

## 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 11, inclusive, answered orally.*

### Defence Forces Remuneration

12. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the steps being taken to ensure better pay and working conditions for members of the Defence Forces; the steps being taken to ensure appropriate supports are available to current and former members that may be experiencing financial difficulties; if he has satisfied himself that current recruitment methods are sufficient; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1806/19]

23. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the stages for the allowances restoration of pay and conditions for members of the Defence Forces; and the timeframe for restoration. [1855/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 12 and 23 together.

Similar to other sectors in the public service, the pay of Permanent Defence Force personnel was reduced as one of the measures to assist in stabilising national finances during the financial crisis.

Pay is being restored to members of the Defence Forces and other public servants 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 in 2017, following negotiations with PDFORRA, improved pay scales for general service recruits and privates, who joined the Permanent Defence Force post 1 January 2013, were implemented.

The Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020, which has been accepted by the Permanent Defence Force representative associations, provides for increases in pay ranging from 6.2% to 7.4% over the lifetime of the Agreement. The focus of these increases is weighted in favour of those on lower pay. The increases due from 1 January 2018, 1 October 2018 and 1 January 2019 have been paid to Permanent Defence Force personnel. Further increases in pay are scheduled in 2019 and 2020.

By the end of the current Public Service Pay agreement the payscales of all public servants (including members of the Defence Forces), earning under €70,000 per annum, will be restored to pre FEMPI levels. The restoration of the 5% reduction to allowances cut under FEMPI is also

scheduled as part of that agreement.

New entrants who joined the Defence Forces since 2011, can also benefit from the measures which were recently announced in relation to interventions at points 4 and 8 of the relevant pay scales for all such new entrants to the public service. This measure, should it be accepted by the Permanent Defence Force Representative Associations, will be effective from 1 March 2019.

There are many factors and personal circumstances which can give rise to an individual needing support and advice in respect of particular financial difficulties. The Personnel Support Service provides a confidential information, education, support and referral service to Defence Forces personnel and their families, giving access to information and services within and outside the military community.

Like other military organisations, turnover of personnel is higher than that which normally prevails in other sectors. In this context, there is ongoing recruitment and promotion to replace personnel who depart.

The Public Service Pay Commission is currently examining recruitment and retention issues in the Defence sector. This is on foot of an initial submission from the Department which highlighted certain recruitment and retention issues. The Commission's work is on-going. The Government will give due consideration to the findings and recommendations that arise from the work of the Commission.

### **Defence Forces Expenditure**

13. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the details of 2019, 2020 and 2021 financial commitments pursuant to Ireland's participation in PESCO; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1965/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** With regard to defence spending, Government policy is defined within the parameters of our national budgetary process and role of Dáil Éireann. Within the EU, it is accepted that defence and security is a national competence, including national spending on defence and security.

As part of our participation in PESCO, Ireland has committed to regularly increase our defence budgets in real terms. It should be noted that regularly does not mean annually but rather over the medium term. The allocations for defence announced in the budget for 2019 mean that Ireland's defence expenditure will increase in real terms over the coming three years.

Joining PESCO does not involve an additional cost to the Exchequer. Additional costs may arise in respect of participation in specific PESCO projects similar to the case where the Defence Forces participate in European Defence Agency Projects. The projects where Ireland has confirmed our participation relate to the ongoing development of Defence Forces capabilities for peace support and crisis management operations. Costs associated with participation on these projects would be incurred in the normal course and will therefore be met from within the Defence Vote.

In 2018 no additional costs were incurred through PESCO related activities other than costs associated with attendance by Defence Forces Subject Matter Experts at PESCO project planning meetings. This may change across 2019 as capabilities are developed and acquired through the PESCO projects. However, it is expected that sharing the costs of capability development across a number of member States should prove cost neutral in terms of overall projected defence expenditure.

*Question No. 14 answered with Question No. 10.*

*Question No. 15 answered with Question No. 7.*

### **Defence Forces Deployment**

16. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the breakdown of Defence Forces personnel on deployment abroad or on secondment; the details of each mission in 2018; the projected mission of each for 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1809/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** As of 10 January 2019, Ireland is contributing 678 personnel to 9 different missions throughout the world and also to a range of international organisations and National representations.

The UNIFIL mission in Lebanon continues to represent Ireland's largest and most well known overseas deployment with 460 personnel. Until recently, Irish troops served as part of a joint Irish-Finnish Battalion in UNIFIL. The Finnish contingent also included an Estonian Platoon comprising some 36 personnel. Due to other National commitments both Finland and Estonia withdrew from the Irish-Finnish Battalion in UNIFIL in November 2018. As an interim measure, an additional contingent of approximately 106 Defence Forces Personnel have been deployed to the UNIFIL mission to cover the backfilling of the Finnish contingent for a 12 month period. Ireland assumed full duties and responsibilities of IRISHBATT up to November 2019 to allow time for an alternative partner to be sourced.

Efforts to source a partner country to replace the Finnish contingent are progressing well. Poland has expressed an interest in providing a contingent of troops, comprising both Polish and Hungarian personnel, to serve as part of the Irish Battalion in UNIFIL. Consultations will now take place on the specifics of this proposed new arrangement.

The United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in Syria is the second largest mission with 138 personnel. Since its establishment in 1974, UNDOF has been a successful mission in supporting the efforts of the international community both in the Golan Heights and in the Middle East region. A contingent of the Permanent Defence Force has been deployed to the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) since 2013.

In March 2018, the UNDOF Headquarters returned to Camp Faouar on the Syrian side of the area of separation and the Chief of Staff UNDOF, Colonel Michael Dawson, together with seven other members of the Defence Forces moved with the headquarters. The main Irish contingent, comprising a Force Reserve Company of some 130 personnel, completed their relocation to Camp Faouar in September 2018. Their role includes the provision of a Quick Reaction Force which is on standby to assist with the on-going operations within the UNDOF area of responsibility. The Irish Infantry Group is also tasked with carrying out patrols and convey escorts as necessary.

The Naval Service deployed 2 naval vessels to Operation Sophia, the EU Common Security and Defence Policy operation in the Mediterranean, during 2018. While there is currently no Irish ship deployed to the Operation, Defence Forces personnel continue to occupy three posts in the Operational Headquarters in Rome and two in the Force Headquarters at sea. Ireland's participation in Operation Sophia in 2019 is currently being considered and a decision will be taken on the matter following a full review of 2018 deployments.

Ireland has participated in the EU Training Mission in Mali since the mission was launched

in 2013. Ireland contributed 20 Defence Forces personnel to this mission in 2018 and the intention is that our contribution will remain at this level in 2019. In addition, consideration is being given to the deployment of a small contingent of Army Ranger Wing personnel to the MINUSMA mission in Mali during 2019. These considerations are at a very early stage and will require further detailed analysis and planning in addition to Government approval, in advance of any proposed deployment.

Defence Forces personnel were also deployed during 2018 to the following missions:

**UNTSO**, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation mission in Israel and Syria - 12 personnel;

**MINURSO**, the United Nations Mission for the referendum in Western Sahara - 3 personnel;

**MONUSCO**, the United Nations Stabilisation mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo - 4 personnel;

**EUFOR**, the EU led operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina - 5 personnel; and

**KFOR**, the International Security Presence in Kosovo - 12 personnel.

The Defence Forces will continue to participate in these missions in 2019.

One member of the Defence Forces is currently on secondment with the UN Office of Military Affairs in New York and, as part of Ireland's participation in Partnership for Peace, a member of the Defence Forces is serving in the role of Gender Adviser to the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative on Women, Peace and Security. Defence Forces Personnel also serve as military advisors, representatives and staff officers with the OSCE, the EU, UN and NATO/Partnership for Peace.

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 Strength**

17. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the target date to reach the allowed establishment figure of 9,500 Defence Forces personnel as outlined in A Programme for A Partnership Government. [1804/19]

19. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the Defence Forces will achieve their establishment strength of 9,500 during 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1859/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 17 and 19 together.

The Government remains committed to achieving the strength target of at least 9,500 personnel for the Permanent Defence Force (PDF). There are a number of factors, some of which are hard to predict, which will impact on the timeframe within which this will be achieved. As at 31 December 2018, the most current figures provided by the military authorities, the whole time equivalent strength of the Permanent Defence Force was just below 9,000 personnel, 8,957

to be exact.

Recently, I met with senior civil and military officials to review recruitment plans for 2019. A range of options to enhance recruitment were considered. The target for inductions in 2019 is approximately 800 personnel. As outlined, the precise net gain in strength will be dependent on a variety of factors. This includes the number of trained personnel that depart, the achievement of recruitment targets and the number of trainees that successfully complete training. This can vary year on year.

I have acknowledged that challenges do exist in recruiting and retaining some specialists such as Pilots, Air Traffic Controllers, and certain Technicians. These specialist can prove difficult to retain where, as in the current economic environment and jobs market, there are demands for such specialists in other sectors. I understand that this is a challenge being faced by military forces elsewhere and is not confined to Ireland.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Public Service Pay Commission has been tasked with examining recruitment and retention issues in the Defence Sector. This work is underway and when the Public Commissions reports, its findings will be considered at that point.

In addition to traditional recruitment methods, a range of alternative recruitment approaches are being developed, aimed at addressing such vacancies in specialist areas. A scheme has been introduced which permits former Officers with specialist skills to re-enter the Permanent Defence Force and arrangements are in train to provide a similar scheme for former enlisted personnel.

Currently there is direct entry provision for those with professional qualifications which is utilised for the recruitment of Medical Officers and Engineers. A working group is examining the scope for greater use of such direct entry recruitment for certain specialist positions.

With regard to other retention measures, there are a range of actions outlined in the White Paper on Defence (2015) which are aimed at enhancing the capabilities of the Defence Forces. These include HR initiatives which impact on retention such as providing career development opportunities and accreditation. The criteria for extending service beyond twelve years have been revised and this has ensured that personnel who would have had to depart could remain. An examination of age profiles for enlisted personnel has been prioritised and this is being progressed. In addition, the military authorities have introduced further initiatives to enhance work-life balance and this is also to be welcomed.

The Government is committed to retaining the capacity of the Defence Forces to operate effectively across all roles and to undertake the tasks laid down by Government both at home and overseas.

### **Naval Service Operations**

18. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he has had discussions with senior officers in the Naval Service in regard to the fact that the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority has significant concerns in regard to the potential negative impact on Ireland's fishery protection through a decrease in the seagoing effort of the Naval Service; if so, the outcome of those discussions; and the next steps decided on to address those concerns. [1958/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** My priority as Minister with Responsibility for Defence is to ensure that the operational capability of the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service, is maintained to the greatest extent possible so as to enable

the Defence Forces to carry out their roles as assigned by Government.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Naval Service is the State's principal sea-going agency tasked with a variety of defence and other roles. While the main day to day role of the Naval Service is to provide a fishery protection service in accordance with the State's obligations as a member of the European Union, it also carries out a number of other non-fishery related tasks including a significant security role. By its nature, often that security role goes unrecognised or unacknowledged, but it is vital to Ireland's national priorities and interests.

In relation to its sea-fishery protection role, the Sea-Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006 established the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) as the competent Authority for securing efficient and effective enforcement of sea fisheries protection legislation and the sustainable exploitation of marine fish resources from the waters around Ireland. A Service Level Agreement is in place which underpins the relationship between the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority and the Defence Organisation. This Agreement provides for the development of an Annual Control Plan and for agreed reporting and training arrangements. The agreement also provides a forum for sharing information between parties and for dealing with fishery control and enforcement issues.

As Minister with responsibility for Defence, I regularly speak with the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces. I have spoken with him about the staffing challenges faced by the Naval Service at present. While my Department's Annual Report for 2018 is not finalised yet, I am advised by the Military Authorities that the Naval Service conducted 1,076 fishery protection patrol days in 2018 which is 99% of the target agreed with the SFPA.

My officials, members of the Naval Service and the Air Corps, continue to meet with officials of the SFPA at formal and informal meetings and enjoy a good collaborative working relationship in relation to sea-fishery protection matters. This close working relationship will continue in 2019.

*Question No. 19 answered with Question No. 17.*

### **Defence Forces Deployment**

20. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the status of the proposed plans to send the Army Ranger Wing to Mali on peacekeeping duties; the reason for this possible deployment; if their deployment has come at the request of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2007/19]

25. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the role envisaged for the Army Ranger Wing in Mali; and the person or body that suggested that the Rangers should be deployed in Mali. [1961/19]

32. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if it is planned that the Army Ranger Wing will be empowered to use force if deployed to Mali. [1962/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 20, 25 and 32 together.

Ireland has participated in the EU Training Mission in Mali since the mission was launched in 2013. Currently, Ireland is contributing twenty (20) Defence Force personnel to this mission. EUTM Mali is part of a wider EU effort in support of international peace and security in the wider Sahel region. The mission is being undertaken at the request of the Malian Government

and has the support of a UN Security Council Resolution.

I was delighted to have an opportunity to visit the region recently with the Taoiseach and to meet with Irish troops deployed on the EUTM mission.

As Deputies will appreciate, potential overseas missions are considered on an ongoing basis. Ireland currently has no Defence Forces personnel deployed to the UN mandated MINUSMA mission. However, the option to deploy a small contingent of Army Ranger Wing personnel within a larger German contingent, currently serving with the MINUSMA mission, will open up later this year. A potential deployment in this regard is currently being considered.

I should point out that we are currently in the very early information gathering stage in considering this mission. This involves getting detailed information on the mission and its operations, consideration of the possible role which the Defence Forces may be able to undertake in the mission, how such a deployment fits with Defence Forces capabilities having regard to existing and potential commitments at home and overseas and a detailed threat analysis and assessment. This process has only just commenced and will take a period of time to reach a conclusion. On foot of the respective military and policy advice arising from this process, I will then consider the matter. I should emphasise that no decision has been taken yet and there is some way to go in the process before we reach that point.

The MINUSMA mission is authorised under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. In that regard, the use of lethal force is authorised in accordance with the terms of the missions Rules of Engagement. The Rules of Engagement for MINUSMA is one of the issues which will also be examined as part of the analysis and consideration of deployment to the mission. I should point out the Defence Forces deployed to a wide range of missions, including UNIFIL and UNDOF, are authorised to use lethal force in accordance with the Rules of Engagement of those missions.

## **Defence Forces Operations**

21. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the key decisions made at the Foreign Affairs Council on 19 November 2018 in relation to PESCO, Civilian Common Security and Defence and the European Defence Fund; and the impact of each of same on Ireland. [1802/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) meeting of Defence Ministers was held in Brussels on 19th and 20th November last. There was a joint session between Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministers on the afternoon of Monday 19th, and two sessions with Defence Ministers the following morning.

Altogether there were three working sessions over the course of the meeting, chaired by the High Representative, Ms Federica Mogherini. The three sessions dealt with a range of ongoing developments in relation to EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP); specifically the way forward for the recent defence initiatives at EU-level and consideration of the EU's CSDP missions and operations.

The Council Conclusions agreed on 19th November outline the key outcomes of the meeting. These include; the Civilian CSDP Compact, a review of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability, PESCO, CARD, and the European Defence Fund (EDF).

In relation to PESCO, the Council Conclusions highlighted positive progress to date and the ongoing discussions around Third State participation in PESCO. The adoption of the Council

Decision establishing the second tranche of PESCO projects was also included. Ireland participates in 2 projects and is an observer in 6 PESCO projects.

Ireland played a central role in the preparation and agreement of the Civilian CSDP Compact, which is a vital element in the implementation of all strands of the EU's Global Strategy. The Council Conclusions welcomed the agreement on the establishment of the Civilian CSDP Compact. As part of our own commitment to the process, in 2018 the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade commissioned a mapping exercise to establish best practice across Member States so that we can enhance our own recruitment, training and deployment processes.

In the Conclusions the Council adopted its position on the EDF (partial general approach). The objective is to strengthen the global competitiveness and innovation capacity of the EU's defence technological and industrial base. The Council Conclusions also agreed to support, in particular, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in this space.

I welcome the progress made in relation to EU defence and security, and acknowledge that the security of the EU depends on our joint cooperation with our EU partners. Outcomes of the November FAC will inform the work of the EU in the area of security and defence for the coming year. Ireland will continue to engage in the EU's defence and security initiatives as they progress throughout 2019.

### **Defence Forces Operations**

22. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his views on whether Irish involvement in PESCO and a change of direction of the Defence Forces will undermine the training work being carried out by Irish troops as highlighted and praised by the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence on his recent visit to Mali. [1856/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** Firstly I would like to add my praise and thanks to those expressed by an Taoiseach during our recent visit to Mali. Irish Defence Forces personnel participating in the EU training mission there are making an important and valuable contribution to both regional and international peace and security through their efforts on the mission. It is with great pride and respect that I acknowledge the ongoing work of all our Defence Forces personnel serving overseas.

Let me be clear, Ireland's participation in PESCO does not represent a change of direction of the Defence Forces. The establishment of PESCO represents a further development in EU Co-operation in support of international peace and security under Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), while national decision-making maintains precedence in terms of defence and security matters.

Our Defence Forces and the wider Defence Organisation continue, and will continue, to make an invaluable contribution to international peace and security, and conflict resolution. This is achieved through their ongoing and professional engagement with the EU, the UN, NATO, the OSCE and other international engagements within a bilateral context.

Within the EU, it is accepted that defence and security is a national competence and that any decisions, including any deepening of EU cooperation, require unanimity. Fully participating in developments at EU level ensures that Ireland continues to have a voice and to influence the evolution of EU defence and security policy.

The participation criteria for PESCO expressly stipulate that PESCO will be undertaken in full compliance with the Treaty on European Union and the associated protocols and will re-

spect the Member States constitutional provisions. It is also important to note that participation in each project is on an “opt in” basis and is therefore entirely voluntary.

Ireland strongly supports the role of the European Union in peacekeeping and crisis management operations and initiatives which enhance deployability and deployment on operations are essential to this. Under PESCO, Member States will come together in different groups to develop and make available additional capabilities and enablers for peacekeeping and crisis management operations.

PESCO will also enable our Defence Forces to further develop their capabilities in support of peacekeeping through participation in joint projects with like-minded partners. Joint projects should also drive down the costs of developing and procuring capabilities.

Through participation in all aspects of CSDP, including PESCO, Ireland has been able to influence the overall direction of CSDP, in particular ensuring recognition by the EU of the UN as its key strategic partner and ongoing support for the UN and multilateralism. Participation in PESCO will continue to be important in fostering that influence.

*Question No. 23 answered with Question No. 12.*

### **Defence Forces Medicinal Products**

24. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the actions taken on foot of the two reports of the working group on Lariam. [1800/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** A Malaria Chemoprophylaxis Working Group was established in January 2011 and reported in April 2013. The Group was re-convened in August 2015 and reported in October 2017. The purpose of the Group was to review, inter alia, issues arising in relation to the use of Lariam, particularly in the context of the current and potential litigation.

The re-convened Working Group’s recommendations focus on a number of different areas including planning, training and education/information sharing as well as the establishment of a Medical Advisory Group. This will formalise the provision of on-going expert medical advice, including external expert medical advice, to the Defence Forces in relation to a range of medical matters including chemoprophylaxis.

I have accepted these recommendations and have established an Implementation Group. This Implementation Group has recently met and is progressing its work.

*Question No. 25 answered with Question No. 20.*

### **Defence Forces Operations**

26. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the details of PESCO projects to which Ireland has committed as participant or observer; the budgets for each project; the personnel involved; the commitments given; the timeline for each; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1966/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The establishment of Permanent Structure Cooperation (PESCO) represents a further development in EU Cooperation in support of international peace and security under CSDP. Under PESCO, Mem-

ber States will come together in different groups to develop and make available additional capabilities and enablers for peacekeeping and crisis management operations.

Ireland is currently participating in the following two projects:

**The European Union Training Mission Competence Centre** – The project will improve the availability, interoperability, specific skills and professionalism of personnel (trainers) for EU training missions across participating Member States. Moreover, it will accelerate the provision for EU training missions due to a higher situational awareness regarding trained, educated and available personnel for current and future EU training missions.

**Upgrade of Maritime Surveillance Systems** – This project will integrate land-based surveillance systems, maritime and air platforms in order to distribute real time information to Member States, so as to provide timely and effective response in the international waters. The main objective of the program is to enhance the Maritime Surveillance, Situational Awareness and potential Response Effectiveness of the EU, by using the existing infrastructure, deploying assets and developing related capabilities in the future. It aims to address timely and effectively new and old threats and challenges (such as energy security, environmental challenges, security and defence aspects); thus ensuring accurate Awareness and Rapid Response, so as to contribute to the protection of the EU and its citizens.

Ireland is an observer on the following projects:

**Maritime (Semi) Autonomous Systems for Mine Countermeasures** will deliver a world-class mix of (semi-) autonomous underwater, surface and aerial technologies for maritime mine countermeasures. This project will enable Member States to protect maritime vessels, harbours and off shore installations, and to safeguard freedom of navigation on maritime trading routes.

**Cyber Threats and Incident Response Information Sharing Platform** will develop more active responses and defences to cyber threats. This project also aims to help mitigate these risks by focusing on the sharing of cyber threat intelligence through a networked Member State platform, with the aim of strengthening nations' cyber defence capabilities.

**Energy Operational Function** based on lessons learnt from recent operations, this project has two objectives. It aims at developing new systems of energy supply for camps deployed in the framework of joint operations and for soldier connected devices and equipment. It also aims at ensuring that the implications for energy are taken into account in capability development planning and implementation as well as operational planning.

**European Software Defined Radio** aims to develop common technologies for European military radios. The adoption of these technologies as a standard will guarantee the interoperability of EU forces in the framework of joint operations, regardless which radio platforms are used, thereby reinforcing the European strategic autonomy.

**Deployable Military Disaster Relief Capability** will deliver a multi-national specialist military package for the assistance to EU and other States, which can be deployed within both EU-led and non EU-led operations. The new EU capability will manage a range of emergencies including natural disasters, civil emergencies, and pandemics. This project aims to include the establishment of a new EU Disaster Relief Training Centre of Excellence, and ultimately a Disaster Relief Deployable Headquarters.

**Military Mobility** will support Member States' commitment to simplify and standardise cross-border military transport procedures. It aims to enhance the speed of movement military forces across Europe. It also aims to guarantee the unhindered movement of military personnel and assets within the borders of the EU. This entails avoiding long bureaucratic procedures to

move through or over EU Member States, be it via rail, road air or sea.

**EU Radionavigation Solution (EURAS)** is to promote development of EU military PNT (positioning, navigation and timing) capabilities and future cooperation taking advantage of Galileo and the public regulated service.

**Counter Unmanned Aerial System** aim is to develop an advanced and efficient system to counter the threat posed by Unmanned Aerial Systems. It aims to deliver protection for personnel.

The above projects are still in the early stages of development and accordingly the budgets and timeline for participant's involvement has not yet been fully determined. In any event, there would be no financial impact for Ireland in relation to the eight projects where we are observers. A representative from the relevant Directorate or Service within the Defence Forces attend each of the project meetings. Ireland's commitment at this time is through our attendance at meetings as the projects progress.

