74      | 72      |
| Congo (Dem Rep)   |         |        | 250     | 224     |
| Cyprus            |         |        | 2       | 0       |
| Czech Republic    | 5,717   | 2,306  | 14,649  | 5,197   |
| Denmark           | 34,173  | 16,044 | 38,587  | 15,584  |
| Equatorial Guinea | 30      | 50     |         |         |
| Estonia           | 787     | 492    | 709     | 283     |
| Finland           | 1,602   | 302    | 1,293   | 243     |
| France            | 13,098  | 3,184  | 14,586  | 2,499   |
| Georgia           | 373     | 205    | 57      | 25      |
| Germany           | 30,687  | 16,237 | 34,184  | 16,116  |
| Ghana             |         |        | 5       | 1       |
| Gibraltar         | 31      | 11     | 23      | 9       |
| Great Britain     | 385,493 | 97,590 | 401,936 | 107,756 |
| Greece            | 37      | 7      | 48      | 17      |
| Guam              |         |        | 314     | 110     |
| Haiti             | 29      | 35     |         |         |
| Hong Kong         | 2,272   | 1,677  | 2,179   | 1,472   |
| Hungary           | 917     | 619    | 1,657   | 867     |
| India             | 45      | 17     |         |         |
| Italy             | 1,944   | 728    | 3,909   | 1,521   |
| Ivory Coast       | 207     | 433    | 140     | 257     |
| Jamaica           | 376     | 193    | 563     | 204     |
| Japan             | 14,162  | 4,750  | 26,201  | 8,789   |
| Latvia            |         |        | 5       | 5       |
| Liberia           |         |        | 30      | 69      |
| Lithuania         | 364     | 171    | 695     | 258     |
| Luxembourg        | 12      | 3      | 11      | 3       |
| Malta             | 71      | 13     | 144     | 27      |
| Netherlands       | 7,199   | 2,921  | 7,447   | 2,207   |
| New Zealand       | 1,470   | 659    | 1,903   | 731     |
| Northern Ireland  | 25,631  | 6,191  | 43,888  | 9,203   |

|                   | 2016    |         | 2017    |         |
|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Norway            |         |         | 1       | 0       |
| Philippines       | 5,363   | 4,601   | 8,223   | 7,312   |
| Poland            | 4,200   | 1,720   | 4,993   | 1,778   |
| Portugal          | 1,634   | 213     | 2,508   | 212     |
| Romania           | 32      | 20      | 41      | 22      |
| Saudi Arabia      | 88      | 25      |         |         |
| Senegal           | 16      | 22      |         |         |
| Serbia            |         |         | 62      | 21      |
| Singapore         | 1,153   | 533     | 768     | 429     |
| Slovakia          | 15      | 3       | 27      | 7       |
| Slovenia          | 19      | 4       | 9       | 2       |
| South Africa      | 1,974   | 1,009   | 2,921   | 1,311   |
| South Korea       | 11,232  | 5,048   | 8,253   | 3,174   |
| Spain             | 4,218   | 562     | 8,291   | 1,114   |
| Sweden            | 9,085   | 6,249   | 8,031   | 6,358   |
| Switzerland       |         |         | 521     | 53      |
| Trinidad & Tobago | 1,516   | 600     | 2,184   | 791     |
| UAE               | 1,647   | 399     | 1,870   | 445     |
| USA               | 25,427  | 6,360   | 19,021  | 4,860   |
| Vietnam           | 1,290   | 889     | 413     | 309     |
| Total             | 733,933 | 265,353 | 790,514 | 275,767 |

### Food Exports

188. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the countries to which food and drink products were exported in 2016; the final year figures for 2017, by value and volume of total exports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10786/18]

189. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the countries to which food and drink products were imported in 2016; the final year figures for 2017, by volume and value of total imports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10787/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 188 and 189 together.

Irish agrifood exports and imports are broken down into 24 categories identified and agreed by my Department and the Central Statistics Office. Products and Raw goods are categorised using combined nomenclature codes, a European harmonised system used to classify goods for customs and trade purposes. These categories include items such as Forestry and Animal Hides and Skins, along with traditional Food and Beverage products.

Total agrifood sector imports for 2016 came to €8.17 billion from over 180 destinations worldwide.

Full year figures for 2017 indicate total agrifood imports for the period of €8.69 billion from

over 180 destinations.

Total exports for 2016 came to €12.19 billion an increase of 1.8% from the previous year, and to over 180 destinations worldwide, this figure increased to €13.56 billion in 2017.

The tables contained in the following link provide a full breakdown of import and export destinations in respect of both value and volume of goods based on CSO data.

[[Tables](/debates%20authoring/webattachments.nsf/0/2CC169C2B2E6D66E802582490036AB30/$File/188.docx?openelement)]

In view of the volume of statistical data collected as part of agrifood trade statistics, some errors in respect of individual products may occur. Where these anomalies are identified, the Department will liaise with the Central Statistics Office to highlight and amend the information as required

Further information in respect of Irish agrifood trade can be found in Chapter 4 of my Department's Annual Review and Outlook, 2016 - 2017.

### **Aquaculture Licence Applications Data**

190. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of aquaculture licences sought in each of the years 2015 to 2017 by county; the number awaiting a decision; the number decided in this period; the number awaiting a decision to date, by shellfish licences and fin fish licences in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10788/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The detailed information requested by the Deputy is not readily available in full. Provision of the information sought will require an extensive examination of my Department's records. The information will be forwarded to the Deputy within 2 weeks.

### **Aquaculture Licence Applications Data**

191. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of aquaculture licences for aquatic plants sought in each of the years 2015 to 2017, by county; the number awaiting a decision; the number decided in this period; the number awaiting decision to date, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10789/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department's records indicate that six new applications have been sought for the cultivation of aquatic plants during the period in question. These licence applications have not yet been determined.

The following table shows the breakdown per county and by year:

| County  | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---------|------|------|------|
| Cork    |      |      | 3    |
| Clare   |      |      | 1    |
| Donegal | 1    |      |      |
| Offaly  |      | 1    |      |

### Aquaculture Licence Applications Data

192. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of aquaculture licences for aquatic plants in operation nationally, by county, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10790/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department's records indicate that thirteen aquaculture sites are licensed to cultivate aquatic plants in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act.

The following table shows the breakdown per county:

| County | No. of Aquaculture Sites |
|--------|--------------------------|
| Cork   | 5                        |
| Mayo   | 3                        |
| Kerry  | 2                        |
| Galway | 1                        |
| Sligo  | 1                        |
| Offaly | 1                        |
| Total  | 13                       |

### GLAS Data

193. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons in receipt of GLAS 1, 2 and 3 who have received the 85% advance payment of their 2017 payment by county in tabular form; the number of persons who have passed all payment approval checks and are awaiting their 85% portion of 2017 payment; the number of GLAS recipients who have yet to receive this portion of payment by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10791/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The information requested is provided below in tabular form. Payment has issued to all cases cleared for payment and weekly updates are published on my Department's website. It should be noted that there are still approximately 2,000 scheme participants who remain ineligible for a payment due to a failure on their part to comply with the scheme and are classified below as "advance not paid".

|          | GLAS 1       |              | GLAS 2       |              | GLAS 3       |              | TOTAL        |              |
|----------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| County   | Advance paid | Adv not paid | Advance paid | Adv not paid | Advance paid | Adv not paid | Advance paid | Adv not paid |
| Carlow   | 252          | 23           | 112          | 15           | 122          | 5            | 486          | 43           |
| Cavan    | 860          | 42           | 396          | 35           | 508          | 31           | 1,764        | 108          |
| Clare    | 1,515        | 96           | 640          | 47           | 760          | 47           | 2,915        | 190          |
| Cork     | 1,990        | 151          | 902          | 100          | 864          | 70           | 3,756        | 321          |
| Donegal  | 1,798        | 133          | 913          | 85           | 1,298        | 106          | 4,009        | 324          |
| Dublin   | 52           | 8            | 16           | 1            | 17           | 2            | 85           | 11           |
| Galway   | 2,775        | 283          | 1,159        | 141          | 1,477        | 108          | 5,411        | 532          |
| Kerry    | 1,609        | 158          | 788          | 81           | 688          | 72           | 3,085        | 311          |
| Kildare  | 214          | 30           | 60           | 18           | 98           | 16           | 372          | 64           |
| Kilkenny | 400          | 27           | 185          | 22           | 169          | 22           | 754          | 71           |
| Laois    | 349          | 19           | 181          | 11           | 213          | 17           | 743          | 47           |

|            | GLAS 1 |       | GLAS 2 |       | GLAS 3 |     | TOTAL  |       |
|------------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-----|--------|-------|
| Leitrim    | 965    | 51    | 389    | 30    | 498    | 28  | 1,852  | 109   |
| Limerick   | 987    | 58    | 271    | 29    | 387    | 15  | 1,645  | 102   |
| Longford   | 484    | 27    | 321    | 22    | 310    | 19  | 1,115  | 68    |
| Louth      | 131    | 16    | 68     | 9     | 92     | 3   | 291    | 28    |
| Mayo       | 2,274  | 271   | 1,148  | 177   | 1,493  | 163 | 4,915  | 611   |
| Meath      | 396    | 25    | 186    | 13    | 232    | 19  | 814    | 57    |
| Monaghan   | 539    | 36    | 140    | 5     | 329    | 9   | 1,008  | 50    |
| Offaly     | 444    | 31    | 249    | 28    | 273    | 21  | 966    | 80    |
| Roscom-mon | 1,444  | 74    | 503    | 47    | 682    | 32  | 2,629  | 153   |
| Sligo      | 871    | 65    | 333    | 30    | 464    | 27  | 1,668  | 122   |
| Tipperary  | 1,045  | 81    | 458    | 49    | 472    | 29  | 1,975  | 159   |
| Waterford  | 311    | 48    | 105    | 26    | 104    | 18  | 520    | 92    |
| Westmeath  | 614    | 27    | 247    | 16    | 260    | 20  | 1,121  | 63    |
| Wexford    | 668    | 89    | 218    | 45    | 274    | 34  | 1,160  | 168   |
| Wicklow    | 301    | 28    | 140    | 11    | 185    | 16  | 626    | 55    |
| TOTAL      | 23,288 | 1,897 | 10,128 | 1,093 | 12,269 | 949 | 45,685 | 3,939 |