## Gender Equality

27. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if a comprehensive audit or survey of women's experience of bullying, harassment and inequality in the Defence Forces is planned with a view to exploring women's experience of same and making relevant recommendations for change. [1959/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The Government is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for men and women throughout the Defence Forces and to the full participation by women in all aspects of Defence Forces activities. This is underlined by a commitment in the Programme for Government to increase the level of female participation in the Defence Forces. The Defence Forces Dignity Charter states that the Defence Forces are committed to maintaining a work environment, whether within the State or when deployed overseas, that encourages the right of each individual to dignity in their work environment and in all activities of their service.

The Dignity Charter also states that bullying, sexual harassment and harassment in any form is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. I am fully committed to this and have outlined on many occasions that such behaviour is completely unacceptable. Complaints relating to incidents of inappropriate behaviour may be lodged under the provisions of Administrative Instruction A.7. Reports relating to incidents of this nature are provided to me by the Chief of Staff on a regular basis.

The Defence Forces are committed to gender equality and employ a gender perspective in all policies and regulations. Military Gender Advisors are employed by the Defence Forces to provide education on gender perspective and in the context of overseas service, awareness of gender based violence in conflict and other settings. A Gender Advisor has also been appointed to promote gender equality policies and training within the Defence Forces.

Unlike some other national armed forces, the Defence Forces have no restrictions with regard to the assignment of men or women to the full range of operational and administrative duties. Women, therefore, play a full and meaningful role in all aspects of Defence Forces operations at home and overseas. In line with the Programme for Government commitment to increase the level of female participation, special consideration is paid to women as a target group for recruitment and within the general recruitment framework, there are specific initiatives which focus on potential female recruits such as female-focused advertising, creation of

female specific recruitment videos and targeted social media advertising. Between 2016 and 2017 some €180,000 was spent on such female-focused recruitment.

Over the lifetime of the White Paper further projects will be progressed to ensure that the development and promotion of strategies that support female participation in the Defence Forces is continued. Such projects include:-

- Development of further initiatives to encourage more women to apply for the Defence Forces and to increase female participation at all ranks.
- Conduct of a survey to identify any impediments to the advancement of women in the PDF.

### **Defence Forces Operations**

28. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if his attention has been drawn to claims that shortages of officers in the Defence Forces have resulted in bomb disposal experts and marine engineers having to work 65 and 70 hours a week, respectively, without overtime; the measures being taken to address this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1862/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The Government is committed to retaining the capacity of the Defence Forces to operate effectively across all roles and to undertake the tasks laid down by Government both at home and overseas.

In this context, recruitment efforts for the Permanent Defence Force are ongoing and continue to be a priority. There were several significant recruitment initiatives throughout 2018 in the Permanent Defence Force, at both enlisted and officer level. Similar recruitment is planned for 2019.

Unlike other areas of the Public Service and due to the nature of the duties performed, overtime or shift allowances are not available to members of the Defence Forces. In its place a Military Service Allowance is paid to all ranks up to the level of Colonel. Military Service Allowance is designed to compensate for the special disadvantages associated with military life. Certain duties performed by Defence Forces personnel attract other additional allowances e.g. Security Duty Allowance and EOD Duty Allowance.

For reasons of operational security, it would be inappropriate for me to comment further on the disposition and specifics relating to hours worked on Explosive Ordnance Disposal duties. Furthermore, as these matters are currently the subject of litigation I am similarly not in a position to comment on same.

The Government has committed to amend the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997. The Department of Defence and Military management have been working closely to progress its implementation.

### **Defence Forces Strength**

29. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which the strength of the Defence Forces remains in keeping with targets and projections; if corrective measures are required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1968/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The whole time

equivalent (WTE) strength of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF), as of as of 31 December 2018 (the latest date for which figures are available), is 8,957.

The Government remains committed to returning to, and maintaining, the agreed strength of the Permanent Defence Force at 9,500 personnel as set out in the White Paper on Defence (2015).

In order to achieve this target, significant recruitment continued in 2018 consisting of two general service recruitment campaigns and competitions for Cadets, Apprentices and Instrumentalists, with other intake from direct entry streams. This has resulted in over 611 personnel being inducted into the PDF in 2018. This figure does not include 15 members of the PDF who were awarded a cadetship last year.

Recently, I met with senior civil and military officials to review recruitment plans for 2019 and I can confirm that, subject to further consideration, similar recruitment competitions to those held in 2018 will take place in 2019. 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 some 800 personnel.

A range of alternative recruitment approaches are being developed, aimed at addressing certain specialist vacancies. These would include a scheme which now permits former Officers with specialist skills to re-enter the Permanent Defence Force and arrangements are in train to provide a similar scheme for former enlisted personnel. In addition a working group is currently examining the scope for greater use of direct entry recruitment for certain specialist positions.

The Government is committed to retaining the capacity of the Defence Forces to operate effectively across all roles and to undertake the tasks laid down by Government, both at home and abroad.

### **Overseas Missions**

30. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which participation by the Defence Forces in international missions is envisaged in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1967/19]

34. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if there have been proposed new military operations or peacekeeping operations in the near future that will see the deployment of Defence Forces personnel overseas in view of his comments that it is a stated ambition to double Ireland's global impact and footprint by 2025 and that military and peacekeeping operations play a role in this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2008/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 30 and 34 together.

As of 10 January 2019, Ireland is contributing 678 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 Defence Forces personnel are currently deployed is the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) with 460 personnel and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in Syria with 138 personnel. The UNIFIL mission in Lebanon continues to represent Ireland's largest overseas deployment.

Until recently, Irish troops served as part of a joint Irish-Finnish Battalion in UNIFIL. The

Finnish contingent also included an Estonian Platoon comprising some 36 personnel. Due to other National commitments both Finland and Estonia withdrew from the Irish-Finnish Battalion in UNIFIL in November 2018.

As an interim measure, an additional contingent of approximately 106 Defence Forces Personnel have been deployed to the UNIFIL mission to cover the backfilling of the Finnish contingent for a 12 month period. This additional commitment will continue throughout 2019 as Ireland has assumed full duties and responsibilities of IRISHBATT up to November 2019. Discussions are advancing with an alternative partner for this mission.

Full details of all personnel currently serving overseas are shown in the following tabular statement.

With regard to the deployment of Defence Forces personnel to new military operations overseas, the deployment of a small contingent of Army Ranger Wing personnel to the MINUSMA mission in Mali is under active consideration for 2019. MINUSMA is the UN mission providing support to the Malian Government in reasserting its authority over northern Mali. I must stress, however, that these considerations are at a very early stage and further detailed analysis and planning will be required in advance of seeking Government approval for a deployment.

The Department of Defence constantly reviews the deployment 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.

“Global Footprint to 2025”, is the Government’s initiative to double the scope and impact of Ireland’s global footprint in the period to 2025. It represents an ambitious renewal and expansion of Ireland’s international presence in terms of diplomacy, culture, business, overseas aid, tourism and trade. The initiative acknowledges the important role of the Defence Forces and security personnel serving on international assignments, in advancing these priorities for Ireland. It also acknowledges Ireland’s longstanding tradition of international engagement in support of peace, security, justice and equality and reaffirms our commitment to maintaining and developing support for humanitarian and peacekeeping missions under the auspices of the UN and the EU.

Ireland has always been a strong supporter of the United Nations and UN Peacekeeping. Our commitment and support for the primary role of the United Nations, in the maintenance of international peace and security, is expressed in Ireland’s long-standing tradition of participating in UN peacekeeping operations. This commitment is also expressed in our engagement in the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)

**MEMBERS OF THE PERMANENT DEFENCE FORCE SERVING OVERSEAS**

**AS OF 10 JANUARY 2019**

UN MISSIONS	
UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) HQUNIFIL 112th Infantry BattalionUNIFIL Sector West HQ	94438
UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation) Israel & Syria	12
MINURSO (United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara)	3

UN MISSIONS	
MONUSCO (United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic of the Congo)	4
UNDOF (COS Staff/FHQ Staff - Camp Faouar - Bravo side)UNDOF 58th Infantry Group (Camp Faouar - Bravo side)	8130
TOTAL	617
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
Naval Service EU Mission (Op Sophia) Operational HQ/ Floating HQ (Operation Sophia HQ - 3 in OHQ & 2 in FHQ)	5
TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONNEL SERVING WITH UN MISSIONS	659
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	5
MILITARY REPRESENTATIVES/ADVISERS/STAFF	
Military Adviser, Permanent Mission to UN, New York	1
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	3
Joint Technical Group for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (JTGDDR) in Mozambique (part time basis)	1
TOTAL NUMBER OF DEFENCE FORCES PERSONNEL SERVING OVERSEAS	678

### Army Barracks

31. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to introduce a new Army barracks in counties Cavan and Monaghan or the greater Border region in view of Brexit and in further view of recent developments and the possible reintroduction of a hard border; if such a move is included in contingency plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1814/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe) (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** As part of a whole of Government approach, my Department continues to engage in forward planning with the other Departments involved in addressing all issues relevant to the UK's decision to leave the European Union. This engagement involves the identification of key strategic, operational and policy issues arising from Brexit.

As I have outlined previously, the UK's decision to leave the EU does not of itself give rise to additional border control requirements. Furthermore, the avoidance of a hard border on the island is fundamental to the Brexit agreement reached in November last between the EU and the UK Government, and there can be no change to the commitments made in that agreement. As such, there are no plans for a new Army barracks in counties Cavan and Monaghan or the greater Border region.

Furthermore, it is important to note that primary responsibility for the internal security of the State rests with the Minister for Justice and Equality and An Garda Síochána. Accordingly, responsibility for the security aspect of border control rests with An Garda Síochána, while the Revenue Commissioners also have responsibilities relating to their particular mandate.

Among the roles assigned to the Defence Forces in the White Paper on Defence is the provision of Aid to the Civil Power which, in practice, means to provide assistance and support to An Garda Síochána when requested to do so. The Defence Forces also provide support to the Revenue Commissioners, again, when requested to do so.

There is ongoing close liaison between An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces regarding security matters and regular coordination and liaison meetings take place. My Department continues to monitor the ongoing situation to ensure that both it and the Defence Forces are fully prepared to address any potential issues that might arise in the defence area as a consequence of Brexit.

*Question No. 32 answered with Question No. 20.*

### **Defence Forces Deployment**

33. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if the Defence Forces expect a greater deployment of its fleet in the provision of fisheries protection missions in 2019 following Brexit; the planning his Department and the Defence Forces have undertaken in this regard; his views on whether two CN 235 Casa aircraft operated by the Air Corps will be sufficient to complete the tasks required; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [1810/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** My priority as Minister with Responsibility for Defence is to ensure that the operational capability of the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service, is maintained to the greatest extent possible so as to enable the Defence Forces to carry out their roles as assigned by Government.

While the primary day-to-day tasking of the Naval Service in Ireland is to provide a fishery protection service in accordance with the State's fishery protection legislation and our obligations as a member of the European Union, when on patrol Naval Service vessels are multi-tasked in the sense that they also undertake general surveillance, security and other duties.

In relation to this sea-fishery protection role, the Sea-Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act 2006 established the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) as the competent Authority for securing efficient and effective enforcement of sea fisheries protection legislation and

the sustainable exploitation of marine fish resources from the waters around Ireland. A Service Level Agreement is in place which underpins the relationship between the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority and the Defence Organisation. This Agreement provides for the development of an Annual Control Plan and for agreed reporting and training arrangements. The Agreement also provides a forum for sharing information between parties and for dealing with fishery control and enforcement issues.

My officials, members of the Naval Service and the Air Corps, continue to meet with officials of the SFPA at formal and informal meetings and enjoy a good collaborative working relationship in relation to sea-fishery protection matters. My officials also meet regularly with officials from the Department of Agriculture and the Marine, which is the parent Department of the SFPA. These close working relationships will continue in 2019.

With regard to the fleet, the White Paper on Defence 2015 underpins the on-going replacement of the Naval Service fleet which has enjoyed a significant investment in the new ships programme of over €250 million since 2010. The Naval Service accepted delivery of the newest ship, to be named LÉ George Bernard Shaw, in late 2018.

The Government is also investing in updating the Air Corps fleet of aircraft with the replacement of the existing Cessna aircraft with three larger and more capable fixed wing utility Pilatus PC 12 aircraft which are being equipped for ISTAR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance). Delivery of these aircraft will start later this year and conclude in 2020.

The White Paper on Defence 2015 also provides for the replacement of the two CASA 235 Maritime Patrol Aircraft with consideration of their replacement with larger more suitable aircraft, which would enhance maritime surveillance and provide a greater degree of utility for transport and cargo carrying tasks. A public tender competition for the replacement of the CASA Maritime Patrol Aircraft is underway in my Department at present, following the publication of a Request for Proposals on the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) in May, 2018.

As I have previously outlined to the House, the UK decision to exit from the EU does not of itself give rise to greater responsibilities for the Defence Forces. Prudent planning in relation to all situations that may require a Defence Forces response, including fishery protection, is undertaken by the Defence Forces in the normal course.

I am satisfied that the Defence Forces have the necessary modern and effective range of equipment available to them which is in line with best international standards in order to fulfil all roles assigned to them by Government.

*Question No. 34 answered with Question No. 30.*

## **Gender Balance**

35. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which gender balance remains an objective in the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2094/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** As of 31 December 2018, the strength of the Permanent Defence Force stood at 8,957 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) personnel. Of this some 6.7%, or 601 personnel, were female broken down as follows:

- Army: 499 Female Personnel
- Air Corps: 34 Female Personnel
- Naval Service: 68 Female Personnel

The Government is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for men and women throughout the Defence Forces and to the full participation by women in all aspects of Defence Forces activities. This is underlined by a commitment in the Programme for Government to increase the level of female participation in the Defence Forces.

Unlike some other national armed forces, the Defence Forces have no restrictions with regard to the assignment of men or women to the full range of operational and administrative duties. Women, therefore, play a full and meaningful role in all aspects of Defence Forces operations at home and overseas.

In line with these policies and commitments, a number of initiatives have been implemented to increase the level of female participation in the Defence Forces. For example:

- Special consideration is paid to women as a target group for recruitment and within the general recruitment framework. There are specific initiatives which focus on potential female recruits such as female-focused advertising, visits to female schools by Defence Forces personnel, creation of female specific recruitment videos and targeted social media advertising.

- The introduction of best practices in recruitment such as the adjustment of physical standards for female applicants and a balanced composition between men and women on recruitment and selection boards.

- A Gender Advisor has been appointed to promote gender equality policies and training within the Defence Forces. The Defence Forces are committed to gender equality and employ a gender perspective in all policies and regulations.

Over the lifetime of the White Paper, further projects will be progressed to ensure the development and promotion of strategies that continue to support increased female participation in the Defence Forces.

### **Defence Forces Recruitment**

36. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of vacant promotional positions waiting to be filled throughout the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2095/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The manpower requirement of the Defence Forces is monitored on an on-going basis in accordance with the operational requirements of each of the three services. In this regard, promotions are ongoing within the officer ranks in order to fill rank vacancies. It is my intention that targeted recruitment along with promotions will continue to be carried out.

The following table outlines the promotional posts vacant within the PDF, as at 31st December 2018, the latest date for which such figures are available.

**PDF vacancies as at 31 December 2018**

Col	Lt Col	Comdt	Captain	BSM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	Sgt	Cpl
1	10	9	96	1	1	10	0	170	197

**Note: Equivalent Naval Service Ranks**

Colonel/Captain

Lieutenant Colonel/Commander

Commandant/Lieutenant Commander

Captain/Lieutenant (NS)

Sergeant Major/Warrant Officer

Battalion Quartermaster Sergeant/Senior Chief Petty Officer

Company Quartermaster Sergeant/Senior Petty Officer

Company Sergeant/Chief Petty Officer

Sergeant/Petty Officer

Corporal/Leading Seaman

**Defence Forces Representative Organisations**

37. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which he remains in contact with representational groups within the Defence Forces with a view to maintaining positive dialogue on issues of mutual concern; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2096/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The Defence (Amendment) Act 1990 and Defence Force Regulations S6 provided for the establishment of representative associations for members of the Permanent Defence Force. The associations that have since been established are RACO (for commissioned officers) and PDFORRA (for enlisted personnel).

The scheme of Conciliation and Arbitration (C&A) for members of the Permanent Defence Force provides a formal mechanism for the determination of claims and proposals from the Permanent Defence Force Representative Associations relating to remuneration and conditions of service.

Since my appointment as Minister with responsibility for Defence, I have met with representatives from RACO and PDFORRA on a number of occasions, both formally and informally. I attended the PDFORRA Annual Delegate Conference which took place last October and in November 2018 I attended the RACO Annual Delegate Conference.

There is ongoing engagement on a regular basis between the Official side and the Representative sides through various Council and Council Sub-committees on a range of items which are processed through the auspices of the Defence Forces Conciliation & Arbitration Scheme. Officials in the Department of Defence keep me briefed of developments.

## **Defence Forces Equipment**

38. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the degree to which ongoing updating of military equipment including vehicles and communication systems continues throughout the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2097/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** My priority as Minister with Responsibility for Defence is to ensure that the operational capability of the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service, is maintained to the greatest extent possible to enable the Defence Forces to carry out their roles as assigned by Government.

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 are considered in the context of the White Paper on Defence as part of the capability development and equipment priorities planning process. 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, including response to security risks and other emergencies, both at home and overseas.

The mid-life upgrade programme for the Army's fleet of eighty MOWAG Armoured Personnel Carriers will extend the utility of the fleet and provide greater levels of protection, mobility and firepower. Additionally, twenty-four 4 x 4 Armoured Utility Vehicles were acquired in 2017, and in 2018 delivery was taken of ten new armoured logistic vehicles. These measures will provide essential force protection overseas.

There is also continuous investment in the non-armoured vehicle fleet. In 2018, 20 minibuses, 22 saloons, 61 logistics vehicles and 2 recovery vehicles were purchased for the Defence Forces, and funding is provided on an on-going basis for the required maintenance of vehicles in the military transport fleet, both at home and overseas.

The Government is currently investing in updating the Air Corps fleet of aircraft with the replacement of the existing five Cessna aircraft with three larger and more capable fixed wing utility Pilatus PC 12 aircraft which are being equipped for ISTAR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance). It is expected that the three aircraft will be delivered by 2020. Planning is also in progress to replace the CASA Maritime Patrol aircraft and a tender competition is currently underway in this regard.

The on-going Naval Service ship replacement programme is evidence of the Government's commitment to investment in the Naval Service. Three new Offshore Patrol Vessels were delivered between 2014 and 2017 with a fourth, to be named the LÉ George Bernard Shaw, delivered in late 2018. In addition, planning is underway for the replacement of the current Naval Service flagship LÉ Eithne with a multi role vessel.

With regard to Defence Forces communications systems, there is continued investment in the development of suitable network enabled communications in order to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex operational environment.

The examples given, while not exhaustive, demonstrate my commitment to update and upgrade the Defence Forces equipment and capability, within the financial envelope available. In accordance with the National Development Plan, the capital allocation for Defence has been increased to €106 million for 2019, an increase of €29 million. The National Development Plan provides for a total of €541 million for Defence over the period 2018-2022. This level of capital funding will allow the Defence Organisation to undertake a programme of sustained equipment

replacement and infrastructural development across the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service as identified and prioritised in the Defence White Paper and builds on the significant investment programme over recent years.

I am satisfied that the Defence Forces have the necessary modern and effective range of equipment available to them, including vehicles and communication systems, which is in line with best international standards in order to fulfil all roles assigned to them by Government.

### **Overseas Missions**

39. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if payments in respect of overseas security missions are paid up to date by the UN and the EU; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2098/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The United Nations reimburses some personnel and Contingent Owed Equipment costs in respect of contributions of personnel to UN led operations. Rates of reimbursement, fixed in accordance with UN categories of equipment and personnel, are agreed in a Memorandum of Understanding between Ireland and the UN for each mission. The only missions for which Ireland is currently entitled to reimbursement of some troop and equipment costs are the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) on the Golan Heights. The timing of the receipt of reimbursements is dependent on the financial situation at the UN. Reimbursements are received in arrears.

The amount received from the United Nations in 2018 was €14m (€9.4m in respect of UNIFIL and €4.6m in respect of UNDOF). Outstanding reimbursements from the UN in relation to Quarter 4, 2018 are expected to be received in 2019.

### **Emergency Planning**

40. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which the Defence Forces are adequately trained and available to deal with emergency situations that may arise either by way of natural disaster or terrorist threat; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2099/19]

42. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which the Air Corps remains capable of responding to emergency missions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2101/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 40 and 42 together.

In accordance with the Framework for Major Emergency Management, primary responsibility for responding to emergencies caused by severe weather events, such as storms and flooding, rests with the three designated principal response agencies, namely, the relevant Local Authority, An Garda Síochána, and the Health Service Executive. The Defence Forces provide the fullest possible assistance to the appropriate Lead Department in the event of a natural disaster or emergency situation in its Aid to the Civil Authority role.

At National level, representation on the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning, by both the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces, ensures the fullest coordination and cooperation in the event of an emergency and that the command structure within the De-

fence Forces is compatible with the requirements in this area.

Major Emergency Plans have been developed by local and regional authorities and these Plans identify the procedures for requesting assistance from the Defence Forces.

The Defence Forces retains a wide range of specialist skills which can be deployed in such circumstances, including for a natural disaster or terrorist incidents.

With regard to security threats, primary responsibility for the internal security of the State rests with the Department of Justice and Equality and An Garda Síochána. Among the roles assigned to the Defence Forces in the White Paper on Defence is the provision of Aid to the Civil Power (ATCP) which, in practice, means to provide assistance and support to An Garda Síochána when requested to do so.

There is ongoing 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.

In relation to the Naval Service, all vessels are multi-tasked in the sense that, in addition to their fishery protection role, they also undertake general surveillance, security, pollution monitoring, and Search and Rescue in support to the Irish Coast Guard, amongst other duties while on patrol. These activities assist in detecting and preventing emergency situations throughout Ireland's maritime jurisdiction.

The role of the Air Corps includes the provision of an emergency inter-hospital Air Ambulance service in support of the HSE. It is also supporting the HSE in an emergency aeromedical support service operating primarily in the West of Ireland. In addition, the Air Corps has a maritime surveillance function undertaken by its maritime patrol aircraft and both it and the Naval Service provide support to the Irish Coast Guard in maritime Search and Rescue operations.

The full spectrum of Defence Forces personnel and equipment are available for deployment in response to any security and other emergencies that may arise. Within the Defence Forces, both the Ordnance Corps and the Army Ranger Wing specialise in providing an immediate response to emergency incidents that might require their highly specialised capabilities. The role of the Defence Forces in these situations is dependent on the nature of the incident and the type of assistance requested.

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. It is my priority as Minister with responsibility for Defence to ensure that the operational capacity of the Defence Forces is maintained to the greatest extent possible to enable the Defence Forces to carry out their roles both at home and overseas.

### **Defence Forces Training**

41. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the extent to which various courses to upgrade training and expertise within the Defence Forces continues to be made available throughout all branches; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2100/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The primary function of training and education in the Defence Forces is to develop and maintain the capabilities necessary to enable them 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. 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 ensures that Defence Forces 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 required to meet operational output and capability development requirements. A long term strategy is adopted with current planning horizons set out to 2021.

The Defence Forces seek to constantly benchmark training across all three arms of the organisation 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 and 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 remain committed to ensuring that the personnel of the Defence Forces continue to be trained to appropriate standards.

*Question No. 42 answered with Question No. 40.*

### **Defence Forces Personnel Data**

43. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of commissioned officers and non-commissioned officers that have retired from each branch of the Defence Forces in each of the past five years to date; his plans for their replacement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2102/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I am informed by the military authorities that it was not possible to collate the required information within the timeframe available. I shall provide the figures to the Deputy when I receive them from the military authorities.

### **Overseas Missions Data**

44. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the proposed overseas locations to which the Defence Forces are likely to be deployed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2103/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** As of 10 January 2019, Ireland is contributing 678 personnel to 9 different missions throughout the world and also to a range of international organisations and National representations.

The UNIFIL mission in Lebanon continues to represent Ireland's largest and most well

known overseas deployment with 460 personnel. The United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in Syria is the second largest mission with 138 personnel.

The Naval Service deployed 2 naval vessels to Operation Sophia, the EU Common Security and Defence Policy operation in the Mediterranean, during 2018. While there is currently no Irish ship deployed to the Operation, Defence Forces personnel continue to occupy three posts in the Operational Headquarters in Rome and two in the Force Headquarters at sea. Ireland's participation in Operation Sophia in 2019 is currently being considered and a decision will be taken on the matter following a full review of 2018 deployments.

Ireland has participated in the EU Training Mission in Mali since the mission was launched in 2013. Ireland contributed 20 Defence Forces personnel to this mission in 2018 and the intention is that our contribution will remain at this level in 2019. In addition, consideration is being given to the deployment of a small contingent of Army Ranger Wing personnel to the MINUSMA mission in Mali during 2019. These considerations are at a very early stage and will require further detailed analysis and planning in addition to Government approval, in advance of any proposed deployment.

Defence Forces personnel were also deployed during 2018 to the following missions:

**UNTSO**, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation mission in Israel and Syria - 12 personnel;

**MINURSO**, the United Nations Mission for the referendum in Western Sahara - 3 personnel;

**MONUSCO**, the United Nations Stabilisation mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo - 4 personnel;

**EUFOR**, the EU led operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina - 5 personnel; and

**KFOR**, the International Security Presence in Kosovo - 12 personnel.

The Defence Forces will continue to participate in these missions in 2019.

Defence Forces Personnel also serve as military advisors, representatives and staff officers with the OSCE in Vienna, the EU and NATO/Partnership for Peace in Belgium, and UN Headquarters in New York.

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 Pensions**

45. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the pension entitlement of a member of the Defence Forces that has completed 31 years service and who has reached 66 years of age; if a person in such a scenario has an entitlement to a State pension (contributory) or a State pension (non-contributory); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2110/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The specific occupational pension scheme terms of members of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) depend

on various factors, including the date a person first joins the public service.

The Deputy has referred to a member who has completed thirty one years' service and reached the age of 66. I take it therefore that the Deputy's query may be in relation to an enlisted member who joined prior to 2004, rather than to a commissioned officer. I propose to answer on this basis.

The military superannuation arrangements of enlisted personnel in the PDF fall into the following three distinct categories, the terms of which are quite different from each other:

- Joined the PDF before April 2004;
- Joined on or after 1 April 2004 and before 1 January 2013; and
- Joining from 1 January 2013.

For an enlisted member who joined the PDF prior to April 2004, the pension entitlement is based on the rank and pensionable service of the member at the date of discharge and would include any eligible pensionable allowances. A person's date of enlistment in the PDF, as well as their technician category, if applicable, and other specified criteria, are factors in determining their potential compulsory retirement age or, where applicable, upper service limits. These, in turn, influence the overall length of a person's military career in terms of the calculation of their retirement benefits.

The question of whether a person has an entitlement to a State pension (contributory) or a State pension (non-contributory) is a matter for the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and I cannot make a statement in this regard. However, I can advise that the age of eligibility for this pension varies depending on a person's date of birth.

I can also advise that the terms of the Defence Forces Pensions Scheme provide for the military occupational pension to be reduced if and when an enlisted member reaches the age prescribed for a contributory old age pension, or becomes otherwise entitled to a retirement pension under the Social Welfare Acts.

It is not possible to be prescriptive about the potential retirement benefits for a member of the PDF without more specific information. If the Deputy's enquiries relate to a specific member of the PDF, and he provides me with the relevant details for that member, I will arrange for my Department to reply directly to the person concerned.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

46. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the amount spent in each year for the past five years on accountancy and consultancy firms in relation to capital projects; the specific capital project in which the costs were incurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2259/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** It was not possible to collate the information requested by the Deputy in the timeframe available. As soon as available, I will provide the Deputy with the requested information directly.

### **Passport Services**

47. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if a requirement (details supplied) will also be extended to passport book holders if the regulation is adopted (details supplied); and his views on the fingerprinting of passport card and passport book holders. [2042/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** A Proposed Regulation on strengthening the security of ID cards and of residence documents was submitted by the Commission on 17 April 2018. Irish officials at the Permanent Representation in Brussels, as well as representatives of the Departments of Justice and Foreign Affairs, engaged extensively in discussions on the proposed Regulation to ensure that the institutions and EU Member States were fully informed about Ireland's national law with regard to the areas covered by the proposed Regulation.

Ireland does not issue identity cards to its citizens and has no provision to do so under national law therefore the proposed Regulation does not apply to Ireland. There is no obligation on Ireland to introduce identity cards or residence documents arising out of this draft Regulation. This is clear from recital 6 of the proposed Regulation which states:

*“This Regulation does not require Member States to introduce identity cards or residence documents where they are not provided for under national law, nor does it affect the competence of the Member States to issue other residence documents under national law outside the scope of Union law, for example residence cards delivered to all residents on the territory whatever their nationality.”*

The proposed Regulation does not apply to the Irish Passport Card which is not an identity card but is an Irish passport in card format. It is fully compliant with International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Document 9303, part 5 (Seventh Edition) which regulates the requirements for passports, in traditional book format as well as in card format.

In order to ensure clarity on this point, a recital was added to the text of the proposed Regulation. The new recital has been included in the latest version of the document, 14360/18 dated 16 November 2018, which was agreed by Member States with a view to granting the Presidency a mandate to start negotiations with the European Parliament. It reads as follows: *“(6c) Travel documents compliant with International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Document 9303, part 5 (Seventh Edition) which do not serve identification purposes in the issuing Member State, should not be considered as falling within the scope of this Regulation.”*

My Department has no plans to introduce any requirement for the fingerprinting of holders of passport books or passport cards.

## Human Rights

48. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to recent protests in Sudan (details supplied); if the violence and repression carried out by the Sudanese forces against civilians will be condemned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2087/19]

49. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if the perceived disproportionate and deadly response to the peaceful protests by tens of thousands of Sudanese by the Sudanese Government will be unreservedly condemned. [2140/19]

50. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if the relationship with the Al-Bashir regime will be reconsidered in view of its diplomatic ties in

Dublin; and if the Ambassador of Sudan (details supplied) will be declared a persona non grata. [2141/19]

51. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will request the European Union to take a stronger stance on the ongoing oppression in Sudan. [2142/19]

52. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the other actions that could stop the regime in Sudan from using violence against unarmed civilians. [2143/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 48 to 52, inclusive, together.

I am deeply concerned about the violence which has accompanied recent protests in Sudan, including credible reports of the use of live fire by the Government of Sudan and of multiple deaths.

Demonstrations, triggered by spiralling costs of living, began in the city of Atbara in the north east of the country on 19 December last year, spreading to over twenty towns and cities. While initially the protests were against the worsening economic situation, they quickly developed into calls for President Omar al-Bashir's resignation.

President Omar al-Bashir reacted by closing schools and declaring a state of emergency in some regions. Sudanese police have used tear gas and live ammunition in an attempt to disperse crowds. It is reported that almost 1,000 people have been arrested across the country since protests began. The Sudanese Government has said that 24 people have been killed during demonstrations, while Sudanese activists and medical workers say that the number killed is at least 40. The use of live fire and arbitrary detention cannot be justified.

Ireland fully supports the EU's 24 December 2018 call on the Government of Sudan to exercise restraint, respect the right to peaceful protest and ensure that all law enforcement and security bodies act under its direct control and in accordance with Sudan's constitutional and international commitments. Ireland also stands fully behind the EU statement of 11 January 2019 which calls on the Government of Sudan to release all journalists, members of the opposition, human rights defenders and other protesters arbitrarily detained, and to guarantee the independence of the Investigation Committee tasked with the investigation of abuses. The Embassy of Ireland in Nairobi, which is accredited to Sudan, continues to monitor the situation closely in cooperation with the Delegation of the European Union in Khartoum.

In addition to the current unrest, Sudan continues to suffer from a range of humanitarian crises, driven by protracted conflicts, inequality and climate change. These feed into the popular disaffection leading to protests. This humanitarian situation has been further exacerbated by the economic crisis in 2018, leading to severe levels of food insecurity and malnutrition across the country. More than 1.8 million people are internally displaced and Sudan hosts a further 1.2 million refugees that have fled conflict in neighbouring countries, the majority of whom rely on humanitarian aid for their survival. As a result, an estimated 5.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Sudan this year, including 2.6 million children. Ireland is responding to these crises, with almost €26 million in direct humanitarian assistance to Sudan through our UN, NGO and Red Cross partners since 2012.

## **International Agreements**

53. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to help in treatment and rehabilitation of torture victims. [2144/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Ireland is a long-standing contributor to the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture and has contributed an average of €85,000 each year since 2010. The Trust Fund provides direct assistance to victims of torture and their family members in 79 countries worldwide. This assistance can take the form of humanitarian, medical, psychological, legal, social and financial aid. Grants are awarded to NGOs, rehabilitation centres, victim associations and family members, hospitals, legal clinics, public interest law firms and individual lawyers.

More generally, Ireland is committed to the prevention and eradication of torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and has ratified relevant international agreements including the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

### **Humanitarian Aid**

54. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to ensure Ireland increases its diplomatic efforts through the EU to ensure the peace deal in South Sudan holds. [2172/19]

55. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to continue to support the humanitarian efforts in South Sudan that are addressing the root causes of the conflict. [2173/19]

56. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to continue to fund and support the conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts at community level by an organisation (details supplied) in partnership with INGOs. [2174/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 54 to 56, inclusive, together.

I am deeply concerned by the humanitarian situation in South Sudan, primarily the consequence of a conflict which began in 2013, but compounded by many years of instability and strife. Violations of human rights and international humanitarian law serve to perpetuate the crisis, with a negative impact on its scale and with devastating consequences for the people of South Sudan. It is estimated that almost 400,000 people have died, and over 7 million people are currently in need of humanitarian assistance and protection.

Drought has exacerbated the effects of conflict, leading to severe food insecurity. There has been massive population displacement throughout the country. Conflict, food insecurity and drought have affected women and girls particularly.

On 12 September 2018, the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, signed a peace agreement with a number of the opposition forces. While this peace agreement has the potential to mark a new departure, it is critical that South Sudan's leaders maintain their commitment to its effective implementation. Achieving lasting peace will require sustained effort and commitment as well as a genuinely inclusive approach to building the future South Sudan.

Ireland strongly supports efforts to build peace in South Sudan. Since the Tánaiste's visit

to Addis Ababa in 2017, when he met representatives of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union, Ireland has provided funding to IGAD to support negotiation of the peace agreement. Ireland will continue to support IGAD's work on monitoring the implementation of the agreement in 2019.

Our Embassy in Addis Ababa, which is accredited to South Sudan, monitors the situation and engages with local, regional and international parties on an ongoing basis. The Irish Ambassador in Addis Ababa visits Juba frequently where she meets with key government, UN, NGO, Red Cross and diplomatic partners, including the EU Delegation. Her most recent visit took place in November last year.

We are committed to supporting efforts towards peace in South Sudan and have contributed to projects aimed at peacebuilding. In 2018, this has included supporting partners' meditation efforts and empowering civil society, in particular women's groups, to facilitate their engagement in peace processes.

As well as our direct bilateral support, we are actively involved in the efforts of the EU to support peace in South Sudan. Two officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade have been seconded to the EU Delegation in South Sudan, including one as Head of Mission. The EU Delegation is strongly supportive of the peace process, in particular by providing support to the implementing and monitoring bodies of the peace agreement. The Tánaiste discussed these efforts with the EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa, Alexander Rondos, when he visited Dublin on 7 November 2018.

While a sustained resolution to the conflict is the ultimate goal, we have a duty now to deal with immediate humanitarian needs. Since 2012, Ireland has provided €61 million in direct humanitarian assistance to South Sudan. Over €10 million in Irish funding was provided in 2018, including to Irish NGOs to assist them in reaching the most vulnerable. Christian Aid, Concern Worldwide, Oxfam, Trócaire and World Vision, with support from Irish Aid, are working in partnership with local organisations and NGO networks to provide lifesaving supplies to meet the basic needs of those suffering from the conflict.

As well as this direct bilateral aid, Ireland has also contributed to humanitarian support in South Sudan through the multilateral system. Ireland is a significant contributor to the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund, which has allocated \$178 million to alleviate the crisis in South Sudan since 2011, as well as to the EU, which provided more than €90 million in 2018.

With humanitarian needs likely to remain acute throughout 2019, Irish funding will continue to support both those in need inside South Sudan as well as South Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries.

## Northern Ireland

57. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the recent peace monitoring report published by an organisation (details supplied); his plans to discuss this report with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and with the parties represented in Stormont; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2214/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I am aware of the report to which the Deputy refers.

The recent peace monitoring report from the Community Relations Council is extensive and covers topics ranging from the Northern Irish economy to LGBT rights. The report highlights

the continuing challenges facing Northern Ireland and the peace process overall, and how they are being exacerbated both by the continued absence of a functioning Executive and the challenges of Brexit. My officials are further analysing its contents and will continue their engagement with the CRC and broader civil society in Northern Ireland

As this report highlights, the lack of devolved Institutions is having a negative impact on everyday life in Northern Ireland. I am currently engaging with Secretary of State Bradley on how both Governments can most effectively secure the full operation of all of the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement, and in turn support the entrenchment of the peace process. Additionally, both Governments are continuing to engage with all of the political parties to seek a way forward to restore the institutions. I held discussions with the leaderships of the main political parties during my trip to Belfast on 9th-10th January last and all re-affirmed their commitment to operating the devolved institutions and have provided views on their key concerns and issues.

My Department is committed to supporting the essential reconciliation work being carried out by civil society and individuals in Northern Ireland and across this island. In May of last year I announced an additional €1 million of funding towards the Reconciliation Fund, bringing the total available through the fund to €3.7 million.

### **Brexit Issues**

58. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the work carried out at EU level and with the French Government in relation to plans to facilitate Irish trucks exiting in a different queue to British trucks at Calais port in France post-Brexit; if this has been fully agreed with France and funding secured from the EU; and the estimated timeline this facility can be in place in the event of a no deal Brexit. [2236/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Government's planning for Brexit has from the start included issues relating to the continued effective use of the UK landbridge. This is a priority for the Government, given the importance of the landbridge in getting Irish products, in particular agrifood products, to market on continental Europe. This is an important issue with regard to protecting the competitiveness of our producers and ensuring continued unhampered access to the EU Single Market.

The issue of the landbridge and the facilitation of Irish traffic at ports, including Irish trucks at the port of Calais, has been raised actively at both Ministerial and official level.

At Ministerial level, the issue has been raised on a number of occasions, including at Minister Ross's meeting with Élisabeth Borne, the French Minister of Transport on 23 November 2018, and at my meetings with Minister for European Affairs, Nathalie Loiseau on the margins of the General Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 16 October and again in Paris on 31 October 2018.

At official level, the Landbridge Project Group, which is chaired by my Department, and involves all relevant Government Departments, including the Department of Finance, the Revenue Commissioners, the Department of Transport Tourism and Sport, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Department of Health, and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, has been instrumental in working closely with the European Commission and other affected Member States (France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden) with a view to preparing EU ports to facilitate the transit of EU products through the UK once it becomes a third country through the use of EU rules on internal transit

set out under the Union's Custom Code.

As part of this process, officials are meeting regularly on a bilateral basis with relevant Member States, including France, to discuss, among other issues, the landbridge and infrastructure around ports and airports. Most recently, a cross-departmental delegation travelled to Paris for consultations on Brexit preparedness where the issue of the landbridge was comprehensively discussed, including the need for infrastructural solutions, such as designated lanes, at French ports to facilitate the free movement of Irish trucks transiting the UK. Officials also met with the European Commission for technical consultations on the landbridge in December 2018. In addition to meetings of Irish based officials, Embassy Paris has met with French authorities in relation to port infrastructure, including the Mayor of Calais, the Port of Calais, and the operators of Eurotunnel, and made representations regarding the segregation of Irish traffic arriving at the port of Calais and the Eurotunnel after transiting through the UK.

These meetings have been productive and there is an openness at all levels in France to work with us to ensure the efficient transit of Irish trucks through French ports. However, it is also clear that it will be very challenging in a no deal scenario for these ports to have the necessary permanent infrastructural solutions in place by 29 March 2019. The Government will continue to work with our partners in France to seek suitable temporary solutions as part of our no deal planning, while, at the same time, working with them on permanent solutions, particularly in an orderly withdrawal scenario, so that the landbridge can continue to be an effective route for our operators trading with the rest of the EU.

### **Brexit Issues**

59. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the talks that have taken place at EU level and commitments sought and secured in relation to state aid and EU financial support post-Brexit to assist Ireland; if no talks have taken place and no commitments sought, his plans in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2237/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Making the case for supporting measures at EU level that recognise where Brexit represents a serious disturbance to the Irish economy is a key pillar of the Government's response to Brexit.

There is a firm understanding at EU level of the unique and disproportionate impact that Brexit will have on Ireland. This has been reflected in a number of concrete measures and commitments to date, such as the EIB's support for the Government's Brexit Loan Scheme. In its Contingency Action Plan of 13 November, the European Commission confirmed that it would support Ireland in finding solutions addressing the specific challenges of Irish businesses.

In March last year, EU Commissioner Gunther Oettinger visited Dublin and met with the Taoiseach, Minister Donohoe and Minister of State D'Arcy to discuss the negotiations on the EU's post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). In the same visit, I met with him to discuss the negative consequences to the Irish economy resulting from Brexit, and the possibility of EU assistance was raised.

In November 2017, the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation met with Commissioner Vestager (European Commissioner for Competition) to discuss, amongst other issues, the impact of Brexit on Irish businesses. As a result of this meeting, a Technical Working Group comprising representatives from DG Competition, the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Enterprise Ireland and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine was es-

established to assist in the scope and design of schemes to support enterprises impacted by Brexit. Minister Humphreys will meet with Commissioner Vestager (DG Competition) in Dublin on 24 January where State Aids issues and the scope for flexibilities will be further discussed.

### Departmental Expenditure

60. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the amount spent in each year for the past five years on accountancy and consultancy firms in relation to capital projects; the specific capital project in which the costs were incurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2263/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department commissions external expertise where highly specialised skills are not available internally, particularly for capital projects where independent project evaluation advice is required for key decisions. During the course of their engagements, these consultants/experts may prepare reports and other documentation for the Department. This work contributes to a more effective and targeted use of resources and greater accountability in the allocation of budgets.

These services are procured by open competitive tender in accordance with EU and national rules and comply with the overall value for money objective of the Department.

Separately, a small number of consultancies are occasionally engaged directly by our Missions abroad.

The following table set out the details of the amount spent in each year for the past five years on accountancy and consultancy firms in relation to capital projects and the specific capital project in which the costs were incurred

Year	Total amount spent on consultancy firms on capital projects	Breakdown of Projects
2014	€8,961.80	Embassy Abuja, Nigeria
2015	€0.00	
2016	€0.00	
2017	€15,927.82	Headquarters Accommodation Embassy Washington D.C., USA
2018	€83,649.05	Headquarters Accommodation Embassy, Washington D.C. Tokyo New Ireland House

### Tax Reliefs Application

61. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Finance if the tax relief for long-term leases of farmland to landlords who provide tenants with long-term leases of accommodation will be extended; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2070/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I understand that the Deputy is referring to a proposed extension to the existing exemption of certain income from long-term leasing of farm land to include rent received by a lessor in respect of a residential property.

Section 664 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provides for the exemption of certain in-

come from leasing of farm land, where the land is let under a qualifying lease, by a qualifying lessor, to a qualifying lessee.

A qualifying lease must have a minimum definite term of five years or more to qualify for the relief. Following Finance Act 2014, a qualifying lessor is exempt from income tax on progressively increasing amounts linked to lease duration as follows:

For leases entered into:	Between 1 Jan 2007 and 31 Dec 2014	On or after 1 Jan 2015
Lease term	€	€
5yrs or more (but less than 7yrs)	12,000	18,000
7yrs or more (but less than 10yrs)	15,000	22,500
10yrs or more (but less than 15yrs)	20,000	30,000
15yrs or more	N/A	40,000

For the purposes of the relief, the definition of “farm land” includes a building “other than a building or part of a building used as a dwelling”.

This relief was designed to encourage longer term leases of farm land in recognition of the advantages of long-term leasing over the short-term conacre system. The 2014 Agritaxation Review recognised the key role of long-term leases in assisting with the mobility and productive use of land, and suggested a number of enhancements to the relief which were implemented in Finance Act 2014.

As the extension proposed by the Deputy would be outside the targeted policy objective of the relief, I do not propose to make such a change to the measure at this time.

### Property Tax Review

62. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance when the review into the local property tax will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2072/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The report of the review of the LPT is currently being finalised in conjunction with the Departments of the Taoiseach, Public Expenditure and Reform, Housing Planning and Local Government, and the Office of the Revenue Commissioners. I will of course carefully consider the conclusions and recommendations of the report when it is presented to me.

### Central Bank of Ireland

63. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if greater resources will be provided to the Central Bank and specifically the client asset specialist team for the purpose of regulating appropriate investment firms or life companies in view of the expected rise in the use of private pensions by workers in the coming years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2217/19]

64. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the staffing levels of the client asset specialist team of the Central Bank. [2218/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 63

and 64 together.

The independence of the Central Bank of Ireland is enshrined in the Central Bank Acts, the Treaties of the European Union and by the Statute of the European System of Central Banks, and in that context the Central Bank Commission is responsible for the Bank's overall staffing levels and the allocation of those staff across the Bank.