### Agri-Environment Options Scheme Data

194. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons who applied for AEOS who have received their total 2017 advance payment by county in tabular form; the number of persons who have passed all payment approval checks and are awaiting their 2017 advanced payment; the number of AEOS recipients who have yet to receive payment by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10792/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** AEOS participants that were paid the advance payment for the 2017 scheme year in 2017 were also paid the balancing payment before the end of 2017. A number of cases were held for review of payments made over the lifetime of the scheme. These cases are being processed and finalised on an on-going basis. The following table outlines the current position.

| County   | Numbers paid for 2017 | Numbers to be processed for 2017 |
|----------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Carlow   | 8                     | 3                                |
| Cavan    | 69                    | 12                               |
| Clare    | 118                   | 17                               |
| Cork     | 83                    | 55                               |
| Donegal  | 289                   | 85                               |
| Dublin   | 2                     | 1                                |
| Galway   | 334                   | 61                               |
| Kerry    | 150                   | 51                               |
| Kildare  | 5                     | 2                                |
| Kilkenny | 17                    | 7                                |
| Laois    | 17                    | 2                                |
| Leitrim  | 150                   | 17                               |
| Limerick | 49                    | 12                               |

| County      | Numbers paid for 2017 | Numbers to be processed for 2017 |
|-------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Longford    | 17                    | 5                                |
| Louth       | 12                    | 3                                |
| Mayo        | 312                   | 98                               |
| Meath       | 21                    | 2                                |
| Monaghan    | 46                    | 8                                |
| Offaly      | 21                    | 10                               |
| Roscommon   | 125                   | 42                               |
| Sligo       | 82                    | 19                               |
| Tipperary   | 34                    | 12                               |
| Waterford   | 16                    | 8                                |
| Westmeath   | 29                    | 1                                |
| Wexford     | 10                    | 3                                |
| Wicklow     | 12                    | 4                                |
| Grand Total | 2028                  | 540                              |

### Beef Industry

195. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the volume and value of beef exports to Northern Ireland in 2017. [10793/18]

196. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the volume and value of beef imports from Northern Ireland in 2017. [10794/18]

197. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the volume and value of beef exports to the UK, excluding Northern Ireland in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10795/18]

198. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the volume and value of beef imports from the UK excluding Northern Ireland in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10796/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 195 to 198, inclusive, together.

The following figures have been provided to my Department by the Central Statistics Office. In view of the volume of statistical data collected as part of agrifood trade statistics, some errors in respect of individual products may occur. Where these anomalies are identified, the Department will liaise with the Central Statistics Office to highlight and amend the information as required.

Volume and value of beef exports to Northern Ireland for 2017 are:

| Volume | Value    |
|--------|----------|
| Tonnes | €000     |
| 33,687 | €118,697 |

Volume and value of beef imports from Northern Ireland to Ireland for 2017 are:



| Volume | Value   |
|--------|---------|
| Tonnes | €000    |
| 2,610  | €12,116 |

Volume and value of beef exports to the United Kingdom 2017 (excluding NI) are

| Volume  | Value      |
|---------|------------|
| Tonnes  | €000       |
| 241,867 | €1,048,822 |

Volume and value of beef imports from the United Kingdom 2017 (excluding NI) are:

| Volume | Value   |
|--------|---------|
| Tonnes | €000    |
| 26,872 | €91,488 |

While these figures reflect the strong position Ireland occupies as a major net exporter of beef and also the existing relationship between Ireland and the United Kingdom in the export and import of beef, it is clear that Brexit will pose a challenge to the continued strong performance of Irish beef exports.

One of the key elements in responding to this challenge is to ensure markets for the export of Irish beef. I am very conscious of the importance of growing third country markets to ensure as many commercial outlets as possible for Irish beef; this is included as a key component of the Food Wise 2025 strategy. My Department is currently in the process of negotiating beef access to a range of Third Countries including China, South Korea, Ukraine, Thailand and Vietnam. This will build on the opening of some major markets in recent years including the US, Canada and Japan. The share of Irish beef exports outside of the EU has grown from less than 2% in 2013 to 6% in 2017, representing a significant diversification from our traditional UK and EU markets.

### Food Industry Data

199. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the volume and value of cheddar imports from Northern Ireland to date in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10797/18]

200. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the volume and value of cheddar exports to Northern Ireland in 2017. [10798/18]

201. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the volume and value of liquid milk exports to Northern Ireland in 2017. [10799/18]

202. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the volume and value of liquid milk imports from Northern Ireland in 2017. [10800/18]

203. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the volume and value of dairy ingredient exports to Northern Ireland in 2017. [10801/18]

204. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the volume and value of dairy ingredient imports from Northern Ireland in 2017. [10802/18]

205. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the volume and value of dairy ingredient exports to the UK excluding Northern Ireland in

2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10803/18]

206. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the volume and value of dairy ingredient imports from the UK excluding Northern Ireland in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10804/18]

207. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the volume and value of cheddar exports to the UK excluding Northern Ireland in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10805/18]

208. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the volume and value of cheddar imports from the UK excluding Northern Ireland in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10806/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 199 to 208, inclusive, together.

The Deputy has requested various details in respect of dairy trade between Ireland and Britain/Northern Ireland, across a range of product categories, for the year 2017. The CSO are the agency responsible for collating and disseminating this information, and recently released provisional trade data for the period January to December 2017 inclusive. This is set out in the attached table.

For cheese, a percentage estimate is included in respect of cheddar as a proportion of the total cheese category. It should be noted that the data as compiled is based on CSO preliminary estimates which will be subject to periodic revision based on updated trade statistics.

In view of the volume of statistical data collected as part of agrifood trade statistics, some errors in respect of individual products may occur. Where these anomalies are identified, the Department will liaise with the Central Statistics Office to highlight and amend the information as required.

**GREAT BRITAIN & NORTHERN IRELAND DAIRY TRADE WITH IRELAND - JAN to DEC 2017 -Source CSO**

| Geo-graphic Entity        | GB         | GB      | GB         | GB      | NI         | NI      | NI         | NI      |
|---------------------------|------------|---------|------------|---------|------------|---------|------------|---------|
| TRADE FLOW                | Exports    | Exports | Imports    | Imports | Exports    | Exports | Imports    | Imports |
| PROD-UCT CAT-EGORY        | € MIL-LION | Tonnes  | € MIL-LION | Tonnes  | € MIL-LION | Tonnes  | € MIL-LION | Tonnes  |
| Milk                      | 6.8        | 9,845   | 18.6       | 40,157  | 24.5       | 93,354  | 221.8      | 661,821 |
| Cream                     | 12.7       | 3,753   | 0.9        | 422     | 15.3       | 4,600   | 7.0        | 3,711   |
| SMP (skimmed Milk Powder) | 17.9       | 9,428   | 19.0       | 20,799  | 0.4        | 201     | 0.2        | 77      |
| WMP (Whole Milk Powder)   | 15.7       | 6,824   | 6.1        | 8,724   | 10.2       | 3,900   | 1.0        | 1,822   |
| Yoghurt                   | 19.9       | 6,385   | 28.8       | 16,402  | 1.9        | 528     | 0.8        | 1,009   |
| Buttermilk                | 5.6        | 4,390   | 15.0       | 10,096  | 1.0        | 524     | 5.0        | 7,402   |

| Geo-graphic Entity            | GB    | GB      | GB    | GB      | NI    | NI      | NI    | NI      |
|-------------------------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|
| Ice Cream                     | 9.4   | 4,742   | 52.8  | 23,269  | 1.8   | 1,448   | 0.7   | 388     |
| Whey                          | 19.6  | 19,226  | 6.0   | 6,516   | 0.7   | 993     | 0.5   | 1,769   |
| Butter                        | 219.2 | 45,514  | 17.3  | 5,267   | 28.2  | 6,215   | 4.4   | 954     |
| Cheese                        | 407.2 | 113,730 | 137.7 | 35,225  | 2.4   | 409     | 0.6   | 159     |
| OF WHICH Cheddar % (est)      | 62.3% | 70.7%   | 36.1% | 40.9%   | 54.7% | 45.7%   | 50.7% | 60.4%   |
| IF (Infant Formula)           | 134.0 | 32,631  | 6.2   | 1,203   | 0.2   | 224     | 0.1   | 10      |
| FFMP (Fat Filled Milk Powder) | 16.3  | 6,526   | 11.4  | 2,520   | 4.9   | 2,522   | 0.2   | 116     |
| Caseines & Caseinates         | 17.2  | 2,764   | 0.4   | 109     | 0.0   | 0       | 0.0   | 0       |
| TOTAL TRADE                   | 904.4 | 267,427 | 325.1 | 174,562 | 91.9  | 115,020 | 243.5 | 679,659 |

### European Fisheries Fund

209. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons in each year of the knowledge gateway scheme that is provided by Bord Iascaigh Mhara since its establishment; the amount allocated and expended in each year respectively; and the budget allocations for 2018, in tabular form. [10807/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department's €240 million European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Operational Programme is the vehicle for financial supports to the seafood sector up to 2021. The Programme delivers a wide range of supports for aquaculture, fisheries and seafood processing through a suite of 15 schemes, including the Knowledge Gateway Scheme which provides funding for projects that promote innovation and research in the aquaculture sector to enhance productivity, environmental management, disease management and animal husbandry.

The following table sets out details of the annual allocation made available for each year, the expenditure outturn and the number of projects aided.

The allocated budget for 2018 is €2.5 million. No funding awards have yet been made in 2018.

| Year | No of projects | Budget Allocated | Total spend  |
|------|----------------|------------------|--------------|
| 2016 | 6              | 1,400,000.00     | 945,913.14   |
| 2017 | 15             | 1,500,000.00     | 1,462,582.20 |

### European Council Meetings

210. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the topics discussed at the most recent European Council agricultural Ministers meeting. [10808/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I attended the Agri-Fish Council in Brussels on the 19th February. The main items discussed at Council were the Commission's Communication on the Future of Food and Farming, the role of the agriculture sector in the EU Bioeconomy Strategy, and the EU Protein Strategy.

My Ministerial colleagues and I exchanged views on the Future of Food and Farming, based on questions posed by the Presidency regarding direct payments, measures for environmental protection and climate action, and, rural development.

The discussion on the EU's Bioeconomy Strategy and the role of the agriculture sector, focussed on supporting the development of a more sustainable and circular bioeconomy and enhancing the benefits for primary producers in this context. The question of improving the integration of farmers and foresters into the bio economy value chains also featured.

In addition, Commissioner Hogan provided an update at Council on the EU Protein strategy.

There were also a number of AOB items discussed, including an initiative to set up an EU Africa Task Force for 'Rural Africa' with a view to strengthening the cooperation between the European Union and the African Union in the field of agriculture and food production.

## **EU Budgets**

211. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the communication from the European Commission (COM (2018) 98 final) on a new multi-annual financial framework for the EU post 2020 and the spending reductions proposed in relation to CAP; his plans to avoid reductions in the CAP budget after 2020; if he has proposed increasing the overall CAP budget; and if he has formally requested that member states increase their national contribution to the EU budget to fill the deficit caused by Brexit. [10809/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** On 14th of February 2018, the Commission published its Communication on a Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) for the European Union post-2020. The Department of Finance is the lead department on the negotiation of the MFF.

The communication indicates that the Commission will publish MFF proposals by early May 2018 at the latest. Recognising the loss of UK budgetary contributions post 2020, and an expanded range of expenditure priorities, it calls for a budget of sufficient size, supported by a revision of the revenue side.

For illustrative purposes, the communication outlines a range of options, some of which involve expenditure cuts, across all major policy areas, including the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The document makes it clear that these are not proposals, but rather are intended to stimulate an open debate.

Any increase in overall expenditure will require additional contributions from Member States. Not all Member States may be willing to make such contributions. From Ireland's perspective, the Taoiseach, in his address to the European Parliament in January 2018, has already indicated that Ireland is open to contributing more to the EU budget, but only if it is spent on policies that contribute to the advancement of the European ideal. The CAP is such a policy, and at the Council of Agriculture Ministers I have repeatedly personally called for the strongest budget possible for CAP post 2020.

## **Agriculture Scheme Administration**

212. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the criteria for the social farming scheme; and if proposals (details supplied) qualify. [10810/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I have not yet made my decision on the allocation of funding for Social Farming in 2018. If and when requests for tenders are issued, they will be publicised through my Departments Press Office. Any future request for tenders will be along a similar basis as 2017 and the award criteria will be set out in the procurement documents.

In previous years, the services comprised the provision of supports under a funding framework for substantial new or existing social farming model project where Social Farming is the practice of offering activity on farms as a form of a social support service. Funding is for current expenditure only and funding for capital works/expenditure will not be considered.

Last year the contracts for social farming were awarded following a procurement process and the award criteria in place were :

- Proposals which have a national reach/benefit;
- Proposals which are open and visible to the public and will thus raise awareness of Social Farming;
- Proposals which can establish or develop a best practice model for social farming;
- Proposals which promote the concept of social farming to a wider audience, as well as supporting individuals who are already involved in social farming nationwide.

## **GLAS Data**

213. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 55 of 13 February 2018, the peak number of active participants in the REPS scheme compared to GLAS. [10811/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** REPS opened in 1994 and over a period of 12 years, during which the scheme was continuously open for the submission of applications, participation levels peaked at 59,200 in 2006.

The first approvals under GLAS run from 1 October 2015 and over the course of three application windows the RDP target of 50,000 approvals by the end of 2018 was achieved by January 2017, a period of 15 months.

## **Agrifood Sector**

214. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the estimated number of direct and indirectly employed persons in the agrifood sector. [10812/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The CSO published four Quarterly National Household Surveys (QNHS) for 2016, the most recent full

year available. These showed that employment in the agrifood sector overall, including all its component parts, averaged 173,400 throughout the year. The agrifood sector represented circa 8.6% of national employment as measured by the QNHS. Full data for 2017, from the recently introduced Labour Force Survey, is expected in mid-March this year.

Other official statistics, such as the Census of Population (2016), show the wide dispersal of sectorial employment through all regions of the country. This also generates significant amounts of indirect employment in such areas, via local sourcing of inputs and consumption of goods and services.

The Food Wise 2025 strategy projects significant growth in both direct and indirect employment, arising from substantial increases in value added and export value for the sector as a whole.

### **Aquaculture Data**

**215. Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons nationally and by county who are directly and indirectly employed in seaweed production and harvesting; the amount this industry is worth to the economy; the regulatory position pertaining to production in this area; and the role overseen by the Marine Institute. [10813/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I am informed by Bord Iascaigh Mhara that there are sixteen people directly employed in seaweed farming in Ireland at this time, of which seven are in Cork, eight in Kerry and one in Mayo. BIM estimates that the seaweed sector supports in the region of ten indirect jobs in ancillary services. A county breakdown cannot be provided for this estimate.

Seaweed farming in Ireland is a fledgling industry, so its value to the economy at this time is nominal. I understand that the value of current production, when dried and further processed, may be in the region of €100,000. However, the sector has significant potential for growth in the years ahead, particularly given its positive environmental impact and its nutritional and pharmaceutical qualities.

My Department co-funds with the European Union a Sustainable Aquaculture Scheme under my Department's EMFF Operational Programme. The Scheme is administered by BIM. It provides capital grants to aquaculture enterprises for investments that seek to grow output, value and employment in the sector. To incentivise the growth of the seaweed farming sector, I have made available the maximum permitted 50% grant rate to seaweed farming investments and grants of up to €1 million are available to aquaculture enterprises for such investments.

My Department is responsible for the licensing and regulation of aquaculture production of seaweed under the Fisheries (Amendment) Act 1997 and the Foreshore Act 1933, as amended.

The Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government is responsible generally for the licensing and regulation of wild seaweed harvesting. However, where the harvested product is used as a food source for the aquaculture production of shellfish, regulation falls within the remit of my Department.

In respect of the production of seaweed, the Marine Institute is a statutory consultee on applications for Aquaculture licences.



## Suckler Welfare Scheme

216. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he will take in the current and future CAP to achieve a €200 payment per suckler cow (details supplied). [10815/18]

217. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the measures available under the RDP Pillar 2 that permits a scheme to be operationalised for a €200 payment per suckler cow. [10816/18]

218. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if it is technically possible to operationalise an Exchequer funded scheme such as the 2008 to 2012 suckler welfare scheme. [10817/18]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 216 to 218, inclusive, together.

I am a strong advocate of supporting a vibrant and productive national suckler herd. The Beef Data and Genetics Programme (BDGP) is the main support specifically targeted for the suckler sector, which provides Irish beef farmers with some 300 million euro in funding over the current Rural Development Programme (RDP) period.

This scheme, which was introduced in accordance with the provisions of Article 28 EU Regulation 1305/2013, is an agri-environmental measure to improve the environmental sustainability of the national suckler herd by increasing genetic merit within the herd. So far under this programme approximately 135 million euro has been paid out to farmers and this Government will continue to support this programme through the lifetime of the current RDP.

In relation to existing funding, under Pillar II of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) my Department has rolled out a range of schemes as part of the 4 billion euro Rural Development Programme (RDP), 2014 - 2020. In addition to the BDGP, other supports which are available for suckler farmers under Pillar II of the CAP include GLAS, ANCs and Knowledge Transfer Groups. Suckler farmer also benefit from the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and Greening payments under CAP Pillar I.

In relation to any potential funding over and above existing supports to farmers under the current CAP, I again stress:

There are no surplus funds available within the RDP above and beyond the funding already allocated, which has been committed to existing schemes within the RDP. Therefore, any additional supports under the RDP would require cuts to other RDP schemes and /or additional exchequer funding. RDP schemes, including the existing BDGP are based on costs incurred and income foregone by participants. Every scheme, or scheme adjustment, under the RDP must be justified and approved by the European Commission on the basis of additional actions and income foregone by farmers.

Any allocation of funding under Pillar I of the CAP for a coupled payment would in principle require a linear reduction to all existing farmers Basic Payment Scheme payments for redistribution.

I am not of the view that taking already committed money from farmers under the CAP is an appropriate means by which to support suckler farmers.

In regard to the Animal Welfare, Recording and Breeding Scheme for Suckler Herds which was operated between 2008 and 2012, its objectives were to improve breeding by recording ani-

mal events data and make better use of genetic evaluation. It also aimed to improve husbandry and weaning to reduce illness and mortality. The scheme was developed to provide training under Article 15 Provision of technical support in the Agriculture Sector of Commission Regulation 1857/2006 for participants of the Suckler Welfare Scheme. The Scheme was successful in meeting its objectives.