The Client Asset Specialist Team (CAST) has cross-sectoral ownership within the Central Bank for client asset and investor money risk. The primary role of CAST is to supervise and inspect client asset and investor money arrangements, and monitor the risks to the safekeeping of client assets and investor money in investment firms and fund service providers.

CAST had 8 staff at end December 2018. I am informed by the Central Bank that this is expected to increase to 10 staff by the end of March 2019. The protection of client assets remains a key priority of the Central Bank, and the ongoing resourcing of all prudential supervisory activities, including client assets, is reviewed regularly to ensure agreed supervisory strategies and outcomes can be met.

*Question No. 64 answered with Question No. 63.*

### **Central Bank of Ireland**

65. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether it is necessary to review section 48(1) of the Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2013 and the investment firms regulations 2017 in view of the expected rise in the use of private pensions by workers in the coming years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2219/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Section 48(1) of the Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2013 (the Act) gives the Central Bank of Ireland the power to make regulations for the proper and effective regulation of regulated financial service providers.

The benefit of Section 48(1) is that it allows the Central Bank to make detailed and technical sector specific Regulations. The approach adopted in Section 48 was agreed following extensive discussion with the Attorney General's Office. The Central Bank's discretion in making Regulations is limited to setting standards and procedures, which is appropriate to its role as a regulatory authority. Regulations made under Section 48 must be effective and proportionate having regard to the nature, scale and complexity of the regulated entities. Furthermore, consultation provisions are set out in Section 49 of the Act, which require, amongst other things, that the Central Bank consult with me as Minister for Finance before making regulations.

Prior to this Act, the Central Bank already had extensive powers to set out detailed regulatory standards across a number of areas, including consumer protections, client assets, account switching and related party lending. However, providing the Central Bank with the power to make Regulations, the Central Bank now has the means to put these requirements on a statutory basis, thereby underpinning the importance of compliance and allowing for a commensurate level of sanctions, as a breach of the Regulations is a prescribed contravention and subject to the Administrative Sanctions Procedure.

The Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2013 (Section 48(1)) (Investment Firms) Regulations 2017 (the 2017 Regulations) apply to MiFID investment firms and to certain investment business firms authorised under the Investment Intermediaries Act 1995. These Regulations were introduced by the Central Bank to give full effect to the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive II (MiFID II), which was transposed into Irish law by S.I. 375 of 2017.

The 2017 Regulations, for example, include the client asset regime that applies to MiFID firms and Investment Intermediary firms which are based in Ireland. Ireland invoked the Member State discretion under MiFID II that allows for gold-plating of the client asset requirements as set out in the Directive. This means we have a client asset regime in Ireland that is over and above what is required at European level.

The 2017 Regulations along with the additional provisions imposed on investment firms based in Ireland due to MiFID II are only in effect since 3 January 2018.

Regarding the proposed implementation of an automatic enrolment pension system which will lead to a rise in private pensions by workers, my colleague the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty, has primary responsibility in this area. However, I have been informed that the detailed evidence building and consultation processes required to deliver an automatic enrolment system is now being undertaken within an initial project planning phase. This will involve an investigation of the potential organisational models for delivery and the likely costs involved. It will also include an assessment of whether a trust-based model, under a Master Trust regime, or a contract-based model will be pursued and whether additional levels of regulation will be required.

Until this work is completed and a preferred model chosen, it is not possible to confirm the specific operational structure and design characteristics of the automatic enrolment system.

## Pensions Data

66. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the average monetary value of a pension fund accumulated by workers using personal retirement savings accounts, approved retirement funds or an occupational pension fund; if the maximum limit under the investor compensation scheme is sufficient to cover these monetary values in the event of a failed investment firm or broker; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2220/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by the Pensions Authority (PA), a body under the aegis of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, that at the end of Q3 2018, the value of assets held in PRSA accounts stands at circa €6.6bn. The number of PRSAs established at that time was 275,739 resulting in a mean average value of PRSAs of circa €24,000. I am further advised by the PA that not all of the established PRSAs are current active contacts. Therefore, the average value of assets held within active PRSA accounts would likely increase if such accounts were excluded.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that ARFs are not pension funds, *per se*. They are investment options into which the proceeds of certain pension arrangements can be invested on retirement. Based on a survey of Qualifying Funds Managers which Revenue conducted during 2017 and 2018, I am advised that the mean average value of ARFs was almost €187,000 and the mean average value of Approved Minimum Retirement Funds (AMRFs) managed by those fund managers was almost €58,000. I stress that these figures are from a survey rather than drawn from tax returns. I should also point out that some individuals may hold more than one ARF.

Regarding the average value of occupational pension funds, I am advised by the PA that the most accurate approximation can be made from examining annual scheme information data, based on data from 2015 Annual Scheme Information (ASI) returns, which show a total value of assets held in occupational pension schemes of circa €95.4bn and 1,267,787 scheme members.

Coverage of the Investor Compensation Scheme (ICS) is set out in the Investor Compensation Act 1998 (the Act). I refer the Deputy to my recent response to PQ 1174/19 which sets out coverage of the ICS in relation to Personal Retirement Savings Accounts (PRSA), Approved Retirement Funds (ARF), and Occupational Pension Funds.

The Deputy will recall that investment instruments which are eligible for compensation under the Act are set out in section 2 of the Investment Intermediaries Act, 1995 (IIA) and Schedule 1 Part 3 of the European Union (Markets in Financial Instruments) Regulations 2017 (MiFID).

It is apparent from the investment instruments referred to in section 2 of the IIA that PRSAs are listed and therefore in-scope, subject to all other elements of the compensation obligations being satisfied in accordance with the Act.

An ARF is not a defined investment instrument within the scope of the Act. Therefore, the compensation obligation, if any, would need to be considered, on a case-by-case basis, by an Administrator appointed in accordance with the provisions of the Act to validate any claims received from clients of the relevant failed firm.

A pension or retirement fund is defined as an “excluded investor” for the purposes of the Act and is therefore outside the scope of ICS coverage.

The ICCL does not collect product specific data from all 3,410 member firms in respect of the individual investors with whom those firms provide investment services, and that would be deemed to be eligible investors under the Act as the ICCL.

In respect of eligible clients’ investments, the compensation obligation of the ICS relates to eligible client money held, and, eligible client investment instruments held, administered and managed in connection with the provision of certain investment services, that the failed investment firm is unable to return to the eligible investor in accordance with legal and contractual conditions applicable. The compensation obligation is limited to 90% of the eligible investors’ net loss, subject to a maximum compensatable payment of €20,000 per eligible investor.

Due to the introduction in January 2018 of the new requirements for investment firms under MiFID and also to the experience of ICCL in dealing with compensation claims over a number of years, at this point in time it is considered that the maximum payment threshold applicable in Ireland is adequate.

Regarding the proposed implementation of an automatic enrolment pension system, my colleague the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, has primary responsibility in this area. However, I have been informed that the detailed evidence building and consultation processes required to deliver an automatic enrolment system is now being undertaken within an initial project planning phase. This will involve an investigation of the potential organisational models for delivery and the likely costs involved. It will also include an assessment of whether a trust-based model, under a Master Trust regime, or a contract-based model will be pursued and whether additional levels of regulation will be required. Until this work is completed and a preferred model chosen, it is not possible to confirm the specific operational structure and design characteristics of the automatic enrolment system.

### **Investor Compensation Company Limited**

67. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to increase the maximum cover of €20,000 as outlined in the investor compensation scheme to bring it in line

with the financial services compensation scheme in the UK; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2222/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Investor Compensation Directive (97/9/EC) sets out the basis for clients of investment firms to receive statutory compensation when an authorised investment firm fails. In Ireland, the Investor Compensation Act 1998 provides for the establishment of the Investor Compensation Company DAC (ICCL) which administers the Investor Compensation Scheme.

The Investor Compensation Scheme deals with investor compensation claims where an investment firm fails and is unable to repay monies owed or return money and financial instruments held in accordance with its legal obligations to eligible investors.

Compensation is paid from a central pool of funds collected through assessed contributions from authorised investment firms or licensed credit institutions based in Ireland.

The limit of compensation is set at 90% of the eligible investors net loss, which is dependent on any amounts recovered on behalf of clients by the administrator appointed to the failed firm, with a maximum payment of €20,000 permitted per eligible investor.

I would note that in the transposition of the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (S.I. 375 of 2017) Ireland exercised the Member State discretion that enabled us to “gold-plate” the client asset requirements as set out in the Directive. This means we have a client asset regime in Ireland that is over and above what is required at an European level.

The legislation applies extensive client asset and consumer protection rules to regulated investment firms. While certain entities (for example, intermediaries) are exempt from MiFID, they are still required to have analogous consumer protection rules as covered by the Central Bank’s Consumer Protection Code 2012. They are also subject to the same client asset requirements as MiFID authorised firms.

I have also been informed by the ICCL that the €20,000 maximum compensation limit currently in place has satisfied the claims of the majority of small investors in the compensation cases it has handled in recent years.

Due to the introduction of the new requirements for investment firms due to MiFID as outlined above in January of last year and the experience of ICCL with compensation claims over a number of years, at this point in time it is considered that the maximum payment threshold applicable in Ireland is adequate.

### **Investor Compensation Company Limited**

68. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the amount paid out by the investor compensation scheme in each of the past ten years; the number of investors that have availed of compensation in each of these years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2223/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Investor Compensation Directive (97/9/EC) sets out the basis for clients of investment firms to receive statutory compensation when an authorised investment firm fails. In Ireland, the Investor Compensation Act 1998 provides for the establishment of the Investor Compensation Company DAC (ICCL) which administers the Investor Compensation Scheme.

The Investor Compensation Scheme deals with investor compensation claims where an investment firm fails and is unable to repay monies owed or return money and financial instruments held in accordance with its legal obligations to eligible investors.

I have been informed by the ICCL that it can only provide detailed records for claims paid from 2012 onwards. Based on the information provided, the total value of claims paid and numbers of eligible investors are as follows:

Year	Value	No. of Investors
2008-2011	Not available	Not available
2012	€1,000,000	49
2013	€5,624,280	384
2014	€214,393	99
2015	€186,617	70
2016	NIL	NIL
2017	€431,712	22
2018	€28,001	10
2019	NIL	NIL

### Pension Provisions

69. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the Pension Outlook 2018 report of the OECD released on 3 December 2018; his further views on the concerns in the report on approved retirement funds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2224/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The OECD Pensions Outlook 2018 provides comprehensive analysis and insight into the challenges facing developed nations that must design and apply appropriate pension policies to best meet the needs of their existing and future older populations.

My colleague the Minister for Employment Affairs & Social Protection outlined last year this Government's approach to reforming all aspects of pension provision in the Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018-2023 (the Roadmap).

As the Deputy will be aware, my Department chairs the Interdepartmental Pensions Reform and Taxation Group (IDPRTG), which is currently undertaking a review of a range of pension issues assigned to it in the Roadmap, including a review of the Approved Retirement Fund (ARF). Some of these issues are discussed in general in the OECD report, including the design of financial incentives and drawdown products and the IDPRTG will consider this work in completing its report.

ARFs were introduced in Finance Act 1999 to provide control, flexibility and choice to the holders of personal pension plans and proprietary director members of occupational pension schemes in the drawdown of their retirement benefits. Prior to that Act, any person taking a pension from a defined contribution (DC) scheme or a Retirement Annuity Contract had to purchase an annuity with their remaining pension pot after drawing down the permissible retirement lump sum. These options have since been extended to the benefits taken by any individual from DC pension arrangements generally.

An internal review of tax relief for pension provision, undertaken by my Department and Revenue in 2005, found that the ARF option was largely not being used to fund an income

stream in retirement as was intended, but rather was being us to build up funds in a tax-free environment over the long-term. To counteract this, Finance Act 2006 introduced, with effect from 2007, an imputed or notional distribution of 3% of the value of the assets of an ARF where the ARF owner is 60 years or over for the whole of a tax year. This was phased in from 2007 to 2009: 1% in 2007; 2% in 2008; and 3% from 2009. The notional amount is taxed at the ARF owner's marginal income tax rate. Funds actually drawn down by ARF owners are credited against the imputed distribution in that year to arrive at a net imputed amount, if any, for the year. Finance Acts 2011 and 2012 increased the rate of the notional distribution to 5%, and 6% in respect of ARFs with values over €2 million.

To reduce the risk that individuals in the age group 60 to 70 years might out-live their ARF funds, Finance Act 2014 reduced the 5% rate to 4% for ARF owners under the age of 70, where the value of assets in their ARF is €2 million or less.

While most ARF owners take drawdowns at least equal to the notional distribution rate, there is no obligation on them to do so. The requirement in the legislation is not a statutory minimum drawdown condition. The only requirement is that tax is paid from the ARF on either the notional drawdown amount, whether it is drawn down or not, or on the amount actually drawn down if that is greater than the notional amount.

It is important to note that on drawdown of retirement benefits, the decision regarding the purchase of an annuity or an ARF is a decision made by an individual based on that individual's specific requirements for retirement. Due to the current perceived poor value in annuities, ARFs are often a more popular post-retirement choice.

It is also important that we protect the integrity of our Exempt, Exempt, Taxed (EET) approach to pension taxation by ensuring income is drawn down in retirement. Our system of pension tax relief ensures contributions and investment returns are exempted from tax and the pension drawdown amount is subject to tax. As stated previously, the IDPRTG, as part of its overall work is currently conducting a broad review of the utilisation of the ARF option, which in conjunction with its other work will inform future policy in this area.

### **Tracker Mortgages Data**

70. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of complaints that have been taken to the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman in relation to the tracker mortgage scandal; the value arising from these complaints; the number that have been decided on; the number that have been decided in favour of the complainant; the number that are still outstanding; the value of those complaints still outstanding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2226/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Firstly, I must point out that the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman is independent in the performance of his statutory functions. I have no role in the day to day workings of his office.

However, I have been advised by the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman that he currently has 1,221 complaints on hand in January 2019 which relate to tracker mortgage issues. Of those, 723 complaints were received in 2018.

The Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman has maintained that the most effective and efficient way to provide redress and compensation to borrowers who have been wrongly denied tracker mortgages was for the banks to co-operate fully with the Central Bank Examination. Therefore, whilst the Examination was still underway individual tracker mortgage-related

complaints were placed on hold pending confirmation that the Central Bank Examination had concluded in respect of those complainants.

In July 2018, a decision was taken to begin to take complaints that could potentially progress, off hold. The duration required to investigate a complaint can vary depending on the number of submissions made by the parties to the complaint as each one will trigger a transparent and sometimes extensive exchange of evidence and submissions. Each complaint is considered on its own merits. No legally binding decisions on trackers were issued by the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman in 2018.

The, now dissolved, Financial Services Ombudsman dealt with tracker complaints since 2009. It received approximately 2,000 complaints relating to tracker mortgages. Findings were issued in respect of 683 complaints. Of these 115 (17%) were upheld, 59 (9%) were partly upheld and 509 (74%) were not upheld. A number of these findings directed financial service providers to restore tracker mortgages to complainants.

In addition, to issuing findings and decisions both the FSO and the FSPO resolved complaints, including tracker mortgage complaints through informal mediation and through the acceptance of settlement offers made by financial service providers after the engagement of the FSO and FSPO.

I understand from the Ombudsman that calculating a “value” for complaints is not possible until the Ombudsman arrives at his decision which may include potential compensation/rectification.

I understand that the FSPO wrote to all members of the Houses of the Oireachtas informing them of the Protocol for the Provision of Information to Members of the Oireachtas by State Bodies and providing a dedicated email address for the timely provision of information to members of the Oireachtas.

### Departmental Expenditure

71. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Finance the amount spent in each year for the past five years on accountancy and consultancy firms in relation to capital projects; the specific capital project in which the costs were incurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2262/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I can confirm that my Department has spent the following on accountancy and consultancy firms in relation to capital projects in the past five years.

Division	Amount spent in each year for the past five years on accountancy and consultancy firms in relation to capital projects;	The specific capital project in which the costs were incurred;
Corporate Affairs	2016 - €4,206.60 2016 - €31,957.05 2017 - €9,009.32	Technical advice in relation to preparation of an RFT for the procurement of an eDiscovery System Legal and technical advice in relation to preparation of an RFT for the procurement of an eDiscovery System Legal and technical advice in relation to preparation of an RFT for the procurement of an eDiscovery System

## **Brexit Issues**

72. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of trucks that pass through Dublin Port on a daily basis entering and exiting the port, respectively; the contingency plans in place to deal with delays at the port post 29 March 2019; if traffic management plans have been drawn up; if additional land will be purchased by 29 March 2019; and if not, when. [2242/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The number of HGV's passing through Dublin Port varies on a daily basis. The daily peak occurs between the hours of 2-6 each morning and numbers between 300-360 HGV's. The contingency plan takes this figure into account.

The Office of Public Works, on behalf of the relevant State agencies, is working with Dublin Port to ensure that an effective traffic management plan is in place.

All land required in a no deal scenario has been secured.

## **Departmental Projects**

73. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position in relation to the financial commitment towards the development of a centre (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2056/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** This is a matter for the Minister for Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht in the first instance.

Overall responsibility for the management and delivery of the project referred to by the Deputy rests with Cork City Council, with Exchequer grant funding being administered through the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

I have been advised by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht that in 2013, a grant of €10m was awarded to the local authority for the development of the project. This was increased to €12m in 2015. To date €1m has been drawn down by the local authority. In December 2018, I understand that the Department wrote to the local authority in response to a request for the provision of additional public funding. I understand that officials from that Department will meet with the local authority shortly to discuss aspects around the public funding elements of the project.

## **Departmental Expenditure**

74. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount spent in each year for the past five years on accountancy and consultancy firms in relation to capital projects; the specific capital project in which the costs were incurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2267/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The information requested by the Deputy is included in the following table.

Year	Company	Capital Project	Cost
2015	Dovetail Technologies	eCohesion IT Project	€46,371
2016	Knowledge Pool as part of CAPITA Consulting	Business case to deliver a new shared model to deliver learning and development for the Civil Service	€106,063
2017	Astron Consulting Limited	eCohesion IT Project	€22,140
2018	Astron Consulting Limited	eCohesion IT Project	€11,070

Information in respect of the National Shared Services Office, which was a Division of my Department until the end of 2017 and is now a Scheduled Office under its aegis, will be forwarded directly to the Deputy.

### Schools Building Projects Expenditure

75. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the budget allocated for primary and post-primary school capital investment in 2019; and the finance directed to school expansion and building in the Dublin 12 area. [2076/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department's capital allocation in 2019 is €941m of which €672m is being allocated for capital spending in primary and post-primary schools. The school sector allocation will be expended primarily on the delivery of large scale projects and on the Additional Accommodation Scheme. Funding will be available for large scale projects that commenced on site in 2018 or earlier and that will remain under construction in 2019 and for large scale projects that are positioned to commence construction in 2019.

Information in relation to the current status of all major school building projects and additional accommodation projects including projects in Dublin 12 area is available on my Department's web-site and this information is updated on a regular basis.

Typically, expenditure levels of between 70% and 80% of the capital allocation available to schools annually is in respect of large scale projects and the Additional Accommodation Scheme. The balance available in 2019 will be expended on site acquisitions, the Summer Works Scheme, the Emergency Works Scheme, furniture and equipment provision and other smaller programmes.

### Schools Establishment

76. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he is satisfied with the level of second-level school places that exist in Dunshaughlin, County Meath providing for the amount of housing that is planned for the coming years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2043/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** In April 2018, the Government announced plans for the establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022). The announcement followed nationwide, demographic exercises carried out by my Department into the future need for primary and post-primary schools across the country.

Where demographic data indicates that additional provision is required, the delivery of such additional provision is dependent on the particular circumstances of each case and may, depending on the circumstances, be provided through either one, or a combination of, the following:

- Utilising existing unused capacity within a school or schools;
- Extending the capacity of a school or schools;
- Provision of a new school or schools.

In addition to the new schools announced, there will be a need for further school accommodation in other areas in the future. Approximately 40% of extra school places are delivered by extending existing schools.

While the announcement did not include a new post-primary school for the Dunshaughlin school planning area, the requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and will have regard for the increased rollout of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

Dunshaughlin post-primary school planning area is catered for by Dunshaughlin Community College. The school operates under the patronage of Louth and Meath Education and Training Board and has a current enrolment in the region of 1,000 pupils. The school is experiencing demand for additional school places and the ETB is open to assisting in meeting this demand. The ETB has submitted an application for additional accommodation which my Department is currently considering. The outcome will assist my Department in determining the future need in the area. In the meantime, my Department has approved the provision of additional temporary accommodation - 8 general classrooms and 1 science lab - to Louth and Meath Education and Training Board to meet the school's immediate needs.

### **Summer Works Scheme**

77. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the summer works scheme will be open to schools for new applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2062/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that I am committed to a new Summer Works Scheme which will open for applications in early 2019 for projects to be delivered from summer 2020.

### **Schools Data**

78. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department has ownership or lease of a school (details supplied); and if not, the owner or leaser in this regard. [2074/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The property referred to by the Deputy is not in my ownership.

When State moneys are provided to facilitate building works to school property owned by a third party, a legal mechanism is put in place in order to protect the State's interest. This is known as a Charging Lease or Declaration of Trust. These leases protect the Minister's capital investment in the school property and require that the property be used as a school for a set

period.

I can confirm that neither a charging lease or Declaration of Trust is in place on the property referred to by the Deputy which means that I do not have a vested interest in the property.

### Schools Building Projects

79. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the details of an application lodged for a proposed building expansion of a school (details supplied). [2075/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I can inform the Deputy that the planning process for the project to which he refers has been completed. The Department is in contact with the school in question to address a number of issues that have arisen on site. A decision on progression of the project to the next stage is imminent.

### Compensation Schemes

80. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the expected date for the publication of the review by a person (details supplied) of the compensation scheme for children abused in schools here. [2137/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** As part of the implementation of ECtHR Judgement in the Louise O’Keeffe case, Mr Justice Iarfhlaith O’Neill, a retired High Court Judge was appointed in November 2017 as an independent assessor to assess cases where an individual has had an application for an ex-gratia scheme declined by the State Claims Agency.

Mr Justice O’Neill invited the Department to make a submission on ‘*whether the imposition of the condition which required that there had to be evidence of a prior complaint of child sexual abuse on the part of the employee in question to the school authority (or a school authority in which the employee has previously worked), to establish eligibility for a payment under the ex gratia scheme, is consistent with and a correct implementation of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Louise O’Keeffe v. Ireland*’ .

The submission forwarded to Mr Justice O’Neill on 27th April can be accessed on my Department’s website.

Mr Justice O’Neill subsequently provided copies of submissions received by him from solicitors representing applicants for assessment and from third parties and asked the Minister to address in particular ‘*the legal status and/or legal effect in domestic law, of decisions/determinations of the Committee of Ministers in relation to the implementation/enforcement of judgments of the ECtHR.*’ The submission forwarded to Mr Justice O’Neill on 14th September can be accessed on the Department’s website.

Mr Justice O’Neill then received submissions from third parties responding to the submission of 14th September and has asked for my response. This response is being prepared and will be published on the Department’s website.

Mr Justice O’Neill is independent in his role and function and his deliberations will be given in due course.

## Special Educational Needs Service Provision

81. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if it is planned to make urgent provision for a student (details supplied) to attend the ASD unit in a school and to be provided with a full-time SNA; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2155/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My officials have informed me that the student referred to by the Deputy has recently been enrolled in a Post Primary ASD special class placement in a school in the area.

Post Primary ASD special classes are resourced to cater for six pupils with complex educational needs and are staffed with a reduced PTR of 6:1.5 with a minimum of two Special Needs Assistants.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for allocating a quantum of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support for each school annually taking into account the assessed care needs of children qualifying for SNA support enrolled in the school.

Where a school has received its allocation of SNA support for 2018/19, but wishes new enrolments or assessments to be considered, which were not taken into account when the initial allocation was made, they may continue to make applications to the NCSE.

## Special Educational Needs Staff

82. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if teachers working in autism spectrum disorder units have specialised training over and above that given to primary and secondary school teachers in view of the fact that the needs of children that attend such schools are different to children in mainstream schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2164/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Teaching Council is the statutory body with responsibility for professional standards and regulation of the teaching profession. Under Section 38 of the Teaching Council Act, all initial teacher education programmes are subject to review and accreditation by the Teaching Council, in accordance with the Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers (published in 2011 and revised in March 2017). In accordance with these Criteria and Guidelines, inclusive education is a mandatory component for all students in ITE. Inclusive education encompasses education of children with special educational needs, including autism.

The learning outcomes of ITE programmes also reflect the need for the teacher to be able to conduct a systematic, holistic assessment of learner needs; to apply knowledge of the individual potential of students, their disposition towards learning and their backgrounds, identities and learning styles to their teaching; to set clear, challenging and achievable expectations for pupils; to evaluate learner progress; to act as an advocate for students, referring students for educational support as required and participating in the provision of that support, amongst other relevant outcomes.

The Teaching Council is currently carrying out a review of the impact of the current programmes, with a view to amending the Criteria and Guidelines before the next round of accreditation commences in 2020.

A recently published report from the National Council for Special Education on *Initial Teacher Education for Inclusion: Phase 1 and 2* (NCSE Research Report No. 26), found that

there is in general much good practice related to inclusive education in ITE, particularly in relation to the fostering of positive attitudes to inclusion, while also noting scope for further alignment between theory and practice, in particular as between student placement and the university experience. These findings will be considered by the Teaching Council in the course of its work.

Students in special classes require experienced teachers with appropriate qualifications and, wherever possible, a background in working with students with special educational needs.

Schools should endeavour to assign experienced teachers to Special Classes. Schools should also be proactive in meeting the continuing professional development needs of their special class teachers, in addition to developing and reviewing their whole school policies in relation to the education and inclusion of students with special educational needs.

The NCSE Support Service delivers a range of professional development initiatives and support for teachers working with students with special educational needs in special classes. Schools planning to open special class provision should contact the NCSE Support Service as soon as they receive their letter of sanction in order to facilitate planning for training of teachers. The NCSE Support Service can be contacted at: [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

In addition to the above, the Department provides funding support for teachers to expand their capacity through courses at the Middletown Centre for Autism and through funded post-graduate provision at a number of higher education institutions for teachers involved in Learning Support & Special Education.

### **Special Educational Needs Staff**

83. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there is a specific category under the Teaching Council for special education teachers as there is for primary, secondary and further education; his plans in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2165/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Teaching Council is the body with statutory responsibility for the regulation of the teaching profession including the registration of teachers in Ireland.

The Teaching Council's (Registration) Regulations 2016 (SI 444 of 2016) set out the requirements to be registered as a teacher in Ireland. Under these regulations there are four defined routes to registration, namely Route 1 Primary; Route 2 Post-Primary; Route 3 Further Education; Route 4 Other.

Under Section 38 of the Teaching Council Act, all initial teacher education (ITE) programmes in Ireland that lead to registration must have professional accreditation from the Teaching Council in accordance with the Criteria and Guidelines for Programme Providers (published in 2011 and revised in March 2017).

Under the Council's criteria for initial teacher education, student teachers in all accredited programmes are required to undertake study in Inclusive Education including Special Education.

### **Special Educational Needs Expenditure**

84. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there are additional

resources available for schools with autism spectrum disorder units; the way in which such funding and resources are allocated; if such funding is based on the number of students catered for or other criteria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2166/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department's policy is that all children with Special Educational Needs, including those with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in school settings through the primary and post primary school network.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) policy advice on Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (2016) found that students are generally well supported in schools with appropriate curriculum; extensive teacher and SNA supports; improving range of educational placements supported by improved accommodation and equipment; improved teacher knowledge and understanding and a generally good standard of provision at primary and post primary levels.

The greater proportion of children with ASD attend mainstream class, where they may access additional supports if required.

Special class placements are provided in mainstream schools for students with ASD and more complex needs, where it has been demonstrated that he/she is unable to learn effectively in a mainstream class for most or all of the school day even with appropriate supports.

Special school placements are provided for other students with ASD and very complex special needs who wouldn't manage in a mainstream school even for part of the week.

Special classes for students with ASD are staffed with a lower pupil-teacher ratio of 6:1 at primary level and 6:1.5 at post primary level, and also have a minimum of two SNAs for every class of 6 children.

Other resources which are provided to schools to support children with Special Educational Needs including Autism include the following:

- The National Educational Psychological Service
- Assistive technology.
- Access to the Special School transport scheme.
- Access to special equipment and furniture where required.
- Enhanced capitation grants at primary level
- Adapted school buildings
- ICT Grant for new classes
- Start Up grant for new classes
- Access to the extended school year scheme. (July Provision).

The NCSE has published guidelines for schools on setting up and organising Special Classes, which are available to download from [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie). The guidelines include information on resources which may be provided to schools with special classes and links to information on the how funding is allocated.

## **Special Educational Needs Staff Remuneration**

85. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if Circular 0058/2006, in particular sections 3.1 and 3.2, apply to the ETBs; if the Labour Court recommendation 20308 and the circular referenced are being monitored to ensure compliance by ETBs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2179/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Redundancy arrangements for SNAs are set out in Department Circular 0058/2006, and this circular is used to calculate redundancy payments for all SNAs. SNAs are employed in an ETB scheme, and not by individual schools. Accordingly, an SNA employed in an ETB scheme will be offered employment in another school in the scheme before redundancy can be offered.

Labour Court Recommendation 20308 of June 2012 is effected in Circular 034/2018 (this circular is reviewed annually). My Department investigates any instances of non-compliance that are brought to its attention, and reminds employers of their obligations to comply with the provisions of the aforementioned circular and the Labour Court recommendation.

## **Schools Amalgamation**

86. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 193 of 18 December 2018, if the views of the local communities in the catchment areas of schools (details supplied) in County Cavan were taken into account in the analysis of the proposal by the ETB to close both schools and provide a new facility; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there is widespread opposition at local level to the ETB proposal which did not involve negotiation or consultation with local communities prior to the decision being made by the ETB; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2184/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the decision making authority for any amalgamation belongs to the Patron/Trustees of the school, and this is subject to the approval of the Department.

Any proposed change involves extensive negotiations at local level and must be well planned and managed in a manner that accommodates the interests of students, parents, teachers, local communities and contributes to an inclusive education system.

My Department has sought further information from the Patron of the schools concerned relating to the proposed amalgamation and this is awaited. The matter can be considered further following receipt of this information.

## **School Enrolments**

87. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a suitable school place will be found for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2200/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The enrolment of a child to a school is a matter in the first instance for the parents/ guardians of the child and the Board of Management of a school. My Department has no role in relation to processing applications for enrolment to schools. The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is a statutory body, the functions of which include planning and co-ordinating the provision of education and sup-

port services to children with special educational needs. The NCSE, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports as required. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support.

SENOs are available to assist parents/guardians to identify appropriate educational placements for children with special educational needs and to discuss their child's special educational needs. As you will appreciate, SENOs are guided by the information regarding diagnosis and the recommendations contained in the reports submitted. The NCSE has published a Guide for Parents and Guardians of Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs on Choosing a School; this guide is available on the website, [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

The NCSE works in collaboration with the Educational Welfare Services (EWS) of the Child and Family Agency which is the statutory agency that can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place for their child or can offer assistance where a child is out of school. The local service is delivered through the national network of Educational Welfare Officers (EWO). Contact details are available at <http://www.tusla.ie/get-in-touch/education-and-welfare/>.

It is the responsibility of the managerial authorities of all schools to implement an enrolment policy in accordance with the Education Act, 1998. The selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants. Under section 15 (2) (d) of the Education Act 1998, each school is legally obliged to publish its enrolment policy.

It should be noted that where a parent/guardian seeks to enrol a child in a school and that school refuses to enrol the child, the school is obliged to inform the parents/guardians of their right under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 to appeal that decision to the Secretary General of my Department. Only where an appeal under Section 29 is upheld, may the Secretary General of my Department direct a school to enrol a pupil.

As the deputy's question refers to a specific child, the question will be forwarded to the NCSE for direct reply.

### **Special Educational Needs Service Provision**

88. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a school place will be offered to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2213/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The policy of my Department is to ensure that all children with special educational needs can be provided with an education appropriate to their needs.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is a separate statutory body whose functions include planning and co-ordinating the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs in conjunction with schools and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

Parents/Guardians who may need advice or are experiencing difficulties in locating a school placement, including special class placement, should contact their local Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) who can assist in identifying an appropriate educational placement for their child, using the contact details available at <http://ncse.ie/seno-contact-list>.

As the matter raised by the Deputy refers to a placement for a particular child, I have arranged for the Deputy's question to be forwarded to the National Council for Special Education for direct reply.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

89. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount spent in each year for the past five years on accountancy and consultancy firms in relation to capital projects; the specific capital project in which the costs were incurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2260/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that while the delivery of major capital projects on the school building programme uses external design teams (Architects, Engineers etc.) appointed by tender to deliver specific projects, these are not termed "consultants" in terms of the Deputy's question. Accountancy firms are not used on major school building projects.

Likewise, no expenditure has been incurred on accountancy and consultancy firms in respect of capital projects in the Higher Education sector.

### **Insurance Fraud**

90. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if additional funding will be provided to An Garda Síochána to tackle insurance fraud; if he is still committed to establishing a dedicated insurance fraud unit in An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2047/19]

91. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on establishing a publicly funded dedicated insurance fraud unit in An Garda Síochána; if the Garda Commissioner rejected the idea of a dedicated insurance unit; if the Commissioner rejected the idea of industry funding such a unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2048/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 90 and 91 together.

The Deputy is aware that the Cost of Insurance Working Group (CIWG) proposed exploring the possibility that a specific unit, funded by the insurance industry, be established within the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) to tackle insurance fraud.

The Deputy will also be aware that the GNECB has engaged with Insurance Ireland in relation to this matter and submitted a mechanism for establishing an insurance fraud unit to Insurance Ireland in the first half of 2017. Following receipt of the reply from Insurance Ireland in July 2018, I met with the GNECB and the Assistant Commissioner, Special Crime Operations, on 30 August 2018 to discuss this recommendation further.

On 13 December, my colleague, the Minister of State at the Department of Finance, Mr Michael D'Arcy, T.D., met with the Garda Commissioner to discuss matters relating to insurance fraud, including this recommendation, and the work of the CIWG. I am aware that the Commissioner indicated his preference at this meeting that, in principle, An Garda Síochána should not be funded by any source other than the exchequer for the purposes of tackling insurance fraud.

I am further informed that the Commissioner undertook to further consider the establish-

ment of an insurance fraud investigation unit within the GNECB. The Deputy will, of course, appreciate that it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible for the allocation of resources within An Garda Síochána and I have no role, as Minister, in such operational matters. The Budget allocated to An Garda Síochána for 2019 is in excess of €1.76 billion, an increase of over €100 million on the 2018 allocation.

More broadly, I am aware that considerable progress has been made in enhancing the level of engagement and cooperation between An Garda Síochána and the insurance industry, in part, via the Fraud Roundtable, established under the CIWG and which involved wide stakeholder consultation. A notable output of the Fraud Roundtable engagement is the commitment for the GNECB and Insurance Ireland's Anti-Fraud Forum to meet on a regular basis in order to discuss and act upon current and ongoing general issues, which arise in the area of insurance fraud. I welcome this enhanced cooperation, which will be very important going forward in tackling the issue of fraudulent claims.

My officials remain in close, ongoing contact with An Garda Síochána in relation to this matter.

### **Closed-Circuit Television Systems**

92. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding community CCTV; and the progress of ongoing talks with the Local Government Management Agency and an organisation (details supplied). [2052/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will be aware that CCTV systems installed for the purposes of crime prevention and as aids to policing in areas to which the general public routinely have access, such as town centres, fall into two distinct but complementary categories, namely Garda CCTV systems and community-based CCTV systems. Neither may be established without authorisation by the Garda Commissioner under section 38 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, among other requirements.

Community CCTV is governed by section 38(3)(c) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005 and the Garda Síochána (CCTV) Order 2006 (SI No 289 of 2006). This legal framework requires that any proposed community CCTV scheme must:

- be approved by the local Joint Policing Committee,
- have the authorisation of the Garda Commissioner, and
- have the prior support of the relevant local authority, which must also act as data controller.

This is the legal basis for all community CCTV schemes, regardless of how they are funded.

As the Deputy is aware, the Programme for a Partnership Government commits to supporting investment in CCTV systems. In furtherance of this commitment, a grant-aid scheme to assist groups in the establishment of community-based CCTV systems in their local areas is being administered by my Department. Eligible groups, including community groups and local authorities, can apply for grant-aid of up to 60% of the total capital cost of a proposed CCTV system, up to a maximum total of €40,000.

There have to date been 28 applications to the scheme. 20 applications have been approved, involving approved grants totalling more than €500,000. A further 5 applications to the scheme are currently being assessed and considered. The remaining 3 applications have been returned

to the applicants concerned to enable them to supply the information necessary to qualify for grant aid.

In accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005 and the Garda Síochána (CCTV) Order 2006, any proposed community CCTV scheme must have the prior support of the relevant local authority, which must also act as data controller. I understand that the large majority of local authorities have previously undertaken to act as data controllers in the context of specific community CCTV schemes. This has been the case either in the course of the current grant-aid scheme administered by my Department, in connection with the previous grant-aid scheme operated by Pobal on behalf of the Department, or in connection with schemes funded independently by local authorities. I understand from my Department's engagement with the Local Government Management Agency that the total number of local authorities which have undertaken the role of data controller for these purposes amounts to 28 out of the 31 local authorities nationwide.

The Deputy may also wish to be aware that on 29 November 2018 the Data Protection Commissioner's Office issued a note (available on its website [www.dataprotection.ie](http://www.dataprotection.ie)) confirming that there is a legal basis for community based CCTV and that the General Data Protection Regulation does not introduce new barriers in that regard. In particular, the Data Protection Commission confirmed that: "Data protection legislation does not stand in the way of the roll-out of Community based CCTV schemes that have been authorised by the Garda Commissioner. Once the local authority in the administrative area concerned is willing to take on and deliver on its responsibilities as a data controller for the schemes concerned, there is no legal impediment under data protection legislation to the scheme commencing."

The Data Protection Commissioner's Office is currently conducting an audit of the practice, operation and governance of CCTV as part of a wider inquiry into surveillance through the use of technologies for law enforcement purposes. We expect the findings from the CCTV module of this process to be of assistance to all concerned and in particular to local authorities.

The Deputy referred to engagement with the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) and the County and City Management Association (CCMA). I can confirm that my Department is engaging positively and on an ongoing basis with the LGMA and the CCMA, as well as with any individual local authorities making separate contact, to clarify any queries arising and to assist those interested in availing of the scheme.

I am keen to ensure that all interested groups, in both rural and urban areas, have the opportunity to take advantage of the availability of the grant aid scheme. If the Deputy is aware of groups wishing to avail of the scheme, details of the grant aid package are available on my Department's website [www.justice.ie](http://www.justice.ie) and support and guidance is available to help interested groups to apply for this funding through a dedicated email address [communitycctv@justice.ie](mailto:communitycctv@justice.ie).

### **Courts Service Properties**

93. **Deputy Pat Casey** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the refurbishment and reopening of Wicklow town courthouse; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2109/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will be aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts, including the provision of accommodation for court sittings, is the responsibility of the Courts Service which is independent in exercising its functions.

However, a number of developments in relation to Courts Service accommodation require-

ments are outlined in the Government's recent National Development Plan 2018 - 2027. They include:

- Further new or refurbished courthouses in regional cities and county towns where facilities remain substandard (including Galway City, **Wicklow Town**, Portlaoise, Tralee and Roscommon) and further provincial locations such as An Clochan Liath (Dungloe) to serve as the Gaeltacht court for the region, and Tuam;

- Regional Family Law Centres;

- A nationwide condition survey of all court buildings in the estate will be undertaken to determine their condition and identify works required in relation to any issues identified and meet ongoing maintenance requirements.

The precise allocation and timing of additional funding over the entire ten year period remains to be fully determined. It will be dependent on the outcome of further detailed planning and analysis of costs which will determine prioritisation of projects from a timing and budgetary perspective.

Furthermore, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that, as part of its provincial capital building programme, one of the objectives is to extend and refurbish the courthouse in Wicklow town to provide a significantly larger 4 courtroom venue together with a range of facilities for staff, the judiciary, persons in custody, jurors, legal professionals, other state agencies and members of the public.

The Courts Service has indicated that while detailed planning or design work has not yet commenced, it has purchased a number of adjacent properties, some of which will be demolished in order to create a larger site capable of accommodating a courthouse building on the scale envisaged. Assistance has been sought from the OPW in this regard and it is hoped that demolition work will proceed in 2019.

### **Legislative Process**

94. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the Parental Leave (Amendment) Bill 2017; his plans to continue to support the legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2119/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** It is important to note that the Government has always been, and continues to be, supportive of the principle of Parental Leave. In fact, as part of Budget 2019, the Government announced the introduction of a new paid parental leave scheme, which will commence later this year. This new scheme will initially provide two weeks of paid, non-transferable leave per parent, with a view to expanding the scheme and increasing the number of weeks of paid leave for both parents in future years.

During the debate in Dáil Éireann on the Parental Leave (Amendment) Bill 2017, I strongly suggested that the relevant Oireachtas Committee would carry out detailed pre-legislative scrutiny on this Bill. If this had occurred, it would have allowed all stakeholders to scrutinise the proposed legislation and to report on any policy or legal issues which may have been identified. It is my view that this is what should happen with all such legislation. Unfortunately, this scrutiny did not take place and it has now arisen that a number of Government Departments have raised certain issues which need to be clarified.

Subsequently, it has been brought to my attention that the Bill's sponsors have decided not to proceed with the Committee Stage in the Seanad at this time.

### **Victim Support Services**

95. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if State prosecution witnesses receive ongoing support in serious criminal prosecution cases in which the witness may fear for their safety due to the release of the perpetrator; and the details of the supports a witness may have access to. [2122/19]

96. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if State witnesses in serious criminal cases are informed prior to a decision on the early release of the person they testified against; and if such information is passed on as a matter of routine. [2123/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 95 and 96 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, there are specific legislative provisions in place, under section 41 of the Criminal Justice Act 1999, to protect witnesses and victims of crime from any form of intimidation in their reporting of crime and in their assisting An Garda Síochána in crime investigation. Under this Act, it is a criminal offence to harm or threaten, menace or in any other way intimidate or put in fear another person who is assisting in an investigation of an offence by An Garda Síochána.

I am assured that when An Garda Síochána become aware of a potential threat to life, whether against a witness in a serious criminal case or against anybody else, immediate steps are taken by Gardaí to mitigate against this danger such as, for example, the issuing of a Garda Information Message warning to those whose lives might be in danger from criminals. However, I would encourage any person who fears for their safety, or indeed the Deputy if she is aware of such a concern, to contact their local/nearest Garda station as a matter of urgency. Alternatively, and if they so wished, they can contact An Garda Síochána by using the Garda Confidential Line on Tel: 1800 666111.

I can assure the Deputy that An Garda Síochána will continue to place the highest importance on the safety of our citizens and will always be on hand to advise any individual regarding any safety concerns they might have.

### **Rights of People with Disabilities**

97. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the optional protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities will be ratified. [2153/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy Finian McGrath):** As the Deputy will be aware, Ireland ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) following a cabinet decision on the 30th of January 2018. Following the passing of a resolution in the Dáil, the instrument of ratification was deposited with the UN on the 20th of March and the Convention came into force for Ireland on the 19th of April 2018.

The Convention and the Optional Protocol cover a broad range of commitments some of which require substantive cultural change such as those relating to de-congregation, personalised budgets and deprivation of liberty.

The Government's approach to meeting the terms of the Convention is one of sustained and ongoing improvement. Work is continuing on the reforms needed for an optimum level of compliance with the Convention's requirements. Accordingly, the Optional Protocol is not being ratified at this time but will be ratified at the earliest opportunity following completion of Ireland's first reporting cycle, which will identify any additional actions needed to ensure the highest possible level of compliance with the Convention.

### **Juvenile Offenders**

98. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the audit will be published of juvenile crime cases in which senior gardaí failed to take action on a significant number of the cases; the steps he plans to take in respect of the victims of these crimes; the way in which he plans to ensure accountability for these failures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2188/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** As the Deputy is aware, a number of issues relating to the treatment of youth crime cases were identified following the completion, in June 2017, of an examination of the Garda Diversion Programme by the Garda Professional Standards Unit (GPSU).

Subsequently, An Garda Síochána initiated a detailed review of youth crime cases from 2010 – 2017. Importantly, the Policing Authority has been monitoring the review process closely. It has taken some time to complete this very complex review task, which involved an assessment of over 22,000 youth crime cases spread over all 28 Garda Divisions. I expect that the public examination of the matter by the Policing Authority, which is due to take place today, 17 January, will help clarify the extent of the systemic problems involved.

I met with the Garda Commissioner recently who briefed me on the work which has been done as part of the review of youth crime cases. I am advised that we are dealing with significant systemic issues and it is clearly appropriate for the Policing Authority to pursue these matters in accordance with its remit.

I am informed that an interim report was presented to the Commissioner yesterday and remains under consideration within An Garda Síochána. I am also informed that the Commissioner has recently initiated a process of external evaluation of the matters raised in this report and I await the outcome of this process, which will also be notified to the Policing Authority.

### **Wards of Court**

99. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if consideration will be given to removing wards funds from the control of the High Court; and if so, if such funds will be given to an independent body in order that the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993 can be amended to allow for auditing of same by the Comptroller and Auditor General. [2189/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy is 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.

At this time, I am not minded to remove wards of court funds, which are not public funds,

from the control of the High Court. As the Deputy is aware, the Courts Service has advised that there is already independent oversight of the investment and management of wards' funds. These funds are independently audited by external auditors in compliance with Generally Accepted Auditing Standards (GAAP) and the audited financial statements are published.