Any attempt to introduce a similar exchequer funded scheme which has the aim of improving the genetic merit and the welfare of the suckler herd would require approval by the European Commission under State Aid regulations and would need to comply with our obligations under WTO rules. The fact that a scheme, the Beef Data Genomics Programme (BDGP), with similar aims already exists would be a complicating factor in seeking State Aid approval.

The introduction of such an additional scheme funded directly from exchequer funds, would in any event not be possible under the current budgetary resources available to my Department. I am strongly of the view that the current range of supports available to suckler farmers is the most appropriate way to support the continued development of the sector which according to the Teagasc National Farm survey for 2016 received support equivalent to approximately 500 euro per suckler cow.

I will continue to argue for as strong a CAP budget as possible, post 2020. In particular, I am committed to ensuring that suckler farmers continue to receive strong support in the next CAP post 2020. However my strong view is that any such payments should support and encourage suckler farmers to make the best decisions possible to improve the profitability, and the economic and environmental efficiency, of their farming system.

Finally I wish to encourage stakeholders within the industry to contribute to the public consultation (closing date 23rd March) which will be an important part of the framing of the future CAP in Ireland.

### **Regional Development Funding**

219. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if funding is available to the regional authorities from the European Regional Fund for the roll-out of broadband; the conditions attached to this; if he is satisfied these conditions can be met by 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10700/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Circular 08/2015) sets out the eligibility rules in relation to the drawdown of all expenditure declared for Operational Programmes co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The current programme runs from 2014 to 2020. The ERDF is delivered in Ireland through the Regional Assemblies. The National Broadband Plan (NBP) has secured a commitment of €75m from the ERDF of which €45m has been allocated to the Northern & Western region and €35m to the Southern region. Under State expenditure eligibility rules €150m is required to be spent to allow for drawdown of the €75m under the ERDF for the NBP project. A Major Project Notification to the ERDF is being progressed by my Department.

In 2015 the Government included an initial stimulus allocation of €275m for the State led Intervention under the NBP in its Capital Plan, with an acknowledgement that further Exchequer funding will be required over the lifetime of the NBP.

My Department remains committed to delivering high speed broadband to all premises in the country. In this regard the formal procurement process to engage a company who will roll-

out a new high speed broadband network in the State intervention area is now in its final stages.

### Fisheries Protection

220. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment when the compensation scheme for eel fishermen will be rolled out. [10708/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** I refer to the reply to Question No. [7000/18] of 13 February 2018. The position is unchanged and discussions with the European Commission are ongoing.

### Departmental Advertising Campaigns

221. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the details of each instance of advertorial content commissioned by his Department and agencies under its remit in the past 12 months; the date this content was published; the purpose of this content; the cost of its publication; the publication or platform on which it was published, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10768/18]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** My Department's remit includes complex policy areas, oversight of State regulation and service provision across key strategic services such as energy and public broadcasting, and regulation of sectors such as mining and hydrocarbon exploration. Given the technical complexity, economic significance and community interest in these areas, there is a requirement to disseminate information and to address specific issues as they arise. The Department therefore necessarily incurs some expenditure on advertorials from time to time. In procuring these services, my Department always seeks to ensure value for money and keeping expenditure to the minimum necessary. The information which the Deputy requested is outlined in the following table:

#### Advertorial content commissioned since 26th February 2017

| Purpose of the content  | Date published | Cost (incl VAT) | Publication/Platform        |
|---|----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Raise awareness of the Department's Trading Online Voucher Scheme                 | March 2017     | €6,150          | Irish Independent Newspaper |
| Tidy Towns magazine - Clean Air Award, Sustainable Award and Climate Change Award | May 2017       | €12,300         | Tidy Towns magazine         |

### Coast Guard Services

222. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the planned construction of a coastguard station at Fethard-on-Sea, New Ross, County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10525/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The Irish Coast Guard propose to arrange for the construction of an extension to the rear of the existing Fethard-on-Sea Coast Guard building, consisting of a meeting room, canteen, changing area, bathroom facilities and small store. Planning permission for such an extension was granted in February 2018.

## **Bus Services**

223. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the details of the BusConnects programme during the lifetime of the national development plan; the areas in which the €2.4 billion will be spent; the timeframe for the BusConnects programme; the commencement date of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10458/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The recently launched National Development Plan (NDP) identifies the delivery of the full BusConnects programme for Ireland's cities (inclusive of ticketing systems, bus corridors, additional capacity, new bus stops and bus shelters etc.) as a key investment priority over the period of the plan.

Work is ongoing by the National Transport Authority in the GDA on the network and also on infrastructure proposals for Core Bus Corridors which will be an integral part of the programme. When this work is completed the proposals will be launched for public consultations expected to commence in April and May of this year. The results of the public consultation will inform the final decisions to be made on the network redesign, Core Bus Corridors and park and ride facilities.

The NTA has also worked in partnership with a number of local authorities in Ireland's cities to prepare transport related strategies or implement transport related projects. An example of this is the Galway Transport Strategy which was developed in 2016 by Galway City Council and Galway County Council in partnership with the NTA. The strategy concluded that bus-based public transport represents the most appropriate system for Galway. A Cork Transport Strategy is also being finalised by the relevant Local Authorities in partnership with the NTA which includes proposals for a revised bus system for Cork and enhancements to the commuter rail service in Cork including additional stations and rail fleet.

Accordingly the NDP identifies that the BusConnects programmes will be delivered for Galway and Cork to include new bus fleets; bus lanes with segregated cycling; revised bus service networks; and park-and-ride facilities. As the other cities develop transport strategies, investment will be available under the NDP for appropriate similar projects there.

## **Mountain Rescue Service**

224. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the next meeting of the national co-ordinating committee for mountain and cave rescue is due to meet; the details of the reporting mechanism from the committee to his Department; the actions taken in the past two years on foot of reports or recommendations of the committee; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10698/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The next meeting of the National Co-Ordinating Committee for Cave and Mountain Rescue is due to take place on 23rd March 2018 at 11.00hrs. The Committee is chaired by the Coast Guard, which is a Division of my Department and its membership includes the Irish Cave and Rescue Organisation (ICRO), Civil Defence, Mountain Rescue Ireland, An Garda Síochána, the Air Corps, and the Department of Justice and Equality

The purpose of the Committee is to monitor the provision and development of mountain and cave rescue facilities; to provide liaison between the Irish Mountain Rescue Association and its Mountain Rescue Teams and the Irish Cave Rescue Association, relevant Government Departments and other public bodies; and to advise on the allocation of small state grants for Mountain

and Cave Rescue. The Committee meets at least twice a year. It has not produced any formal recommendations for action for my attention in the past two years.

### **Driver Licensing Exchange Agreements**

225. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to amend driving licence regulations in view of difficulties arising for persons returning from the United States of America (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10745/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Irish driver licensing law operates within a framework of EU law. It is important to remember that driver licensing law exists to ensure that people licensed to drive on our roads meet high standards of safety. The standards for testing drivers are set at EU level.

As such, all EU driving licences are exchangeable when a person moves from one Member State to another. In the case of non-EU jurisdictions, we may make bilateral agreements on licence exchange. These are not a straightforward matter, and reaching them is not a matter of political will. They can be made only when the relevant authorities in each jurisdiction have studied and compared the two licensing regimes, so that each side can be satisfied that they are compatible. On the Irish side, this task is undertaken by the Road Safety Authority (RSA).

The RSA has previously explored reaching agreement on exchange with the USA. However, US driver licensing operates at state rather than federal level, meaning that there are 50 licensing systems with widely varying standards. Agreement with any one state would mean taking into account the exchange relations between that state and the other 49. The RSA determined that agreement would not be possible.

When people come to Ireland with a non-exchange licence, we have no option but to require them to go through the process of obtaining an Irish licence. This is a matter of public safety. While many may have a safe driving record, we have no way of measuring this.

At present, people with a full but non-exchange licence go through the normal driver learning process with one exception, namely that they do not have to be a learner for the usual minimum of 6 months before taking a driving test.

I am aware of the difficulties, in terms of time, cost, and frustration, which this can cause. As Minister I have to balance this against a duty to public safety. The single largest cause difficulty is the requirement to undertake the 12 mandatory 'Essential Driver Training' lessons. I agree that this is excessive for experienced drivers. I have consulted with the RSA, and last week I announced that I have decided to introduce a 'short EDT' of 6 lessons for people with non-exchange licences.

Some might have preferred to abolish the EDT altogether for people in this position. I consulted with the RSA on this possibility, but it is clear that some lessons would be useful in helping people to adjust to Irish driving rules and conditions and in preparing people for the driving test.

### **Taxi Licences**

226. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10748/18]



**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The regulation of small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry, including the licensing of SPSV drivers, is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013.

I have referred your question to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

### **Departmental Advertising Campaigns**

227. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the details of each instance of advertorial content commissioned by his Department and agencies under its remit in the past 12 months; the date this content was published; the purpose of this content; the cost of its publication; the publication or platform on which it was published, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10780/18]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** My Department has not commissioned any advertorial content in the timeframe requested by the Deputy.

As regards the agencies under my Department's remit this is a matter for themselves. I shall however issue the Deputy's question to them for their direct response. If the Deputy does not receive a response within 10 working days she should contact my private office.

### **Family Resource Centres**

228. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if recognition and funding will be considered for a centre (details supplied) in County Kildare. [10460/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, administers the Family Resource Centre Programme. As part of Budget 2018, I was pleased to announce that additional funding of approximately €3.0m is being allocated to Family Resource Centres. This funding will provide an increased allocation to existing centres, and will support the expansion of the programme, with the inclusion of an additional 11 centres in 2018.