The Deputy will also be aware that the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 provides a modern statutory framework to support decision-making by adults with capacity difficulties. New administrative processes and support measures, including the setting up of the Decision Support Service within the Mental Health Commission (a body under the Department of Health), must be put in place before the substantive provisions of the Act can be commenced.

The Act provides for the repeal of the Lunacy Regulation (Ireland) Act 1871 and the Marriage of Lunatics Act 1811. The current Wards of Court system for adults will be phased out over a three year period from the commencement of Part 6 of the Act. The Act offers a continuum of options to support people in maximising their decision-making capability.

Each adult ward (a ward who has attained the age of 18 years by the date of commencement of Part 6 of the Act) will be reviewed in accordance with the new system. A ward who is found to have capacity will be discharged from wardship. A ward who continues to have capacity needs will be discharged from wardship and offered the support option most appropriate to his or her needs. Wards who are discharged from wardship will have their property returned to them in accordance with the provisions of Part 6 of the Act.

### **Naturalisation Applications**

**100. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status and likely eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2193/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the processing of the application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy is ongoing. On completion of the necessary processing the application will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible. Should further documentation be required it will be requested from the applicant in due course.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements, not only within the State but also at European Union level, and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

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**

101. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedure to be followed to regularise residency in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2194/19]

**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 information provided by the Deputy is not sufficient to establish the correct identity of the individual concerned in order to provide a response on the matter.

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**

102. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the residency requirements of a person (details supplied) will be considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2195/19]

**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), the partner of the person named has not submitted written representations.

The position in the State of the partner of the person named will now be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and all other applicable legislation. If any representations are submitted, they will be considered before a final decision is 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.

### **Immigration Status**

103. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a person (details supplied) will be facilitated by way of stamp 4 or naturalisation in view of their marriage to an Irish citizen for more than 25 years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2197/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that there is no record of an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy. A deter-

mination on whether an applicant satisfies the statutory criteria attendant to naturalisation can only be made after an application is received.

It is 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.

Full details of the eligibility criteria and extensive guidelines are available on the INIS website at [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie).

The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and I know the Deputy will appreciate that it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to 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**

104. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a change of address will be noted in the case of a person (details supplied) with a view to continued assessment of their eligibility for appropriate residency status; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2198/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The new address of the person concerned has been noted on his case file.

Given that the person concerned had no valid basis to remain in the State, he was, by letter dated 20 November 2012, notified that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making written representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why he should not have a Deportation Order made against him.

The position in the State of the person concerned will now be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and all other applicable legislation. Any representations submitted will be considered before a final decision is 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.

### **Deportation Orders**

105. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if arrangements will be made to defer proposals to deport in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2199/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the persons concerned have no valid basis to remain in the State. They were notified, by letter dated 20 December 2018, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of them. They were given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making written representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why they should not have a Deportation Order made against them.

Written representations have not been received on behalf of the persons concerned to date.

The position in the State of the persons concerned will be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and all other applicable legislation. Any representations submitted will be considered before a final decision is 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.

### **Citizenship Applications**

106. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of an application for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2203/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that, as indicated in my response to the Deputy's Parliamentary Question No. 94 of the 13 December 2018, the application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to by the Deputy continues to be processed and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible. If further documentation is required it will be requested from the applicant in due course.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

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**

107. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedure to be followed in the case of a person (details supplied); if stamp 4 will be updated with a view to reactivation or alternative; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2204/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that, as indicated in my response to the Deputy's Parliamentary Question No. 95 of the 13 December 2018, the person referred to by the Deputy was invited to attend a citizenship ceremony which took place on 21 May 2018 in The Killarney Convention Centre, Gleneagle Hotel, Killarney, Co. Kerry but failed to attend. It is incumbent on Mr Kifu to write to the Citizenship Division outlining the reason for his non-attendance at the above-mentioned ceremony and requesting an invitation to a future ceremony, if he wishes to attend same.

The records indicate that the current permission to reside in the State granted to the person concerned expired on 22 May 2018. It is up to the person concerned to seek permission to remain beyond the expiry of his current permission. All non-EEA nationals are required to keep their permission to remain in the State up to date at all times, and to have such permission registered. Failure to do so may adversely affect an application for a certificate of naturalisation

As the Deputy will appreciate, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements, not only within the State but also at European Union level, and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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**

108. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the residency status and eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2206/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned has permission to reside in the State on Stamp 4 conditions as a dependant of an Irish national. This permission is valid until 28 November 2019 and may be renewed, subject to compliance with the relevant conditions, with the person's local Immigration Officer.

I am also informed that it remains open to the person concerned to make an application for Irish citizenship under the naturalisation process. Detailed information regarding eligibility for naturalisation in respect of the person concerned can be obtained from the INIS website at

<http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/Pages/citizenship>.

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 INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Immigration Status**

109. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if entitlement to work in the case of persons (details supplied) can be transferred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2207/19]

**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 has permission to reside in the State under Stamp 3 conditions until 21 November, 2020. I am further informed that INIS has no record of correspondence from the person concerned in relation to a request for a change of immigration status to allow the person work in the State.

I am further informed that it is open to the person concerned to make an application to vary their permission to reside in this State. In order to allow for a full examination of the person's circumstances, the person concerned should write to Unit 2, Domestic Residence and Permissions Division, INIS, 13/14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2 and provide a detailed account and documentary evidence of their personal circumstances.

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.

### **Naturalisation Applications**

110. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position in regard to eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2210/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that there is no record of a current application for a certificate of naturalisation from the persons referred to by the Deputy. A determination on whether an applicant satisfies the statutory criteria attendant to naturalisation can only be made after an application is received, and every application is considered on its individual merits, regardless of whether the applicant had applied previously.

As two of the persons referred to by the Deputy are adults it is open to them 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.

As regards the third person referred to by the Deputy, where sections 6A and 6B of the Irish

Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, are applicable, a child born in the island of Ireland on or after 1 January 2005 has an entitlement to Irish citizenship if, at the time of the birth of the child, one of his or her parents had, during the period of 4 years immediately preceding the person's birth, been resident in the island of Ireland for a period of not less than 3 years or periods the aggregate of which is not less than 3 years. Periods of unlawful residence, periods of residence which were for the sole purpose of having an application for refugee status determined or periods of residence where permission was granted for the purposes of study are excluded from the determination of periods of reckonable residence. Entitlement of a child to Irish citizenship is determined by the Passport Office following receipt of an application for a passport on the child's behalf.

Where a child born in the State did not at birth have an entitlement to Irish citizenship, the parent or guardian or person who is in loco parentis to the child may lodge an application for naturalisation on behalf of the child if and when the conditions for naturalisation are satisfied, including a requirement to have 5 years residence in the State.

The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and I know the Deputy will appreciate that it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to 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.

### **Deportation Orders**

111. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a reprieve will be granted in respect of a proposed deportation of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2212/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order signed on 29 September 2017. This Order requires the person to remove themselves from the State and remain outside the State. The enforcement of the Deportation Order is a matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

As previously advised, representations were received from the person concerned, pursuant to the provisions of section 3(11) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), requesting that the Deportation Order be revoked. Following the detailed consideration of the information submitted in support of the request, the Deportation Order was affirmed and notified to Ms. Fernandes by letter dated 27 November 2018.

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.

## Departmental Expenditure

112. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount spent in each year for the past five years on accountancy and consultancy firms in relation to capital projects; the specific capital project in which the costs were incurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2266/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** My Department has not engaged accountancy or consultancy firms in relation to capital projects in the past five years. Capital projects arise in the main within agencies in the Justice and Equality sector rather than the Department itself, or are managed by the Office of Public Works on behalf of the Department and its agencies. In that regard I have requested that the agencies under the remit of my Department respond directly to the Deputy.

## Community Policing

113. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans in relation to the provision of additional resources to An Garda Síochána for community policing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2288/19]

**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.

Community policing is at the heart of An Garda Síochána as it recognises that every community, either urban or rural, has its own concerns and expectations. The role of a community Garda is not a specialist role in An Garda Síochána; rather it is the case that all Gardaí have a role to play in community policing in carrying out their duties. The official categorisation of Community Garda simply refers to those who are exclusively assigned to building relationships with local communities and civil society including giving talks to schools, community groups and others. It is a matter for the Divisional Chief Superintendent to determine the optimum distribution of duties among the personnel available to him or her having regard to the profile of the area and its specific needs.

Since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, almost 2,400 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. This accelerated recruitment of Gardaí saw Garda numbers reach just over 14,000 by the end of 2018. Furthermore, a total budget of €1.76 billion has been provided to An Garda Síochána in 2019, an increase of over €100 million on the 2018 allocation. This substantial investment will provide new and leading edge technology to support our front line Gardaí in carrying out their work and increasing visibility in both rural and urban communities

The Garda Commissioner has informed me that it is his intention to recruit a total of 600 trainee Gardaí in 2019 along with a net 600 Garda Staff (civilians). The recruitment of these additional Garda staff will allow the Commissioner to redeploy this year a further 500 fully trained Gardaí from administrative duties to the frontline duties for which they are trained. I believe that the injection of this large number of experienced officers into the field, along with the new recruits, will be really beneficial in terms of protecting communities. This and on-going recruitment will clearly provide the Commissioner with the resources needed to deploy increas-

ing numbers of Gardaí across the organisation, including Community Policing in the coming years.

### **Garda Resources**

114. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if additional resources will be provided to An Garda Síochána to deal with the increasing problems due to the widespread availability of illicit drugs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2289/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Since the reopening of the Garda College in September 2014, just under 2,400 Garda recruits have been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide, including 800 new Gardaí during 2018.

As the Deputy is aware, the manner in which the resources of An Garda Síochána are deployed is solely a matter for the Garda Commissioner and his management team and I, as Minister, have no direct role in this regard. However, I am informed by the Commissioner that the resources coming on stream has enabled him to assign additional resources to the specialist units that come within the ambit of Special Crime Operations, including the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau.

The Government has increased the budget for An Garda Síochána to €1.76 billion for 2019, which included provision for the recruitment of up to 800 Gardaí this year. The Commissioner has informed me that he intends to recruit a total of 600 trainee Gardaí along with a net 600 Garda Staff. The recruitment of these additional Garda Staff will allow the Commissioner to redeploy this year a further 500 fully trained Gardaí from administrative duties to the frontline policing duties for which they were trained.

I am assured that An Garda Síochána remains resolute in its determination to act against those within society who pose a significant threat to the welfare and well-being of our citizens and the communities they serve. All Gardaí have a responsibility in the prevention and detection of criminal activity whether it be in the area of drug offences crime or otherwise. A core focus of the work carried out by An Garda Síochána is aimed at tackling drugs and organised crime.

The Garda Commissioner has confirmed that the Government's commitment to increase the overall strength of An Garda Síochána to 15,000 Garda members will be achieved by the target date of 2021. The Government fully supports the Commissioner's management decision which will ensure that increasing numbers of Gardaí are available for frontline duties in the prevention and detection of criminal activity whether it be in the area of drug offences crime or otherwise in 2019 and beyond.

### **Consumer Protection**

115. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of complaints lodged with the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission in each of the years 2015 to 2018, relating to the sale of tickets and or ticket touting practices; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2183/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) is the statutory body responsible for the enforcement of competition and consumer law in the State.

Section 9(5) of the Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2014 provides that the CCPC is independent in the performance of its functions, including its day to day operational work regarding complaints made to it and I, as Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, have no direct function in such matters.

Notwithstanding this, the CCPC have informed me of the aggregated figures for consumer and competition-related complaints in relation to ticketing by year that have been logged on their consumer contact line (supplied below).

**Year No. of complaints**

2015 104

2016 220

2017 332

2018 350.

**Work Permits Eligibility**

116. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if entitlement to work in the case of persons (details supplied) can be transferred; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2208/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Employment Permits Section of my Department inform me that the individual referred to by the Deputy does not currently hold an employment permit but may have immigration permission allowing the individual to work without an employment permit. My colleague, the Minister for Justice and Equality, has responsibility for issuing immigration permissions and visas.

It is open to any foreign national living in the State with the requisite immigration permission to apply for an employment permit. Any such application should meet with the relevant legislative requirements including having secured a job offer for an eligible occupation from an Irish registered employer.

Details on how to apply for an employment permit are available on the Department's website at the following link - <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Workplace-and-Skills/Employment-Permits/>

My officials have produced a comprehensive Frequently Asked Question document covering all aspects of the Employment Permits regime which is available here -

<https://dbei.gov.ie/en/What-We-Do/Workplace-and-Skills/Employment-Permits/FAQs/Employment-Permits-FAQs-2018.pdf>

**IDA Ireland**

117. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if a tenant has been secured in the IDA advanced facility in Castlebar as was announced recently to local media by a person (details supplied). [2233/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** IDA

Ireland are not in a position to provide details on a prospective tenant for the IDA advanced facility in Castlebar.

It should be noted that the announcement of any investment by IDA Ireland client companies is always at the discretion of the individual company involved.

### Brexit Supports

118. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the take-up of all Brexit supports in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2248/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** My Department and its agencies are working to provide extensive supports, schemes and advice to ensure that businesses are prepared for Brexit. These measures aim to assist businesses in identifying key risk areas and the practical preparatory actions to be taken over the coming weeks.

In addition to the direct supports outlined in the following table, my Department and I have been very active in the ‘Getting Ireland Brexit Ready’ public information campaign. This campaign includes workshop events throughout the country aimed primarily at business and people most impacted by Brexit. Officials from my Department and agencies also participated in the Getting Ireland Brexit Ready events, which included Enterprise Ireland, IDA, the LEOs, NSAI and the HSA.

Further to the below, increased funding has been allocated to Brexit-related support from my Department and its agencies as part of Budget 2019. An additional €5 million capital funding has been allocated to the Local Enterprise Offices, an increase of 22%, and a further €1 million allocated to InterTrade Ireland to help SMEs prepare for the particular North-South challenges associated with Brexit. Additional resources have also been distributed across Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland and the Health and Safety Authority.

Work continues on the development of the Future Growth Loan Scheme, which will provide a longer-term facility, 8 to 10 years, of up to €300m to support strategic capital investment for a post-Brexit environment by business at competitive rates.

While many businesses have taken preparedness actions, a number have yet to do so. It is vital that businesses prepare themselves for Brexit impacts and take actions to mitigate. Firms that do business with the UK, whether buying goods or exporting products, should examine their supply chains to determine their vulnerabilities and take appropriate action.

Scheme	Uptake as at 7 January
Brexit Loan Scheme	369 applications received, 325 approved by SBCI, 63 Loans progressed to sanction at bank level to a value of €14.83 million (this figure as at 11 January)
Enterprise Ireland Brexit Scorecard - online platform for Irish companies to self-assess their exposure to Brexit	3,712 Brexit Scorecards have been completed. 651 LEO clients have completed the scorecard.
Enterprise Ireland Be Prepared Grant	151 Be Prepared Grants have been approved
Enterprise Ireland Market Discovery Fund - A support to EI clients to research new markets	208 projects have been approved under this initiative

Scheme	Uptake as at 7 January
Enterprise Ireland Agile Innovation Fund - Gives rapid fast-track access to innovation funding	39 Agile Innovation projects have been approved
Enterprise Ireland Brexit Advisory Clinics	11 Brexit Advisory Clinics have been run with approx. 915 in attendance
Enterprise Ireland Brexit “Act On Programme” – A support funding the engagement of a consultant to devise report with recommendations to help clients address weaknesses and improve resilience	165 “Act on” Plans have been completed
Enterprise Ireland Strategic Consultancy Grant – A grant to assist EI clients to hire a strategic consultant for a set period	1,049 Strategic Consultancy Grants have been approved
Enterprise Ireland Brexit-exposed companies that have completed sustainable growth plans	706
Local Enterprise Office Technical Assistance Grant for Micro Export - an incentive for LEO clients to explore and develop new market opportunities	391 clients were approved assistance under the Technical Assistance Grant
Local Enterprise Office LEAN for Micro - The LEO Lean4Micro offer was developed in collaboration between the EI Lean department and the LEOs to tailor the EI Lean offer for LEO micro enterprise clients	221 LEO clients have participated in the programme
Local Enterprise Office Mentoring	402 mentoring participants solely focused on Brexit
Local Enterprise Office Brexit Seminars/Events	3,996 Participants at the Brexit Information events
InterTradeIreland Brexit Advisory Service	4,175 SMEs have directly engaged with the Brexit Advisory Service in 2018 [this figure as at early December 2018, pending annual report]
InterTradeIreland Brexit Start to Plan Vouchers	There have been 811 applications, with 657 approved and 25 still pending assessment [this figure as at early December 2018, pending annual report]
Pilot Online Retail Scheme administered by Enterprise Ireland	Total fund of €1.25m. The first call opened on 24 October and closed on the 5 December. Applications are currently being assessed by Enterprise Ireland and the successful applicants will be announced in Q1 2019. There will also be a second call in 2019

### Departmental Expenditure

119. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount spent in each year for the past five years on accountancy and consultancy firms in rela-

tion to capital projects; the specific capital project in which the costs were incurred; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2255/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Details of expenditure by my Department on accountancy and consultancy in relation to capital projects in each of the last five years are set out in the following tables.

2018
Nil

2017
Nil

2016
Nil

2015		
Capital Project	Consultancy/Accountancy Firm Contracted	Amount
Consultancy to assess Ireland's future research Infrastructure needs to support a national strategy for science, technology & innovation	Technopolis Group	€40,836 (VAT inc)

2014		
Capital Project	Consultancy/Accountancy Firm Contracted	Amount
Consultancy to assess Ireland's future research Infrastructure needs to support a national strategy for science, technology & innovation	Technopolis Group	€30,750 (VAT inc)

### Higher Education Institutions Expenditure

120. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount of funding allocated to the programme for research in third level institutions in each of the years 2010 to 2018; the amount subsequently expended in each year; the amount of funding allocated in 2019; the amount of funding that has been ring-fenced for frontier research in 2019, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2290/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan):** The Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions (PRTLTI) was launched in 1998, with five cycles of expenditure to-date. The Programme is designed to facilitate Ireland's Higher Education Institutions to produce world class research in key strategic areas including bioscience/biomedical; medical technologies; energy, environment and marine; food and drink; social sciences and humanities; ICT and advanced communications and platform technologies and materials.

The PRTLTI has supported the provision of top-class research infrastructure (buildings, laboratories and cutting-edge equipment) as well as human capital development, through Structured PhD/Emergent Technology programmes across Ireland’s Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). My Department took over responsibility for the PRTLTI in May 2010, from the Department of Education and Skills. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) continues to administer Cycle 5 of the Programme on behalf of my Department.

The allocations and amounts expended on the PRTLTI in the years 2010 – 2018 are set out in Table A, with some increases in funding due to Supplementary Estimates (as detailed below). The full amount allocated in the Department’s Vote under the Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions is expended within the year. The PRTLTI allocation for 2019 is €24.3m.

Table A - PRTLTI funding 2010-2018

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Allocation €m	49.9	57.9	54.7	45.2	39	55.5*	30.4**	26.4***	18.3****

\*2015 allocation included a Supplementary Estimate of €23.5m in December 2015

\*\*2016 allocation included a Supplementary Estimate of €20m in December 2016

\*\*\*2017 allocation included a Supplementary Estimate of €12m in December 2017

\*\*\*\*2018 allocation included a Supplementary Estimate of €4m in December 2018

While there is no specific allocation within the PRTLTI for frontier research, Innovation 2020 committed to establishing a new programme of funding for frontier research across all disciplines. The Irish Research Council (under the Department of Education and Skills) launched the Frontier Research Programme or Laureate Awards in April 2017 with an initial fund of €2.5 million, to support researchers to undertake project-based frontier research and to develop as Principal Investigators. A total of €29.6 million was subsequently announced for investment by the Irish Research Council in “frontier research” projects in March, 2018.

As in previous years, the 2019 PRTLTI allocation of €24.3 million is being used to part pay outstanding bills for PRTLTI Cycle 5 projects. It also funds vital shared infrastructure essential to the third level research sector, including part payment of an annual subscription for e-Journals. E-Journals funding provides Irish based scientists online access to a wide range of leading international scientific journals and is a necessary tool to enable them to conduct their own research. E-Journals formed part of the transfer of functions between my Department and the Department of Education & Skills as decided by Government order in May 2010.

In addition, some of this money will be used to allow for the commencement of dedicated funding for PhD/Research Masters enrolment through the new Centres for Research Training. This programme is administered by Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) and will fund postgraduate enrolments in disciplines under their remit. This initiative accords with the action in Innovation 2020 to increase postgraduate researcher enrolments, in disciplines aligned to enterprise and national needs.

In 2017, my Department and its agencies were responsible for the largest proportion of Government investment in R&D at €380.6m or 51.5% of total Government Investment. Other Departments also provided funding for research and development across sectors. The Department of Education and Skills had an R&D outturn in 2017 of €180.4m or 24.4% of total Government Investment in R&D while the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine invested €95.1m or 12.9% in 2017. Overall Government funding of R&D in 2017 was €739.3m and represents

an increase of 2.8% over the outturn figure for 2016. Government investment in R&D includes funding for programmes that encompass all disciplines and all types of research.

### **Higher Education Institutions**

121. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the introduction of a new five year cycle with respect to the programme for research in third level institutions; the duration of the cycle in operation; and when it ceases. [2291/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan):** The current Cycle 5 of the Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions (PRTLTI) was announced in 2010 and has involved exchequer expenditure of approx. €277m with a further €59m of private investment. Cycle 5 projects have now been completed and my Department is addressing the remaining payments associated with these awards. In addition to supporting the provision of top-class research infrastructure (buildings, laboratories and cutting-edge equipment), PRTLTI saw significant investment in human capital development, through Structured PhD/Emergent Technology programmes across Ireland's Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

Innovation 2020, the Government's strategy for research and innovation, includes an action to scope out and develop a successor to PRTLTI to support new investment in research infrastructure, including buildings and equipment. It also contains an action to increase the enrolment of PhD and research masters students. The scoping of a future cycle of PRTLTI has been undertaken by my Department, working with the Department of Education and Skills (DES).

While future cycles of PRTLTI are referenced in the National Development Plan, Project Ireland 2040, it is important to note that actions are already being taken by DBEI and DES to fund all of the key elements that had been encompassed by PRTLTI including research buildings, equipment and structured PhD programmes. These actions include:

- my Department, through Science Foundation Ireland, has allocated more than €74m for research equipment across the higher education system since the start of 2016, providing significant additional investment for research equipment. This includes €24.8m in 2018.

- My Department, again through Science Foundation Ireland, has commenced roll-out of a new €100 million programmes of investment in PhDs and Research Masters through new Centres for Research Training (CRT). The annual budget for this programme will increase to €15 million this year. The CRT programme will provide training for cohorts of Research Masters and PhD students with new cohorts of students enrolling each year for four years from 2019. It will provide training for 600 postgraduate students in areas of nationally and internationally identified future skills needs of digital, data and ICT.

- The Department of Education and Skills also announced funding in the context of Budget 2018 and 2019 to address the need for physical space for research in the higher education sector. This included Budget 2018 announcements of €200m for public private partnerships in the Institute of Technology sector and €257m for investment in the higher education sector generally, including for research. Budget 2019 then saw announcements of €57 million to be invested in higher education initiatives in 2019 along with capital investment of €150 million being allocated to the higher education, further education and training and research sectors. Project Ireland 2040 signals a significant commitment in capital investments in the region of €2.8 billion by the Department of Education and Skills in higher education over the coming decade and this includes support for research. On 11th January 2019, the Minister for Education and Skills

announced a call for applications for a €80 million Higher Education Strategic Infrastructure Fund which forms part of this Project Ireland 2040 programme of investment.

The actions being taken by my Department and the Department of Education and Skills are addressing to a significant degree the requirements for increased investment in both physical infrastructure and human capital in higher education research as identified in Innovation 2020.

### Research and Development Data

122. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the level of public research and development intensity as measured as a percentage of GDP in each of the years 2005 to 2018; and the budgeted figure for 2019, in tabular form. [2292/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan):** The information is contained in the table.

Year	GBARD as percentage of GDP
2005	0.42%
2006	0.41%
2007	0.45%
2008	0.50%
2009	0.52%
2010	0.49%
2011	0.45%
2012	0.43%
2013	0.40%
2014	0.37%
2015	0.28%
2016	0.26%
2017	0.25%
2018 estimate	0.24%

The Table shows Government Budget Allocations on R&D (GBARD) as a percentage of GDP for the years 2005 to 2018. Note data for 2019 is not available yet. For more information please see the R&D Budget 2017-2018 at the following link:

<https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/The-R-D-Budget-2017-2018.html>.

### Research and Development Data

123. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the Eurostat data as a percentage of each member state's GDP; and the monetary amount each Government expended on research spending on an annual basis over the 2018 period. [2293/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan):** The information is as follows:

Year: 2017

GEO	GBARD €m	GBARD as percentage GDP
European Union (current composition)	96,470.7	0.63
Euro area (19 countries)	74,538.8	0.67
Belgium	2,870.2	0.66
Bulgaria	109.6	0.21
Czechia	1,240.7	0.65
Denmark	2,613.4	0.90
Germany	29,006.1	0.89
Estonia	143.2	0.61
Ireland	739.3	0.25
Greece	850.2	0.48
Spain	5,917.8	0.51
France	14,747.9	0.64
Croatia	355.0	0.72
Italy	8,577.9	0.50
Cyprus	61.1	0.31
Latvia	60.0	0.22
Lithuania	132.2	0.31
Luxembourg	352.9	0.64
Hungary	317.8	0.26
Malta	21.3	0.19
Netherlands	5,107.4	0.69
Austria	2,854.3	0.77
Poland	1,687.9	0.36
Portugal	712.6	0.37
Romania	352.4	0.19
Slovenia	172.3	0.40
Slovakia	297.1	0.35
Finland	1,885.9	0.84
Sweden	3,806.7	0.80
United Kingdom	11,448.5	0.49
Iceland	132.5	0.61
Norway	3,562.1	1.01
Serbia	147.5	0.40

The table shows Government Budget Allocations on R&D (GBARD) and as a percentage of GDP for EU countries for 2017. Data for 2018 is not yet available from Eurostat. For more information please see the R&D Budget 2017-2018 report at the following link:

<https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/The-R-D-Budget-2017-2018.html>.

### Research and Development Data

124. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the

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amount expended here as a percentage of GDP on research spending in each of the years 2010 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [2294/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan):** The information is as follows:

Year	GERD as a percentage of GDP
2010	1.6%
2011	1.6%
2012	1.6%
2013	1.6%
2014	1.5%
2015	1.2%
2016	1.2%
2017	1.2%

The table shows Gross Expenditure on R&D as a percentage of GDP for Ireland for 2010-2017. Gross expenditure on R&D includes R&D carried out in the Government, Business and Higher Education sectors. Note data on 2018 is not available yet. For more information please see the Research and Development Budget 2017-2018 at the following link:

<https://dbe.gov.ie/en/Publications/The-R-D-Budget-2017-2018.html>.

### Research and Development Data

125. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount of capital expenditure in public research and development in each of the years 2005 to 2018; the 2019 budgeted figure, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2295/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan):** The information is as follows:

### Government R&D Capital Expenditure

Year	€m	-
2005	€m	79.7
2006	€m	105.7
2007	€m	160.5
2008	€m	182.7
2009	€m	162.7
2010	€m	111.5
2011	€m	83.3
2012	€m	72.4
2013	€m	58.8
2014	€m	64.9
2015	€m	72.9
2016	€m	69.3
2017	€m	64.5

Year	€m	-
2018	€m	60.7

Note data for 2019 is not available yet. For more information please see the R&D Budget 2017-2018 at the following link: <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/The-R-D-Budget-2017-2018.html>

### Horizon 2020 Strategy Funding

126. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of SMEs that have been recipients of Horizon 2020 funding in each year since the programme became operational by county, in tabular form. [2296/19]

128. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount of Horizon 2020 funding provided to SMEs on an annual basis since it was established by county, in tabular form. [2299/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 126 and 128 together.

The following tables provide the total Horizon 2020 (EU) funding awarded to SMEs, by county, for each of the years 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. These figures were previously provided in response to PQ 19542/18 and have been updated to include 2018 data up to November 2018.

The tables are based on the European Commission's most recent data release on Horizon 2020, which cover the period up to the 13th November 2018, and includes the number and value of grant agreements which were signed by Irish SMEs in each year.

It should be noted that the information requested is not collated by my Department - it is maintained and updated by the European Commission.

The Commission has recently upgraded the level of reporting available to the public regarding Horizon 2020, which is accessible at <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/dashboard/>

#### 2014

County	No of SMEs involved in awards	Amount awarded
CARLOW	1	€ 92,003
CORK	4	€ 1,093,563
DUBLIN	21	€ 4,088,854
GALWAY	3	€ 776,040
KERRY	4	€ 758,150
LIMERICK	1	€ 50,000
OFFALY	1	€ 50,000
WATERFORD	1	€ 50,000
WESTMEATH	1	€ 50,000
2014 Total	38	€ 7,008,610

**2015**

County	No of SMEs involved in awards	Amount awarded
CARLOW	3	€ 569,425
CORK	12	€ 7,402,156
DUBLIN	47	€ 15,292,147
GALWAY	11	€ 3,442,232
KERRY	2	€ 50,000
KILDARE	1	€ 57,603
LIMERICK	6	€ 2,182,470
LIMERICK CLARE	1	€ 50,000
LOUTH	7	€ 1,599,861
TIPPERARY	1	€ 77,239
WICKLOW	4	€ 2,576,860
2015 Total	95	€ 33,299,991

**2016**

County	No of SMEs involved in awards	Amount awarded
CAVAN	1	€ 240,000
CORK	7	€ 5,709,126
DUBLIN	49	€ 18,094,783
GALWAY	5	€ 1,968,975
KERRY	4	€ 2,852,605
KILDARE	3	€ 574,719
LIMERICK	5	€ 841,928
LONGFORD	1	€ 123,960
LOUTH	1	€ 1,090,443
MAYO	1	€ 136,999
MEATH	1	€ 495,653
SLIGO	1	€ 50,000
WATERFORD	1	€ 665,967
WESTMEATH	1	€ 1,014,224
WICKLOW	3	€ 663,550
2016 Total	84	€ 34,522,931

**2017**

County	No of SMEs involved in awards	Amount awarded
CARLOW	1	€ 332,063
CORK	7	€ 1,669,379
DUBLIN	43	€ 13,893,376
GALWAY	9	€ 5,621,857
KERRY	4	€ 2,000,185
LIMERICK	8	€ 7,453,290
LOUTH	1	€ 217,500
MEATH	1	€ 50,000
MONAGHAN	1	€ 340,004

Questions - Written Answers

County	No of SMEs involved in awards	Amount awarded
OFFALY	1	€ 250,000
WICKLOW	3	€ 863,132
2017 Total	79	€ 32,690,785

**2018 (Up to Nov 2018)**

County	No of SMEs involved in awards	Amount awarded
CORK	11	€ 4,379,525
DONEGAL	2	€ 738,469
DUBLIN	31	€ 15,538,662
GALWAY	4	€ 2,605,741
KERRY	3	€ 414,438
KILDARE	2	€ 2,092,125
LEITRIM	1	€ 70,000
LIMERICK	3	€ 291,118
LOUTH	2	€ 444,188
MAYO	1	€ 323,750
MEATH	2	€ 1,676,843
TIPPERARY	1	€ 73,803
WATERFORD	1	€ 50,000
WICKLOW	3	€ 503,851
TOTAL	67	€ 29,202,512

**Research and Development Data**

127. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the latest findings by the EU Research and Innovation Observatory (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2297/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy John Halligan):** Innovation 2020 is Ireland's whole of Government Strategy for Research and Development, Science and Technology, driven by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. The Government's ambition is for Ireland to become a Global Innovation Leader and this is the key vision of the Innovation 2020 Strategy.

The details supplied by the Deputy refer to the recent report published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. The report highlights Ireland's gross Research & Development (R&D) expenditure as a percentage of GDP compared with other EU member states. Ireland, along with our EU colleagues, signed up to the Europe 2020 Strategy in 2011. Under Europe 2020, Ireland committed to raise gross (public and private) investment in R&D to 2.5% of GNP by 2020. We reiterated this commitment in Innovation 2020. Ireland determined to use GNP as the intensity rate denominator and not GDP due to the effects of foreign owned companies on our economy.

The key Innovation 2020 commitment to increase public and private investment in RDI to 2.5% of GNP by 2020 is challenging and it is unlikely that we will meet this target within the given timeframe.

Since the publication of the Strategy in 2015, direct Exchequer funding of RDI has increased steadily- from €736m in 2015 to an estimated €751.7m in 2018. This is the highest level

of public expenditure on RDI since 2012.

However, the Irish economy is experiencing far higher economic growth than most other European countries. This is one of the main reasons for our lack of progress on the RDI intensity rate. In 2018, Ireland's GDP grew by 7.8%, the fastest in the EU.

It is noted that only four member states have reached their Europe 2020 targets and the EU as a whole remains below its target of 3% of GDP.

The Gross Expenditure on R&D as a percentage of GDP intensity rate of 1.05% of GDP for 2017 from the Eurostat report is calculated using preliminary figures for Business Expenditure on R&D (BERD) and Higher Education Expenditure on R&D (HERD). Surveys on both are currently being compiled and are due to be published later this year from the Central Statistics Office and my Department respectively and will give the full picture on RDI expenditure for 2017.

In October 2018 my Department published the Research & Development Budget 2017-2018 which estimated that GERD as a percentage of GDP was 1.15% in 2017. The figure for the GERD as a percentage of GNP for 2017 was 1.46%.

The report showed that in 2017, the business sector contributed 71% of Ireland's gross expenditure on RDI, the third highest private investment figure in the EU. A very significant part of public policy has been to align our efforts in a manner that maximises the capacity to leverage RDI activity in the enterprise sectors. We are frequently cited as one of the most R&D-effective countries in the EU, maximising innovation output per euro of public funding.

Innovation 2020 recognises that innovation is central to ensuring that our enterprise base is resilient and internationally competitive and a key goal is to increase enterprise engagement in RDI. Under the National Development Plan and as part of Project 2040, the Government launched the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund, or DTIF, in 2018. It is being delivered through the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and its agencies with a resource allocation of €500 million over the period 2018-2027 consisting of an initial Exchequer allocation of €180 million to 2022. As a first tranche, €20 million will be allocated during 2019, which will leverage the same again in private sector matched funding. 27 projects have been announced from the first tranche of funding, worth €75m to 2021. All projects include collaborations between start-ups, SMEs, multinationals and academic institutions. Every project involves at least one SME and many are led by an SME. Over the next ten years €500 million will be allocated through the fund, which was announced as part of Project Ireland 2040.

In the European Innovation Scoreboard 2018, Ireland remains in the category of "Strong Innovator" and has moved up a place to 9th in the EU. Ireland is placed first in three out of the ten dimensions considered - innovative SMEs, employment in knowledge-intensive activities and sales due to innovation activities. Ireland is ranked higher than 12 other member states that invest a higher amount of public funds as a percentage of GDP. Ireland has also retained 10th place in the Global Innovation Index, out of 126 countries assessed.

*Question No. 128 answered with Question No. 126.*

### **HSE Staff Remuneration**

129. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the measures he plans to implement to improve the pay and conditions for nurses in the health service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2253/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Government has already approved a range of measures that would improve the pay and conditions of nurses and midwives in the health service.

The Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA) is delivering wage increases of 6.4% to 7.2% over 2018-2020. In addition to the pay increases nurses and midwives can expect under the PSSA, they would also benefit from the proposals announced last September relating to the 'new entrant' pay issue, benefiting approximately 10,000 nurses in Ireland who entered the health service since 2011. Measures proposed by the Public Service Pay Commission for nurses and midwives and accepted by the Government include increases of 20% in Local and Qualification Allowances for Nurses, extension of these allowance to maternity services, and a reduction of time required to become eligible for the Senior Staff Nurse/Midwife Grade.

While the INMO and PNA have rejected these measures and are set to engage in industrial action in pursuit of cost increasing pay claims, they are parties to the PSSA. The pursuit of cost increasing pay claims and engagement in industrial action are both specifically excluded under the terms of the PSSA.

Officials from my Department and the HSE met with the INMO and PNA on Tuesday and a further meeting is scheduled for next Monday. Management have undertaken to respond to a number of queries raised at Tuesday's meeting and this will be done within the confines of the PSSA. The parties have also been invited to meet with the National Oversight Body (which oversees the PSSA) on Friday of this week.

### **Hospital Staff Data**

130. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacant positions within the orthopaedic department of Our Lady's Hospital, Navan. [2045/19]

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

### **Hospital Procedures**

131. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health the number of elective procedures that have taken place in the past four years in the orthopaedic department of Our Lady's Hospital, Navan. [2046/19]

**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.

### **Ambulance Service Provision**

132. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his plans for a new ambulance base in County Cork further to the reference to same in the National Development Plan 2018-2027; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2058/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of healthcare infrastructure projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

## Hospitals Building Programme

133. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his plans and the plans of the HSE for the development of new hospitals in County Cork; the status of progress in relation to the matter; the timelines in this regard; the funding that has been ring-fenced in relation to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2059/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I take it that the Deputy is referring to the proposed development of an elective only facility in Cork, as proposed in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018 - 2027.

The NDP includes significant new programmes and projects, particularly in relation to additional capacity and the development of three elective only facilities. These projects reflect the next stage of health sector development, and many require significant policy scoping and planning assessment to be carried out.

As set out in the Sláintecare Implementation Plan, the intention now is to progress the development of these new facilities, within a national framework.

Detailed policy analysis to underpin this very significant health capital investment is now being considered by my Department, with the aim of ensuring value for money and meeting both current and future service needs. This will guide the service and operational specification for the new facilities and allow for an objective basis for the evaluation of proposals. There will be appropriate consultation in the development of this policy which will be based upon international best practice and national population health planning.

I want to see the development of new facilities progress as quickly as possible, in accordance with the timelines set out in the Sláintecare Implementation Plan.

## Medicinal Products Availability

134. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health when Translarna will be made available through the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2065/19]

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

## Hospital Appointments Status

135. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2069/19]

**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, since 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 Services Provision**

136. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health when the free provision of contraception will be rolled out as recommended in the ancillary recommendations in the report by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Eighth Amendment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2077/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** Work is continuing on the implementation of the ancillary recommendations of the Joint Committee on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution. This includes exploring issues associated with enhancing access to contraception, with a view to developing evidence-based policy in this area.

Preparations are ongoing for the initial expansion of free access to condoms in 2019. Condom use has the advantage of reducing both crisis pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.

### **Vaccination Programme**

137. **Deputy Louise O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Health if he will consider including additional groups in the free meningitis B vaccination programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2078/19]

140. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Health his plans for a roll-out of the programme of meningitis B vaccinations for children who had not received it to date especially those in high risks categories; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2085/19]

149. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if the feasibility of rolling out the meningitis B vaccine and making it freely available to each child will be examined; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2115/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 137, 140 and 149 together.

The National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) is an independent committee of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland which is comprised of experts in a number of specialties, including infectious diseases, paediatrics, and public health, which makes recommendations to my Department on vaccination policy in Ireland.

On foot of a recommendation by NIAC, the Primary Childhood Immunisation Schedule was amended in 2016 to include the introduction of the Meningitis B vaccine for all babies born on or after 1 October 2016. This change to the immunisation schedule took effect from 1 December 2016. The first dose of the vaccine is administered to children when they reach two months of age; a second dose is administered at four months and a third and final dose at twelve months. Meningitis B disease is most common in babies under the age of 1 year old and

the scheduling of the administration of the vaccine under the immunisation programme takes account of this.

All vaccines administered through the Primary Childhood Immunisation Schedule are provided free of charge. Ireland is the second country in Europe to make the Men B vaccine available free of charge as part of its national immunisation programme.

There are no plans to introduce a catch-up programme for the Men B vaccine to older children. Those who have a medical card are eligible to have the vaccine administered by their GP free of charge. However, the purchase of the vaccine is not covered by the medical card scheme.

In Ireland, Men B, Men C, PCV and Hib vaccines are offered to children to protect them against meningitis.

As of Monday 14 January 2019, thirteen cases of meningococcal disease have been notified to the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC). Three deaths are associated with the thirteen cases. It is important to note that, although three of the thirteen notified cases are related to Meningitis B, none of the 3 deaths have been attributed to this strain of the disease.

### **Cancer Screening Programmes**

138. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the closure of the genetic screening clinic in St. James's Hospital; if the clinic is being re-located; his plans to reopen it in the near future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2081/19]

139. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health the screening programmes available for the high risk cancer genes such as BRCA1 and BRCA2; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2082/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 138 and 139 together.

In parallel with the Rapid Access Clinic for Symptomatic Breast Disease in St James's Hospital, a Familial Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Service has evolved to provide a clinical service to women who are considered to be at higher than average risk of developing cancer in their lifetime. Due to increased referral rates to the symptomatic breast disease clinic, as well as to the 'family risk' clinic, the hospital is currently prioritising the symptomatic patients to ensure that a quality, timely and sustainable service is available to them. This has resulted in the suspension of the family risk service, other than for very high risk patients.

During 2018, one of the hospital's two mammography machines was replaced and a third machine has been installed. Capacity for mammography has been a major part of the challenge in meeting demand for breast services in St James's. It is expected that the Familial Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Service in St James's will be restored in the next two months.

While there is no national programme for screening for high risk cancer genes, patients found to carry a cancer predisposition gene such as BRCA1 or BRCA2 are followed up at all designated cancer centres.

*Question No. 140 answered with Question No. 137.*

## **Maternity Services**

141. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the status of the planned relocation of the Rotunda Hospital to Connolly Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2090/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The model of stand-alone maternity hospitals is not the norm internationally. In line with the National Maternity Strategy, Government policy is to co-locate all remaining maternity hospitals with adult acute services in order to provide optimal clinical outcomes. Co-location of maternity services with adult services provides mothers with access to a full range of medical and support services should the need arise. The availability of these services helps ensure the delivery of an optimum, safe service, particularly for high risk mothers and babies.

Project Ireland 2040 and the National Development Plan 2018-2027 support the implementation of the National Maternity Strategy, including the relocation of the Rotunda. I have been advised that the Rotunda hospital has prepared a Design Brief for the new facility. In addition, a Development Control Plan for the Connolly campus has been drafted to support the orderly development of future capital projects on that campus, including the Maternity Hospital. As the Rotunda relocation proposal is at an early development stage, it would be premature to provide any indicative time frames for completion at this time.

## **Hospital Appointments Delays**

142. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health if an appointment for a person (details supplied) to see an ENT specialist will be expedited. [2093/19]

**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, since 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.

## **Home Help Service Provision**

143. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Health if home help hours will be provided to a person to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2104/19]

**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.

### **HSE Expenditure**

144. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the overall cost annually to the HSE for treating illnesses (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2105/19]

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

### **Prescriptions Charges**

145. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Health when the reduction from €2 to €1.50 in the prescription charge for medical card holders over 70 years of age will be introduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2106/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As part of Budget 2019 I announced a reduction in the prescription charge for medical card holders aged 70 and over, from €2 to €1.50, and a reduction in the monthly cap for this group from €20 to €15. The implementation date is 1 April 2019.

### **Treatment Abroad Scheme**

146. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health if a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied) will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2108/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Deputy will be aware the Treatment Abroad Scheme (TAS) allows public patients to be referred to another EU/EEA country for treatment that is not available in Ireland, subject to qualifying criteria. A patient's Irish based consultant is responsible for referring the patient abroad under the terms of the TAS, after having exhausted all treatment options including tertiary care within Ireland.

I am very much aware of the concerns of patients and parents of young children receiving treatments under the TAS in the UK for what are in many cases very complex conditions. I also note that Brexit may bring additional distress to patients and their families who are dealing with complex treatments. By way of some assurance, I can say that both the Irish and UK Governments are committed to working to maintain arrangements for access to healthcare for both Irish and UK citizens to publicly funded health services. You should also be aware that as part of a whole of Government response to Brexit, the Department of Health is working to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated set of preparations to ensure continuity of health services post-Brexit. This work involves the Department and the HSE and other agencies in engaging in intensive Brexit preparedness and contingency planning. A key priority for the Government is to ensure that insofar as possible there is minimum disruption to health services and that essential services, such as the TAS, are maintained on a cross-Border, all-island and Ireland-UK basis.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

147. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive an appointment for a gastroenterologist at UHW; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2113/19]

**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, since 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.

### **Home Help Service Eligibility**

148. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will be assessed for additional home help hours; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2114/19]

**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.

*Question No. 149 answered with Question No. 137.*

### **Hospital Appointments Delays**

150. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if a hospital appointment will be expedited for a person (details supplied). [2118/19]

**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, since 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 Waiting Lists

151. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) who has been waiting over two years will have a knee assessed by an orthopaedic consultant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2120/19]

**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, since 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 Procedures

152. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health the services he plans to put in place to address the issue of bariatric surgery here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2124/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Improving waiting times for hospital procedures is a key commitment in the Programme for Government.

The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) advises that on foot of a proposal submitted by Ireland East Hospital Group (IEHG) in 2018, funding was provided for extra theatre sessions in order to open additional surgical capacity to accommodate 50 surgeries which were undertaken primarily in St. Vincent's Hospital. 38 of these patients were treated by the end of 2018, with a further 7 to be treated by the end of January 2019 and the NTPF has approved the rolling over of the 5 remaining procedures to 2019.

The 2019 Scheduled Care Access Plan is currently being finalised by my Department and will set out HSE activity levels to reduce waiting lists across specialties and improve access. The Access Plan will also set out activity levels for the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) who, following an increase in funding in Budget 2019 to €75 million, will supply additional activity to HSE activity by arranging both insourced and outsourced appointments and treatments to reduce waiting times experienced by patients.