In addition to the resources provided in Budget 2018, over €2.0m in once-off extraordinary funding was allocated to existing centres for investment in small works in December 2017.

Tusla has advised that it has received a total of 43 applications for inclusion in the Family Resource Centre Programme from community organisations, including the organisation referred to by the Deputy. Tusla is currently assessing all applications. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of the assessment early this month.

I highly value the work of Family Resource Centres across the country. Tusla is committed to using all available resources for children and families in the most efficient, equitable, proportionate and sustainable way.

### **Youth Services Funding**



229. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to properly resource youth services in each ETB area to support volunteer youth leaders; if the requested review of existing youth club and group support structures will be conducted; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10520/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** My Department administers a range of funding schemes and programmes to support the provision of youth services to young people throughout the country including those from disadvantaged communities.

These schemes include the Youth Service Grant Scheme under which funding is made available on an annual basis to thirty national and major regional youth organisations. This funding is intended to ensure the emergence, promotion, growth and development of youth organisations with distinctive philosophies and programmes aimed at the social education of young people. In 2017, I provided an additional 5% in funding to this scheme, bringing the total allocation to €10.65m.

The Local Youth Club Grant Scheme supports youth work activities at a local level. These grants are made available to all youth clubs and groups through the local Education and Training Boards. The scheme is open to some 1,700 youth groups and clubs, with an estimated 90,000 club members around the country. In 2017, I provided an additional 10% in funding to the scheme, bringing the total allocation to €1.1715m.

My Department has commenced a process to identify service development needs for 2018 and to finalise the 2018 allocations to the above schemes. Every effort will be made to complete this process as soon as possible.

In 2017, I was also pleased to approve the establishment the Local Youth Club Equipment Scheme which provided €6.35m nationally. The primary focus of this once-off scheme was to assist volunteer led clubs and groups that work with young people in communities throughout the country. The scheme provided for the purchase of equipment for sport, arts, adventure and other much needed items. I have received extremely positive feedback on the scheme from clubs across Ireland.

My Department has commenced a review of the Youth Service Grant Scheme. This review is intended to enhance its accountability, transparency and scheme measurement. It is also seeking to ensure the scheme responds to the ever evolving needs of young people.

### **Child Care Services Provision**

230. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the status of the independent review of the cost of providing quality child care; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10760/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Independent Review of the Cost of Providing Quality Childcare is a critical input to the on-going reform of childcare in Ireland and is commitment in the Programme for Government.

This Review seeks to:

- Analyse the current costs of providing childcare in Ireland and factors that impact on those costs;
- Develop a model of the unit cost/costs of providing childcare that allows analysis of policy

changes and variation in cost-drivers, including the potential impact of increased professionalisation; and

- Provide an objective, high level market analysis of the childcare sector in Ireland, including analysis of fee levels charged to parents.

The contract to undertake this Review was awarded to Crowe Horwath in September 2017. Since then, a literature review and preliminary stakeholder engagement has been completed. These initial steps are informing subsequent steps of the Review, including a survey of childcare providers and the development of a cost model and cost calculator.

The survey of childcare providers is currently being finalised and is due to be piloted in the coming week with a view to rolling out the national survey in early March.

This Review is expected to take approximately 10 months to complete with the final report expected in June 2018.

### Departmental Advertising Campaigns

231. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the details of each instance of advertorial content commissioned by her Department and agencies under its remit in the past 12 months; the date this content was published; the purpose of this content; the cost of its publication; the publication or platform on which it was published, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10767/18]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Details of the costs incurred on advertorial content over the past twelve months by my Department are set out in the following table. The overall objective is to keep costs of this nature to a minimum.

| Date content was published | Media platform content was published | Purpose of the content                     | Cost   |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--------|
| 29/05/2017                 | magicmum.com/mummypages.ie           | New Measures for more Affordable Childcare | €9,840 |
| 12/06/2017                 | Herfamily.ie                         | New Measures for more Affordable Childcare | €4,920 |
| 05/06/2017                 | Rollercoaster.ie                     | New Measures for more Affordable Childcare | €4,920 |

The purpose of the content was to raise awareness of the new measures, available from September 2017, to make childcare more affordable. 68,000 of the estimated 70,000 beneficiaries are now in receipt of these new supports. The affordable childcare website highlighted in the above formats received over half a million views from parents in the run up to the introduction of these measures.

As regards the agencies under the remit of my Department, both the Adoption Authority of Ireland and Oberstown Children Detention Campus have indicated that they did not incur any costs. I have requested Tusla, the Child and Family Agency and the Office of the Ombudsman for Children to contact the Deputy directly in the matter.

## Community Services Programme

232. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of Pobal funding for a community service organisation (details supplied); if funding will continue until the end of 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10457/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The Community Services Programme (CSP) supports community organisations to provide local services through a social enterprise model. Around 425 organisations are supported under the CSP, with funding provided as a contribution to the cost of a manager and an agreed number of full-time equivalent (FTE) positions.

The organisation in question has been awarded a one-year grant agreement to end-December 2018. The CSP grant includes a contribution towards the cost of a manager and five FTEs from January to June 2018, and a manager and two FTEs from July to December 2018. The organisation will also receive an operational grant of €7,000 in 2018.

The original grant is being maintained from January to June 2018 to allow the organisation transition to the lower level of support. Thereafter, support will be revised to reflect CSP-appropriate activity currently being carried out by the organisation. The re-contracting process, which included an unsuccessful appeal by the organisation, has been completed by Pobal and my Department is not in a position to alter the decision at this stage.

The organisation will have an opportunity to resubmit a revised business plan to Pobal as part of the re-contracting process for 2019-2020. The business plan, which must be submitted by end-June 2018, can include a business case for increased support from January 2019 to December 2020. A decision on funding for the organisation for 2019-2020 will be taken towards the end of this year.

## Local Improvement Scheme Administration

233. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his plans to widen the criteria for eligibility to the local improvement schemes from the minimum of two persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10705/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) is a programme for improvement works on small private/non-public roads. The eligibility criteria for the scheme are largely based on the Local Improvement Schemes Memorandum published in 2002 by the then Department of Environment and Local Government.

Eligible roads are non-public roads, often leading to houses and important community amenities such as graveyards, beaches, piers, mountains, etc., or other non-public roads that provide access to parcels of land, or provide access for harvesting purposes (including turf or seaweed) for two or more persons. There must be more than one landholder on an LIS road and the road must be open to the public.

I have no plans at present to change these criteria. It is clear that there is a continuing demand for LIS funding in rural communities across Ireland based on these criteria. I recently announced the allocation of approximately €10 million for the scheme for 2018. All Local Authorities have been notified of their indicative allocations and have been requested to submit lists of eligible roads to my Department by the end of March.

## **Departmental Advertising Campaigns**

234. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the details of each instance of advertorial content commissioned by his Department and agencies under its remit in the past 12 months; the date this content was published; the purpose of this content; the cost of its publication; the publication or platform on which it was published, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10779/18]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** My Department was established on 19 July 2017. I can confirm that there has been no advertorial content commissioned by my Department or by any of its four agencies: Pobal, the Western Development Commission, the Charities Regulator or Irish Water Safety, from July 2017 to date.

## **Disability Allowance Eligibility**

235. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person (details supplied) is on the correct rate of disability allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10488/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** On 15 January 2018 this department received notification from Newbridge Intreo Office that this lady's spouse had made a claim for Jobseekers Benefit (JB).

The person concerned was requested to supply supporting documentation on 18 January 2018 regarding her spouse's two employments, which is required by the deciding officer in order to carry out a review of her entitlement.

On 22 January 2018 we received details regarding the cessation of one employment. A further request for the remaining supporting documentation was sent to this lady on 22 February

On receipt of this information a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified of the outcome of her review.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

## **Carer's Allowance Applications**

236. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10499/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an oral hearing of the appeals of the person concerned took place on 11th January 2018. At the oral hearing it was agreed that the person concerned would send in further documentation in support of the appeal and this has now been received by the Appeals Officer. The Appeals Officer will now consider the appeal in the light of all of the evidence submitted, including that adduced at the oral hearing. The person concerned will be notified of the Appeals Officer's decision when the appeal has been determined.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and 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 Allowance Appeals**

237. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10500/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who has decided to convene an oral hearing in this case.

Every effort will be made to hear the case as quickly as possible and the person concerned will be informed when arrangements for the oral hearing have been made.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and 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 Allowance Applications**

238. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10501/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My department received an application for Carer's Allowance (CA) from the person concerned on 12 June 2017. One of the qualifying conditions for CA is that the means of the person concerned must be less than the statutory limit.

Following an investigation it was determined that her means exceeded the statutory limit and that she was therefore not entitled to CA.

The person concerned was notified on 3 November 2017 of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review and appeal.

The department was notified on 1 December 2017 that the person concerned had appealed this decision to the Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO). A submission in support of the decision is being prepared and will shortly be forwarded along with the file to the SWAO for determination.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy

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

239. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10502/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care. An application for CA was received from the person concerned on 6 December 2017. 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.

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

240. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10503/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned has been referred to an Appeals Officer who will consider the appeal in light of all of the evidence submitted. It is expected that a decision will issue to the person concerned within the next week. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and 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 Allowance Appeals**

241. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10504/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence, has decided to allow the appeal of the person concerned by way of a summary decision. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officer's decision.

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

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

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

242. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10505/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is



habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care. An application for CA was received from the person concerned on 10 November 2017. 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.

### Labour Activation Programmes Data

243. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of adult dependants on a social welfare labour activation scheme in each of the years 2010 to 2017, by county, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10508/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The following table gives details of the number of recipients of weekly Working Age Employment Support payments who were in receipt of Qualified Adult Allowances, at the end of each year 2010 to 2017 and at end-January 2018.

#### Qualified Adult Allowances in payment at end-year (2010-2017) and end-January 2018

|   | 2010  | 2011  | 2012  | 2013  | 2014  | 2015  | 2016  | 2017  | Jan 2018 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------|
| Back to Work Allowance Employee(1)                      | 116   | 17    | 4     | 2     |       |       |       |       |          |
| Back to Work Enterprise allowance scheme                | 2581  | 4101  | 3642  | 3445  | 3723  | 3907  | 3,562 | 3,089 | 3,000    |
| Part-time Job Incentive                                 |       |       |       | 43    | 53    | 57    | 72    | 55    | 18       |
| TUS - Community Work Placement Initiative               |       |       | 1,268 | 1,895 | 2,056 | 1,889 | 1,703 | 1,547 | 1,510    |
| JobBridge(2)  |       |       | 596   | 755   | 869   | 618   | 288   | 4     | 5        |
| Gateway   |       |       |       |       |       | 657   | 185   | 13    | 10       |
| Community Employment Schemes (excluding Supervisors)(3) |       |       | 4,152 | 5,740 | 6,685 | 6,748 | 6,365 | n/a   | n/a      |
| Back to Education Allowance                             | 1,894 | 2,317 | 2,487 | 2,701 | 2,594 | 2,051 | 1,633 | 1,390 | 1,376    |

(1) This scheme was closed to new applications from 1st May 2009

(2) This scheme was closed to new applications from 21st October 2016

(3) The Community Employment scheme has recently moved to a new computer system. Some reports on the scheme are not yet available.

### Social Welfare Overpayments

244. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Pro-

tection the reason correspondence was issued to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal on an overpayment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10531/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Following an investigation by the Department's Special Investigation's Unit, the person concerned was determined to be working and claiming jobseekers payments. The Department's decision on this claim was sent to the person at the end of January 2018. As a result of the findings of the investigation, an overpayment of €2,105.60 was assessed. My understanding is that no appeal has been made against this decision and that the correspondence relates to the Department's efforts to recover the sums overpaid. The person concerned can get further information on this matter from the Intreo Centre in Letterkenny.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **State Pension (Contributory)**

245. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason and the circumstances in which a person (details supplied) has had a pension withdrawn. [10532/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The person concerned was the beneficiary of an Increase for qualified adult (IQA) on their spouse's state pension (contributory) until 21 October 2010. The IQA is a means-tested pension increase that can be awarded to a state pension (contributory) recipient whose spouse/civil partner/co-habitant is being wholly or mainly maintained by them, and where their adult dependant's personal means from any source(s) do not exceed certain weekly income limits. This Increase is payable at the maximum rate where the adult dependant's weekly means are assessed at €100 or less. Where their weekly means exceed €100, and up to a maximum of €310, a tapered, reducing IQA scale applies. Weekly means greater than €310 per week exceed the current statutory limit for this payment.

Following a review of the IQA in 2010, it came to light that the person concerned had undisclosed means from employment and capital from a sale of property. As a result their means were in excess and this allowance was stopped.

If the circumstances of the person concerned have changed, it is open to their spouse to re-apply for this allowance on their state pension (contributory).

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Community Employment Schemes Administration**

246. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the process for a person or body to set up or become a manager of a community employment scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10533/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Community Employment (CE) projects are typically sponsored by groups wishing to benefit the local community, namely voluntary and community organisations and, to a lesser extent, public bodies involved in not-for-profit activities. Such projects provide a valuable service to local communities and may also provide training and educational opportunities to jobseekers. The Department's priority in supporting CE is having access to schemes that can provide job-

seekers and other vulnerable groups with good quality work experience and training qualifications to support their progression into employment.

With regard to new projects, an initial contact is received from a potential new sponsor who is given a copy of the Community Employment (CE) Procedures Manual and invited to attend a formal briefing given by a Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) Officer. The formal briefing will cover the following:

- Presentation on key responsibilities of the Sponsor (Employer)
- Explanation of Application Process and Procedures
- Questions and Answers

The DEASP Officer will assess whether the proposed project complies in outline form with the criteria for CE. The officer will also assess the suitability/compatibility of the proposed sponsor to manage the project (based on the background of the individuals involved, their bona fides, history and former achievements). Where the DEASP Officer is satisfied that all the requirements are met, he/she will give the potential sponsor the “Community Employment Sponsor Application Pack”.

All completed applications from new sponsors are appraised and approved by the relevant DEASP Division and submitted to the DEASP Employment Programmes Policy Unit for review. This is to ensure that the proposed application is in line with the current direction of CE and that a budget allocation is available.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Community Employment Schemes Operation**

247. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason some community employment schemes are of two, three and six years in duration; the process and criteria for the way in which a person can extend their community employment scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10534/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** In the context of the economic recovery, my Department undertook a review of the work programmes in 2016. Arising from the review, the Government agreed to implement changes to the qualifying conditions for Community Employment (CE) in order to broaden access to a wider range of people. These new rules were implemented from July 2017. In general all placements will now be for one year only - if a CE participant is undertaking training to achieve a major award, their time can be extended by up to 2 year to allow them to complete the training which will enhance their overall employment prospects. This allows for 3 years continuous participation on CE. Those over 55 years of age can also remain on CE for three years. An overall lifetime limit of 6 years will apply to CE participants (7 years if on a disability payment). A person may re-qualify for CE after 12 months of being in receipt of a qualifying social welfare payment, provided they have not reached their 6 year overall lifetime limit.

Participation on CE is intended to be for a temporary fixed-term. These placements are not full-time sustainable jobs. Overall participation limits are in place to ensure that as many unemployed people as possible are able to benefit from the scheme. My Department's priority in supporting work programmes is to provide access to good quality work experience and training qualifications to support the progression into employment of jobseekers and other vulnerable

groups.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Fuel Allowance Payments**

248. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the value of duration of the fuel allowance will be increased in view of the recent cold weather; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10535/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The fuel allowance is a payment of €22.50 per week for 27 weeks from October to April, to over 338,000 low income households, at an estimated cost of €227 million in 2018. The purpose of this payment is to assist these households with their energy costs. The allowance represents a contribution towards the energy costs of a household. It is not intended to meet those costs in full. Only one allowance is paid per household. In October 2017, I introduced the option for qualified households to receive their fuel allowance payment in two lump sums - in October and in January. This allows people to buy fuel in bulk and potentially avail of special offers or discounts on the purchase of the particular fuel that meets their specific needs.

In Budget 2018, I increased the duration of the fuel allowance season by one week to 27 weeks. This is clearly longer than the winter period in Ireland, and provides assistance during what are largely colder weeks, when heating costs are expected to be at their highest. The current fuel allowance season will, therefore run to the first week in April.

Given the severity of the weather in recent days, last week I announced that all people in receipt of the Fuel Allowance will receive an extra payment of €22.50 in respect of this week.

This is to ensure our customers can be safe and warm at this time. The additional payment will be paid automatically during the week commencing 12th March and will bring Fuel Allowance payment to €45 that week. The extra payment of €22.50 will also be paid to those who have received the Fuel Allowance in lump sum payments.

Under the supplementary welfare allowance scheme, exceptional needs payments may be made to help meet an essential, once-off cost which customers are unable to meet out of their own resources and this may include exceptional heating costs.

The best way to tackle fuel poverty in the long term is to improve the energy efficiency of the dwelling. My Department works closely with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment to help identify people in energy poverty who are living with chronic respiratory conditions so they can avail of the Warmth and Well-being Scheme which aims to make homes warmer and healthier to live in.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

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

249. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a carer's allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10536/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):**

Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care. I confirm that my department received an application for CA from the person concerned on 25 October 2017. Additional information in relation to the person's application was requested by a deciding officer on 26 February 2018.

Once the information is received the application will be processed without delay and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

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

250. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10537/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care. An application for CA was received from the person concerned on 19 February 2018. 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.

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

251. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10538/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** An application for carer's allowance (CA) was received from the person concerned on 28 August 2017. A person can be considered to be providing full-time care and attention where they are engaged in employment, self-employment or on training courses outside the home for a maximum of 15 hours per week, provided that they can show to the satisfaction of a deciding officer that adequate care has been provided for the care recipient in their absence.

As the applicant is engaged in farming the matter was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) on 14 December 2017 to assess the level of care being provided, assess means and confirm that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied.

Once the SWI has reported, a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

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

252. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social

Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10539/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** An application for carer's allowance (CA) was received from the person concerned on 25 September 2017. CA is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care.

A person can be considered to be providing full-time care and attention where they are engaged in employment, self-employment or on training courses outside the home for a maximum of 15 hours per week, provided that they can show to the satisfaction of a deciding officer that adequate care has been provided for the care recipient in their absence.

As the applicant is a self-employed, the matter was referred to a local social welfare inspector (SWI) on 18 January 2018 to assess the level of care being provided, assess means and confirm that all the conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied.

Once the SWI has reported, a decision will be made and the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

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

253. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10540/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I confirm that my department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on the 8 November 2017. It is a condition for receipt of a CA that the person being cared for must have a disability whose effect is that they require full-time care and attention.

This is defined as requiring from another person, continual supervision and frequent assistance throughout the day in connection with normal bodily functions or continual supervision in order to avoid danger to him or herself and likely to require that level of care for at least twelve months.

The evidence submitted in support of this application was examined and the deciding officer decided that this evidence did not indicate that the requirement for full-time care was satisfied.

The person concerned was notified on 27 February 2018 of this decision, the reason for it and of his right of review and appeal.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

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

254. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10541/18]



**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer's allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care. I confirm that my department received an application for carer's allowance (CA) from the person concerned on the 22 November 2017.

Additional information was requested from the person concerned on 27 February 2018. Once the information is received the application will be processed without delay and she will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

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

255. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application for a carer's allowance by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10542/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** An application for carer's allowance (CA) was received from the person concerned on 14 November 2017. CA was awarded to the person concerned on 14 February 2018, with effect from 16 November 2017, and the first payment will issue to the person's nominated post office on 8 March 2018.

Arrears of allowance due from 16 November 2017 to 7 March 2018 will issue shortly.

The person concerned was notified of these details on 14 February 2018.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **State Pension (Contributory)**

256. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if all periods of employment have been taken into consideration in the calculation of a State pension in the case of a person (details supplied); if the full rate is being paid in this instance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10714/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** According to the records of my Department, the person concerned has a social insurance record of 1,821 reckonable contributions and credits. This entitles them to a reduced rate of state pension (contributory), based on an assessed yearly average of 37 contributions, covering the period from July 1967 to end-December 2015. The person does not have recorded contributions for the tax year 1976, for the tax years 1980/81 to 1982/83 inclusive, for the tax year 2006, and for the tax years 2008 to 2015 inclusive. This affects their overall yearly average and, consequently, their rate of pension entitlement.

The person was notified in writing of their pension entitlement on 27 January 2016. Attached to the decision letter was a copy of their social insurance record upon which their pension was calculated. If the person considers that they have additional unrecorded contributions or credits, it is open to them to forward documentary evidence of the missing periods of employment and their pension entitlement will be reviewed.

The person's entitlement to state pension (non-contributory) was also examined. As their entitlement to this pension is at a higher rate, they are currently financially better off to remain on the state pension (non-contributory).

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Jobseeker's Allowance Appeals**

257. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when jobseeker's allowance will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10720/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on the 25th of January 2018. 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 Employment Affairs and 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 Allowance Applications**

258. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason carer's allowance has been refused in the case of a person (details supplied); if eligibility will be reviewed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10721/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer's Allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment, made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to a person who has such a disability that they require that level of care. The person concerned applied for CA on 28 April, 2016. This application was disallowed as it was decided that full-time care and attention was not being provided by the person concerned or required by the person receiving care.

The person concerned appealed this decision to the Social Welfare Appeals Office.

The outcome of this was that the appeal was disallowed. The person concerned was notified of this on 4 April 2017.

Under Social Welfare legislation, the decision of an Appeals Officer is final and conclusive and may only be reviewed in the light of relevant additional evidence or new facts.

My department informs me that, to date, no new application for CA has been received from the person concerned.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### State Pension (Contributory)

259. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the assessment procedure that applies in respect of a qualified adult dependant whose partner is in receipt of a full rate of a State (contributory) pension; the particular assessment that applies to capital including land and or income that the dependent spouse may have; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10744/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Entitlement to an increase for a qualified adult (IQA) on a person's state pension (contributory) is subject to a means test, which assesses weekly income from any source. The increase is only payable where the spouse/civil partner/co-habitant is being wholly or mainly maintained by the claimant. The increase is payable at the maximum rate where the qualified adult's means are assessed at €100 per week or less. Where the weekly means assessed exceed €100, but do not exceed €310, a tapered, reducing IQA scale applies. No IQA is payable where the weekly means is in excess of €310.

The weekly income received by the qualified adult is assessable in full, such as income from employment, self-employment, and income from any other source, including rental income and private or occupational pensions.

Capital held by the qualified adult such as property, savings and investments is also assessed. The method of calculating the weekly income from capital is as follows:

|                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| Amount            | -             |
| First €20,000     | Nil           |
| Next €10,000      | €1 per €1,000 |
| Next €10,000      | €2 per €1,000 |
| Excess of €40,000 | €4 per €1,000 |

It should be noted that the amount of any mortgage or loan outstanding is allowed as a deduction in estimating the net value of the property. Where capital or assets are held jointly by a couple, half the value is taken into account for assessment purposes. Further details about the IQA means assessment are available on the Department's website [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie).

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Departmental Advertising Campaigns

260. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the details of each instance of advertorial content commissioned by her Department and agencies under its remit in the past 12 months; the date this content was published; the purpose of this content; the cost of its publication; the publication or platform on which it was published, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10772/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Set out in the following table are details of each instance of advertorial content commissioned by the Department and also organisations under the remit of the Department, in the past twelve months, including Citizens Information Board, Pensions Authority, Pensions Council, Social Welfare Tribunal and the Low Pay Commission. In summary, there have been two instances of paid advertorial /native content for the Department. In both instances the article appeared online, and clearly stated at the beginning of the article that it was sponsored content. Both also

clearly and prominently displayed the Department's logo.

See further details in the table below:

**Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection**

| Content Publication Date | Purpose   | Cost (inc VAT) | Online Publication |
|--------------------------|---|----------------|--------------------|
| 13/04/2017               | Treatment Benefits for the self-employed Campaign | €6,150         | Journal.ie         |
| 14/08/2017               | Paternity Benefit Awareness Campaign              | €5,237.96      | Joe.ie             |

**Organisations under the remit of the Department**

**Citizens Information Board**

| Content Publication Date | Purpose  | Cost (inc VAT) | Online Publication |
|--------------------------|--|----------------|--------------------|
| 27/01.17                 | To promote the range of information services available and support the public can get from the Citizens Information Service            | €6,150         | Journal.ie         |
| 27.02.17                 | To educate those in mortgage arrears as to the services of Abhaile and help them deal with their mortgage arrears                      | €6,150         | Journal.ie         |
| 22.08.17                 | To educate those in mortgage arrears as to the services of Abhaile and how abhaile can help if they are taken to court by their lender | €6,150         | Journal.ie         |
| 11.09.17                 | To educate those in mortgage arrears as to the services of Abhaile and answer 6 pressing mortgage arrears questions                    | €6,150         | Journal.ie         |

| Content Publication Date | Purpose  | Cost (inc VAT) | Online Publication |
|--------------------------|--|----------------|--------------------|
| 13.11.17                 | To educate those in mortgage arrears as to the services of Abhaile and help them deal with their mortgage arrears                                    | €6,150         | MummyPages.ie      |
| 16.11.17                 | To educate those in mortgage arrears as to the services of Abhaile and help them deal with their mortgage arrears                                    | €4,305         | Joe.ie             |
| 20.11.17                 | To educate those in mortgage arrears as to the services of Abhaile and how Abhaile can help if they are taken to court by their lender               | €6,150         | MummyPages.ie      |
| 21.11.17                 | To educate those in mortgage arrears as to the services of Abhaile and help them deal with their mortgage arrears                                    | €6,150         | Boards.ie          |
| 27.11.17                 | To educate those in mortgage arrears as to the services of Abhaile and particularly how a PIP can help separated couples due to recent court rulings | €6,150         | MummyPages.ie      |
| 27.11.17                 | To educate those in mortgage arrears as to the services of Abhaile and how abhaile can help if they are taken to court by their lender               | €4,305         | Joe.ie             |
| 15.12.17                 | Tips from a MABS advisor on coping with the pressures of Christmas and how to avoid overspending and managing your money                             | €6,150         | Journal.ie         |

Pensions Council - Nil

Social Welfare Tribunal- Nil

Low Pay Commission -Nil

### **Tús Programme**

261. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason for the reduction in the number of schemes (details supplied) in County Cavan; if these cuts will be reversed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10781/18]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Tús is one of a range of supports provided by my Department to cater for long-term unemployed jobseekers and those most distant from the labour market. It provides part-time temporary work in local communities, as a stepping-stone back to employment. However, it is important to note that these placements are not full-time sustainable jobs and are designed to break the cycle of unemployment and maintain work readiness, thereby improving a person's opportunities of returning to the labour market or getting a job for the first time. The scheme commenced operation in 2011 as a response to the high level of unemployment and the large numbers on the Live Register at that time. There are 47 Local Development Companies (LDCs), as well as Údarás na Gaeltachta, involved in the delivery of the Tús programme - known as Implementing bodies (IBs). The Deputy will appreciate that the reduction in the unemployment rate is a factor in recruitment to all programmes. Long-term unemployment is expected to fall further this year in line with the continuing forecasted fall in overall unemployment.

The Deputy will appreciate that given the welcome improvements in the labour market in recent years with reducing numbers of long-term unemployed on the Live Register, which is the target cohort for Tús, it is proving difficult to fill the number of places available nationwide. However, changes were introduced recently to the selection criteria for Tús which should broaden the availability of Tús to a greater number of people on the live register. This includes an increase in the percentage of assisted referrals from 20% to 30%, as well as permitting someone who has had a break of up to 30 days on the Live Register in the past 12 months to be considered eligible for Tús selection.

In the five years since the end of December 2012, there has been a 48% fall in the numbers on the Live Register who are more than 1 year unemployed. In this context the Department is currently engaging with the Irish Local Development Network – the representative body for the IBs.

The Department keeps all aspects of its activation programmes under review to ensure the best outcomes for participants and communities.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Departmental Staff Data**

262. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of persons who work at his Department's offices in Wexford town, County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10523/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** At



the end of January 2018 there were 109 staff members employed in my Department's Newtown Road premises in Wexford. My Department is one of six public bodies currently occupying this building.

### **Housing Adaptation Grant Funding**

263. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when funding for housing adaptation works to local authority dwellings to enable councils commence urgent work will be allocated. [10706/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department provides funding under the Disabled Persons Grants (DPG) scheme to local authorities for adaptations and extensions to the existing social housing stock to meet the needs of local authority tenants. The scheme applies to adaptations that are necessary to address the needs of older people or people with a disability who may require stair-lifts, grab-rails, showers, wet-rooms, ramps, etc. It also provides funding for extensions such as the installation of a downstairs bedroom or bathroom or in the case of overcrowding.

My Department will shortly be issuing a call to all local authorities requesting their funding requirements in respect of the DPG scheme for 2018. It should be noted that works can take place throughout the year to allow for the full utilisation of the annual funding allocation to each local authority and, to facilitate this and to ensure that there is no delay in respect of priority works under the programme, local authorities are allowed to undertake works up to a maximum value of 65% of their previous year's allocation in advance of notification of the current year's allocation.

### **Mayoral Election**

264. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the timeframe for holding plebiscites on a directly elected mayor for Dublin and other cities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10754/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan):** At its meeting of 26 September 2017, the Government agreed, as part of an indicative schedule for a number of referendums over the next 18 months, that a plebiscite on directly elected mayors would take place in October 2018. My Department is prioritising the drafting of the legislation required to give effect to this decision and it is included in the Government's legislation programme as a Bill to be published in the first half of this year.

### **Departmental Advertising Campaigns**

265. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the details of each instance of advertorial content commissioned by his Department and agencies under its remit in the past 12 months; the date this content was published; the purpose of this content; the cost of its publication; the publication or platform on which it was published, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [10776/18]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** There has been no advertorial content commissioned by my Department in the past 12 months.

The details requested in relation to bodies under the aegis of my Department are a matter for the individual bodies concerned. Arrangements have been put in place by each Agency to facilitate the provision of information directly to members of the Oireachtas. The contact email address for each agency is set out in the following table.

|  |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Name                                   | -                               |
| An Bord Pleanála                       | Oireachtasqueries@pleanala.ie   |
| Ervia, Gas Networks Ireland            | oireachtas@ervia.ie             |
| Housing Finance Agency                 | oireachtas.enquiries@hfa.ie     |
| Housing Sustainable Communities Agency | publicreps@housingagency.ie     |
| Irish Water                            | oireachtasmembers@water.ie      |
| Local Government Management Agency     | corporate@lgma.ie.              |
| Ordnance Survey Ireland                | Oireachtas@osi.ie               |
| Property Registration Authority        | reps@prai.ie                    |
| Pyrite Resolution Board                | oireachtasinfo@pyriteboard.ie   |
| Residential Tenancies Board            | OireachtasMembersQueries@rtb.ie |
| Valuation Office                       | reps@valoff.ie                  |

### Foreshore Issues

266. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the regulatory position in regard to seaweed harvesting; and the role of his Department in regulating the activity in accordance with the Foreshore Act 1933. [10814/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** Under the Foreshore Act 1933, as amended, the removal of “beach material” is prohibited from any area within the foreshore. The Act includes a clear definition for “beach material” and it is defined as sand and gravel and other materials, which the definition indicates includes “seaweed whether growing or rooted on the seashore or deposited or washed up thereon by the actions of tides, winds, and waves or any of them”.

Individuals or companies who do not have a right to harvest and are seeking to acquire (harvest) wild algae resources must first obtain a foreshore consent (licence) under the Foreshore Act. A number of such applications were received by my Department and in the course of assessing these licence applications, it has become clear that certain rights to harvest wild seaweed exist.

In this regard, my Department has engaged with the Property Registration Authority (PRA) to attempt to establish the extent of these existing appurtenant rights specified in Land Registry folios to harvest wild seaweed. On foot of this engagement, the PRA has provided my Department with data detailing the extent of the rights in seven of the western seaboard counties, namely Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Clare, Galway, Mayo and Donegal.

My Department has also met with the Attorney General’s Office on several occasions to examine the implications of the interaction between the existing seaweed harvesting rights and the applications for licences by companies. My Department is continuing to work on this complex legal issue and hopes to have made substantial progress in this regard in the second quarter of this year.

### Heritage Sites

267. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to enhance visitor services at the site of the Battle of Vinegar Hill (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10528/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The ruined windmill at Vinegar Hill is in my guardianship as Minister and is managed by the Office of Public Works.

The Battle of Vinegar Hill itself was a very important event in Irish history and my Department recently authorised extensive archaeological investigations on the site to provide a better understanding of how the battle was conducted. The information gleaned from this this research will, in turn, add to and enhance the visitor understanding of the site and their experience.

I appreciate the ongoing involvement and investment by Wexford County Council in promoting the site and the facilities that have been put in place for visitors. My Department will continue to work with the Council and other stakeholders, including the tourism agencies, to increase public awareness and interest in the site.

The Office of Public Works, which is responsible for visitor services at State owned archaeological and historical sites, also offers practical assistance to voluntary groups engaged in heritage tourism initiatives through training and mentoring by its experienced professional guide staff.

### Departmental Staff Remuneration

268. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the severance packages received by individual staff members at principal officer grade and above in her Department and the agencies under its aegis since January 2016, in tabular form [10691/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** I am advised that severance packages received by individual staff members, at Principal Officer grade and above, in my Department and the agencies under its aegis, since January 2016, are as set out in the following table. This payment was in accordance with Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's, Instructions to Personnel Officers – Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil.

| No. | Severance payment |
|-----|-------------------|
| 1   | €60,069           |

### Cúram agus Oideachas na Luath-Óige

269. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** an Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil sé i gceist aici plean cuimsitheach a réiteach i gcomhairle leis an Aire Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Oige chun a chinntiú go mbeidh soláthar cuimsitheach sa Ghaeltacht agus tacaíocht stáit chuí ar fáil do ghréasáin naoilanna, naoínraí agus cúraim iarscoile a oibríonn go hiomlán as Gaeilge; an mbeidh infestíocht á deanamh i dtaighde chun a chinntiú go ndéanfar amhlaidh de réir na gcleachtas idirnáisiúnta is fearr. [10699/18]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Is faoi Údarás na Gaeltachta go príomha a thagann cúram an chórais luathoidreachais Ghaeilge sa Ghaeltacht. Chuir Údarás na Gaeltachta cistíocht ar fiú €535,000 ar fáil do Chomhar Naíonraí na Gaeltachta (CNNG) sa bhliain 2017 agus baintear úsáid as an gciste seo chun tacú le 74 seirbhísí luathoidreachais Gaeltachta a fheidhmíonn faoi scáth CNNG. Tuigtear

dom go bhfuil an t-allúntas céanna ar fáil don eagraíocht i mbliana.

Ós rud é gur eagraíocht neamhspleách reachtúil é Údarás na Gaeltachta, tuigfidh an Teachta gur faoin eagraíocht féin atá sé breithniú a dhéanamh ar chonas an chistíocht a chuirtear ar fáil dó go bliantúil a chur chun fónaimh i gcomhthéacs na gcúramaí atá sainithe dó, lena n-áirítear an córas luathoideachais.

I dteannta leis an gcistíocht thuasluaite, cuireann mo Roinn cúnamh ar fáil chomh maith - idir reatha agus chaipíteal chun tacú le cúrsaí luathoideachais sa Ghaeltacht, trí Scéim Seirbhísí Réamhscoile agus Iarscoile agus tríd an gClár Tacaíochtaí Pobail agus Teanga . Mar thaca tánaisteach don chóras luathoideachais, cuireann an Roinn cúnamh reatha ar fáil don eagraíocht Ghaeltachta, Tuismitheoirí na Gaeltachta, chun cabhrú leo clár gníomhaíochtaí a chur sa tsiúil a thacaíonn le teaghlaigh Ghaeltachta atá ag tógáil clainne le Gaeilge nó a dteastaíonn uathu é sin a dhéanamh. Den chuid is mó, is ar theaghlaigh le páistí ag aois réamhscoile agus bunscoile atá a gcuid gníomhaíochtaí dírithe.

Cé gur ar na ceantair Ghaeltachta is mó atá sé dírithe - mar chuid de thionscnamh faoi leith atá mar thaca breise do theaghlaigh le páistí réamhscoile, dáileann an Roinn beartán tacaíochta teanga a bhfuil ráchairt mhór air fud fad na tíre agus go deimhin níos faide i gcéin.

Chun tacú tuilleadh leis an gcóras luathoideachais i gcomhthéacs fhorfheidhmiú na Straitéise 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010-2030, tá bailchríoch á cur faoi láthair ag mo Roinn, i gcomhar le páirtithe leasmhara lena n-áirítear an Roinn Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige, ar phlean gníomhaíochta don tréimhse 2018-2022. Sa phlean gníomhaíochta seo, leagfar amach bearta faoi leith a chuirfear i bhfeidhm thar shaolré cúig bliana an phlean chun treisiú a dhéanamh ar a bhfuil ar bun cheana féin ar mhaithe le tuilleadh cúraim a dhéanamh d'fheidhmiú céimiúil na Sraitéise agus den Ghaeilge dá réir. Tá sé i gceist go mbeidh bearta faoi leith san áireamh ann a bheidh chun sochair an chórais luathoideachais Ghaeilge sa Ghaeltacht agus ar bhonn náisiúnta.

### **Departmental Advertising Campaigns**

270. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the details of each instance of advertorial content commissioned by her Department and agencies under its remit in the past 12 months; the date this content was published; the purpose of this content; the cost of its publication; the publication or platform on which it was published, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [10769/18]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** In light of the range of enquires being undertaken to ensure a comprehensive response to the matter raised, arrangements are being made for this information to be compiled and forwarded to the Deputy, in accordance with the timelines set out in Standing Orders.