The Access Plan is being developed to ensure an appropriate balance between high volume activities and offering treatment to complex long waiting patients. The NTPF will do this by inviting public hospitals to seek solutions for very long waiters either in the private sector or through insourcing. The NTPF will provide funding to the solutions proposed if appropriate. In this context, the NTPF advises that a proposal to fund a further 100 cases in 2019 has recently been received from IEHG.

In addition, the HSE advised my Department in late November 2018 that they had raised the

issue of bariatric waiting times with both Saolta and Ireland East Hospital Groups. Saolta has confirmed that for Galway University Hospital (GUH) the provision of treatment for obesity is one of the key priorities for the hospital and Perioperative Directorate. It is acknowledged that GUH continue to be challenged in relation to theatre and bed capacity and in this context they have prioritized efforts to recruit additional staff including nursing staff and a senior dietician.

The HSE further advise that Galway University Hospital currently has two initiatives running with a focus on improving access to Obesity clinics. GUH has almost doubled the number of patients that received surgical treatment year on year as outlined in the table:

Time Frame	2017	To end October 2018
Number of Patients	16 bariatric surgeries	26 bariatric surgeries

Within the context of Ireland East Hospital Group (IEHG), the HSE advises that the weight management programme is delivered by St. Columcille's Hospital (SCH) and St. Vincent's University Hospital (SVUH). The medical multi-disciplinary weight management component of the programme is delivered in St. Columcille's Hospital, whilst patients deemed suitable for surgery are referred to the surgical component of the programme in SVUH.

The patient pathway is such that all patients are initially referred to a Multi-Disciplinary Weight Management programme in SCH. Participants in the programme undergo a nine-month out-patient based multidisciplinary behavioural programme with input from dietitians, physio therapists and psychologists. Midway through the programme participants are assessed by the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) for suitability for surgery.

Since 2015 funding of €300,000 has been allocated to SVUH to support the provision of bariatric surgery enabling on average 30 bariatric surgeries to be undertaken per annum. IEHG has prioritised improving access for patients waiting for bariatric surgery.

A new bariatric surgeon, with a formal commitment to bariatric surgery, was appointment to St. Vincent's University Hospital and to St. Columcille's Hospital by the Ireland East Hospital Group in August 2017. This is the only Consultant Surgeon appointment in Ireland with a specialist focus on bariatric surgery.

### Hospitals Data

153. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health the methodology for calculating the trolleyGAR statistics on patients waiting in casualty for admission; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2129/19]

154. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health if patients waiting on corridors or in extra beds in wards are considered as part of the trolleyGAR statistics; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2130/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 153 and 154 together.

I wish to acknowledge the distress overcrowded EDs cause to patients, their families, and frontline staff working in very challenging working conditions in hospitals throughout the country. Hospitals are increasingly operating at or above capacity, with year-round demand pressures that are further challenged over the winter months.

Key actions are now underway, as part of the Winter Plan, to support hospitals during this

period of peak demand to include: the opening of additional beds, the use of private hospital capacity, frailty intervention teams in EDs, additional homecare packages and transitional care beds, and additional diagnostics in hospitals and for GPs.

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

### **Hospitals Data**

155. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health the statistics in relation to elective admissions and procedures which have been cancelled to date as part of the winter plan 2018 to 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2131/19]

159. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health the additional diagnostic investigations that have been made available to general practitioners as outlined in the winter plan 2018 to 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2135/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 155 and 159 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Winter Plan came into effect on 1 December 2018 and will continue until 31 March 2019. The Plan seeks to ensure that the health system is as prepared as possible for the increase in demand on services over the coming months, within existing capacity and financial parameters.

Key actions are now underway, as part of the Winter Plan, and a €30 million investment has been made in improving services for patients during this period of peak demand to include: the opening of additional beds, the use of private hospital capacity, frailty intervention teams in Emergency Departments, additional homecare packages and transitional care beds along with additional diagnostics in hospitals and for GPs.

In addition, the NTPF has established a fund of €1m which will support the HSE Winter plans with a focus on increasing access to diagnostics in both private facilities and in-house. To date, out of 5,000 vouchers, the NTPF has issued 2,300 vouchers to Emergency Departments to provide patients with access to diagnostics.

In relation to the specific query regarding additional diagnostics made available to GPs under the winter plan, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

### **Cancer Screening Programmes**

156. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional cervical smears carried out to reassure women outside the normal cervical screening programme; the cost of the additional smears; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2132/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In May, I made the decision to offer free out of cycle smears to any woman who was concerned about her health following issues which had emerged in relation to the CervicalCheck screening programme. This decision was made in good faith to address the considerable fears of the many anxious women in Ireland as a result of the issues that emerged in late April.

In regard to the specifics of the Deputy's question, I have asked the HSE to respond directly to him.

### Hospital Beds Data

157. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health the type and location of the extra beds added to the health service in 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2133/19]

158. **Deputy Michael Harty** asked the Minister for Health the type and location of beds he plans to open during the course of 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2134/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 157 and 158 together.

As Minister for Health, I recognise that hospitals are increasingly operating at or above capacity, with year-round demand pressures that are further challenged over the winter months. It is against this background that the Health Service Capacity Review 2018 recommended an increase in acute hospitals beds of over 2,600 by 2031 to support the projected increase in demand for services in the years ahead.

Increasing capacity is therefore a priority for the Government. Over the past 12 months, an additional 240 beds have been opened as outlined in the following table:

Hospital Group	Hospital	Type of bed	Number of beds
RCSI	Our Lady of Lourdes Drogheda	Acute beds (part of new bed block)	25
RCSI	Beaumont Hospital	Acute beds	20
Dublin Midlands	St. James' Hospital	Acute beds	23
Dublin Midlands	Naas General Hospital	Acute beds	11
Ireland East	The Mater Hospital	Acute beds	24
Saolta	Galway University Hospital	Acute beds	28
UL	Limerick University Hospital	Short Stay beds	17
Ireland East HG	St. Vincent's Hospital	Acute beds	22
Ireland East HG	Mater Misericordiae University Hospital	HDU beds	2
Ireland East HG	St Luke's Hospital Kilkenny	Acute beds	14
RCSI HG	Our Lady of Lourdes Drogheda	Acute beds (part of new ward block)	4
South South West HG	Cork University Hospital	Acute beds	30
South South West HG	Cork university hospital	Critical Care beds	2
South South West HG	Waterford University Hospital	Acute beds	17
Ireland East	The Mater Hospital	ICU bed	1
Total			240

The HSE's National Service Plan for 2019 provides for a comprehensive capacity programme for 2019. The main elements of the programme are:

- 78 additional beds are scheduled to come on stream by the end of Quarter 1 of 2019, including the 40 bed modular build in South Tipperary General Hospital and the 30-bedded ward in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda;

- 75 acute beds and 70 community beds are scheduled to come on stream during 2019, as part of the Winter Plan 2018/19;

- Preparation of 202 beds, of which 16 are critical care, during 2019, with a view to bringing this extra capacity into operation in the first quarter of 2020.

In relation to the specific information sought on the location and type of beds planned for 2019, I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly.

*Question No. 159 answered with Question No. 155.*

### **Hospital Equipment**

160. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 735 of 7 September 2018, the reason the reply provided by the HSE does not contain the requested information; when a satisfactory response to same will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2136/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In relation to the particular query raised, I have asked the HSE to ensure that a reply is provided to the Deputy.

### **Cross-Border Health Services Provision**

161. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if an application by a person (details supplied) for inclusion on the cross border scheme will be expedited. [2145/19]

**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.

### **Neuro-Rehabilitation Services Provision**

162. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 368 of 11 December 2018, the details of the pilot programme to be rolled out in CHO areas 6 and 7; the target group, that is, disabilities, ages, time since neuro trauma and so on; the type of service being delivered; and the goals of same. [2149/19]

**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.

## **Neuro-Rehabilitation Services Provision**

163. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the fact that persons who are chronically neurodisabled but need ongoing input from various specialties are being pushed down the waiting lists for services while existing poorly resourced services are struggling to deliver the most basic services to the recently discharged neurodisabled. [2150/19]

**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 a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

## **Hospital Accommodation Provision**

164. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health when the psychology department at Beaumont Hospital (details supplied) will be moved from the prefab in which it has resided for many years into a permanent and appropriate building. [2151/19]

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

## **Hospital Car Parks**

165. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the reason persons with disabilities attending the psychology department in Beaumont Hospital must pay to park in a limited number of disabled parking spaces in a multi-storey carpark (details supplied). [2152/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Hospitals which charge parking fees are cognisant of the financial implications parking costs can have on patients and their families, particularly those with long-term illnesses. Some hospitals have introduced a maximum daily fixed parking charge, thus capping this expense. I understand that some hospitals also provide reduced rate parking for long-term patients and visitors for whom the payment of the full rate would cause hardship.

In March 2018, I requested the HSE to carry out a review of hospital car parking charges, with the aim of establishing clear national guidelines in this area. The review involved a wide range of stakeholders and took account of the views of patient advocacy groups, the income generated by charges and the impact of any reduction in car parking income on hospital services.

I met with HSE officials in October 2018 to discuss the progress of this review. I understand that this report is currently being finalised by the HSE and will be submitted for my consideration shortly. My Department will then liaise with the HSE on the next steps to be undertaken.

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

166. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when occupational therapy and child psychology services will be provided to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2154/19]

**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.

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

167. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be provided with the early intervention service at a local primary care centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2156/19]

**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.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

168. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health the health capital projects being suspended, held back or postponed in view of the overrun of the budget for the national children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2167/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Health Service Executive is currently developing its Capital Plan for 2019. The requirements of the new children's hospital and other health capital projects, currently at various stages of development, are being considered as part of this process.

### **Abortion Services Provision**

169. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to ensure free access for women and unfettered access to clinics, hospitals and general practitioner surgeries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2168/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I assume the Deputy is referring to safe access for people attending at health services for the purpose of accessing termination of pregnancy under the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018.

It is my intention to introduce legislation to ensure safe access to premises in which termination of pregnancy services may be provided. The intention of the legislation would be to allow patients, service providers, healthcare staff and members of the public to enter such premises without fear of intimidation or harassment.

While it was originally intended to provide for such safe access in the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Bill 2018, a number of legal issues were identified during the drafting process. In order to allow full consideration of these issues, Government approved the drafting of a separate piece of legislation on safe access to health services.

Officials in my Department will work with the Office of the Attorney General on this legislation.

### **National Children's Hospital Status**

170. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health the progress and timeline for the satellite national children's hospital at Tallaght University Hospital. [2169/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Works at Tallaght are under way. The new decant & crèche building at Tallaght were completed in November 2018, allowing the OPD & Urgent Care Centre construction works to commence at the end of this month with a target handover date of July 2020.

### **Hospital Car Parks**

171. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Health the details of the parking for the new national children's hospital to be located at St. James's Hospital. [2170/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Access to the children's hospital at the St James's campus is well served by public transport, however the plans and design for the hospital recognise the need of most families to access the hospital by car.

The plans for the hospital provide for 1,000 car parking spaces, of which 675 will be dedicated for use by families, three times the number of spaces currently available at the three Dublin children's hospitals combined. The car park will be located in the basement of the new children's hospital. Parents will be able to reserve their space ahead of arriving at the hospital.

The 1000 spaces also include 31 drop-off emergency spaces at ground level outside of the Emergency Department.

### **Cross-Border Health Services Provision**

172. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if an assessment and the op-

eration needed for a person (details supplied) will be expedited; if urgent cases such as the case of same can be dealt with under the cross border initiative; if so, if the HSE will make contact with the person to make the arrangements; the number of persons such as the person that were informed on 23 February 2018 that it would be 51 months plus before they would be seen; the steps being taken by him and the HSE to resolve this level of service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2182/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Reducing waiting time for patients for hospital operations and procedures is a key priority for the Government.

The patient may be eligible for treatment under the Cross Border Directive (CBD). The HSE operates the CBD in Ireland. Under the terms of the Directive, patients of an EU/EEA Member State who meet the necessary criteria may opt to avail of healthcare provided under the legislation of their Member State of affiliation in another EU/EEA Member State and be reimbursed the lesser of the cost of receiving the treatment abroad, or the cost in their own Member State. The HSE provides information for patients on the CBD on its website which can be accessed at <http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/schemes> and also by phone at 056 7784551.

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.

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

### **Home Care Packages Data**

173. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the number of home care packages being provided in each CHO area; the reason funding allocated for this purpose is not aligned with demand; the steps he is taking to ensure adequate funding is provided in 2019 to address the waiting lists for the service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2185/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** Improving access to home support has been a priority for Government. Over the past four years we have seen a considerable increase of nearly €140 million in the budget which has grown from €306 million in 2015 to almost €446 million this year. This includes additional funding provided as part of Winter Planning 2018/2019.

The HSE's National Service Plan sets a target that over 53,000 people will receive more than 18 million home support hours this year. This will assist older people to live independently in their own homes for longer and enable large numbers of people to return home following acute hospital admission. Our immediate focus is to support approximately 550 people leave hospital over this winter period.

Despite this significant level of service provision demand continues to rise and there is considerable variation in access to services in different parts of the country.

While the existing home support service is delivering crucial support to many people across the country, it needs to be improved to better meet the changing needs of older people. That is why we propose to establish a statutory scheme for home care which will improve access to the service on an affordable and sustainable basis while also introducing a system of regulation that will ensure public confidence.

Details of the breakdown of home support packages and number of home support hours per region is an operational matter for the HSE and this aspect of Deputy's request has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

### **National Children's Hospital Expenditure**

174. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the estimated cost of the proposed new national children's hospital; the reason the cost is higher than the original estimate; and the steps he plans to take to control the cost and to minimise the impacts on other capital projects. [2186/19]

180. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the estimated overall cost of the children's hospital; the cost expected to be incurred by the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2228/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 174 and 180 together.

The children's hospital is one of the most complex and important public capital projects that this country has ever embarked upon. The hospital will facilitate the implementation of a new model of care that will have a profound impact on all paediatric services once the new hospital is open.

Considerable work has been undertaken on the project since April 2017 when Government gave the green light for the construction of the hospital. Enabling works on the main hospital site are complete and Phase A construction works (substructure works on the main site), which commenced in October 2017, are also now nearing completion. The Phase B 7-storey above ground works will begin early this year. Development is also well advanced on the paediatric outpatients and urgent care centres. Works at Connolly are on target for practical completion of the building in the Spring with the opening scheduled for July 2019. Works at Tallaght are underway with a target handover date of July 2020, and the construction of the main hospital to be completed in 2022.

At an early stage in the process, it was determined that the traditional method of procurement was not suitable or realistic for a project of this size and complexity. Accordingly, the contract is subject to a two-stage process with stage one consisting of a scope refinement and value engineering process, based upon tendered rates, to finalise the Phase B works (above ground). This approach allowed the early phases of work to commence on site while also allowing for the detail of later phases to be finalised and agreed. This approach brings issues on cost to the fore much earlier in the life of the project than is the case where traditional procurement approaches are deployed.

Following the completion of the second stage of the two-stage tender procurement process, the final cost of the design, build and equipment programme for which the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board is responsible is now at €1,433 million, €450m more than advised to Government in April 2017. €319m of the additional cost relates to construction costs, and the balance of €131m, which includes €50m in VAT, relates to costs associated with staff, consultants, planning, design team fees, risk/contingency, and Management Equipment Service.

There have been conflicting total cost figures mentioned in the media over the last few days, in particular a reference to €1.7 billion, and I would like to provide some clarity on the issue. €1,433m is the capital build cost of the project. There is additional investment from other sources associated with broader programme which is outside of these capital costs. This relates

to investment in ICT and the Electronic Health Record rollout funded through the ICT capital programme, the comprehensive Children's Hospital Integration Programme which is well underway, funded through revenue, to ensure the successful clinical and operational merging of three paediatric hospitals, pre-2013 project expenditure relating to the former Mater project, and the planned construction of the Children's Research and Innovation Centre to be funded through philanthropic funding.

As I have already stated the increased cost is a matter of great concern and I have made it clear that Phase B of the construction project must be delivered within budget and timescale. Accordingly, there will be an independent review, commencing in January, of the escalation in cost in determining the adjusted contract sum, the contributory factors and associated responsibilities so that any potential weaknesses are identified and comprehensively and speedily resolved in the interests of the successful completion of the project and the effective management of public funds. The National Paediatric Hospital Development Board will be required to provide on-going assurance to the HSE, Department of Health and Government that Phase B of the project is being delivered within budget and timescale.

### **Cancer Screening Programmes**

175. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the waiting times for cervical smear test results; the number of tests which have timed out; and the steps he is taking to address the backlog. [2187/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In May 2018, I asked CervicalCheck to make the necessary arrangements to provide that any woman who had had a CervicalCheck smear test, and whose GP considered that they should have a further test, to access such a further test without charge. This decision was made in good faith to address the considerable fears of the many anxious women in Ireland as a result of significant media coverage of the issues that emerged in late April.

In the months since then, there has been a significant increase in the volume of women presenting for smear tests. This includes women who have availed of the out of cycle tests, but also a greater number of women presenting for scheduled screening.

This increased level of engagement with the programme is very welcome. However, the increased demand has undoubtedly put immense pressure on lab capacity and the HSE has advised that, currently, results of smear tests may take up to 20 weeks from the time of the test, and that it may take longer in a small number of cases.

The HSE has been working actively with the labs to manage this issue and to improve turnaround times for smear tests. The HSE reports that laboratories have agreed to undertake additional recruitment, provide for overtime and manage annual leave in an effort to minimise the backlog. In addition, the HSE is aiming to source additional screening capacity, which would improve the turnaround time of results. However, sourcing capacity and resources is a global challenge as countries start to move to primary HPV screening, which vastly reduces the requirement for cytology screening staff.

The HSE is currently developing a capacity plan to take account of available capacity and expected demand, with the aim of bringing the programme into stabilisation this year.

While the provision of out of cycle smears ceased on the 31 December 2018, it is important to be clear that this backlog will take some time to resolve. It remains a priority concern for me, for my Department and for the HSE.

Smear test samples must be sent to the laboratory and made into slides within six weeks of the smear test date. After six weeks, the sample is deemed expired and cannot be processed. Transferring slides to samples in this timeframe was being achieved by the laboratories used by CervicalCheck until they experienced a high demand on resources following the announcement of free repeat smear tests in April. In some cases, the increased volume resulted in a delay transferring samples to slides.

However, as of 30 July 2018, the HSE has advised that the majority of smear test samples are now transferred to slides within the six week timeframe. There may be a small number of cases where the vial used to contain the sample expires before the laboratory has an opportunity to carry out the analysis of the sample and in some cases a sample may be insufficient. Although every effort is made to avoid these situations from happening, it is inevitable that cervical screening programmes will sometimes encounter these issues. In such cases, a woman and her GP are advised of the need for a repeat test in three months' time by letter from CervicalCheck.

From April to October 2018 the rate of expired samples and vials was 0.29%. This compares with 0.25% for the same period in 2017.

In relation to the specific number of tests which have expired, this is a matter for the HSE and accordingly I have asked the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy on this issue.

### **Medical Card Applications**

176. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when a medical card renewal will be concluded in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2201/19]

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

### **Health Services Provision**

177. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if urgent steps will be taken in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2202/19]

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

### **Medical Card Applications**

178. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health when a medical card renewal will be completed in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2209/19]

**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.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

179. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the cost of appointing a company (details supplied) to review the costs at the children's hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2227/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Government has approved the commissioning of an independent review of the escalation in costs and the effective management of public funds.

This review is being commissioned by the HSE. Accordingly I am referring this query to the HSE to respond directly to the Deputy.

*Question No. 180 answered with Question No. 174.*

### **General Practitioner Contracts**

181. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the progress to date in relation to reform of the GMS contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2250/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Government is committed to engaging with GP representatives on the development of modernised GP contractual arrangements.

Talks between the State and the Irish Medical Organisation resumed in October 2018 and there was intensive engagement, particularly in the weeks leading up to Christmas. While some progress was made, there are a number of outstanding issues that need to be progressed before any agreement can be secured.

The State's negotiating team is keen to bring a renewed focus to the engagement with the IMO in coming weeks in an effort to bring matters to a conclusion.

I look forward to positive and productive engagement with all parties concerned. Agreement on the delivery of service improvements and contractual reform would facilitate a very substantial increase in the resourcing of general practice on a multi annual basis.

In line with the long-established approach to such processes, and by agreement of the parties concerned, I am not in position to give further details while engagement between the parties is under way.

### **General Practitioner Services**

182. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the measures he plans to implement in relation to the recruitment and retention of doctors in general practice with particular reference to the shortage of doctors in rural Ireland and the difficulties in replacing retired doctors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2251/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Government is aware of workforce issues facing general practice, including the influence of demographic factors, and has implemented a number of measures to improve recruitment and retention in general practice.

GPs play a crucial role in the provision of primary care services. The number of GPs on the specialist register continues to increase – up from 2,270 in 2010 to 3,723 in 2018 and the number of GPs with a GMS contract has also risen from 2,098 in 2008 to 2,491 as at 1 January 2019.

GP training places have been increased from 120 in 2009 to 193 in 2018 and the Govern-

ment's objective is to continue to achieve annual increases in the number of training places available while ensuring that all of the places are filled.

Entry provisions to the GMS scheme have been changed to accommodate more flexible GMS contracts and the retirement age has been extended to 72. An enhanced support package for rural practices has been introduced with improved qualifying criteria and an increased financial allowance of €20,000 per annum. 257 GP practice units encompassing 347 individual GPs are now in receipt of financial supports under this framework, a significant increase on the 167 GPs who received a rural practice allowance prior to the introduction of the 2016 measures.

The Government remains committed to the continued development of GP capacity to ensure that patients across the country continue to have access to GP services and that general practice remains an attractive career option.

### Hospital Services

183. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health if there will be no change to the status of a service in a health facility (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2252/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Report of the Trauma Steering Group – *A Trauma System for Ireland* was approved by Government on the 6th February 2018 and published online.

In an inclusive Trauma System, as recommended for Ireland by the Trauma Steering Group, the trauma care pathway is not organised around individual institutions but in the context of networked ones whereby all acute hospitals, including Cavan General Hospital, will participate – each has a role as either a Major Trauma Centre, Trauma Unit, Local Emergency Hospital or Injury Unit.

The HSE has established an interim implementation group, as recommended in the Report, with Departmental representation, to commence immediate actions including recruitment of a National Clinical Lead and establishment of the National Office for Trauma Services, and selection of a Major Trauma Centre for Dublin. The group met for the first time on 12 April 2018 and continues to meet on a regular basis to consider these actions in the first instance.

Detailed implementation planning will be required to fully implement the Trauma Strategy over a number of years and will be led by the National Office for Trauma Services.

### Departmental Expenditure

184. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent in each year for the past five years on accountancy and consultancy firms in relation to capital projects; the specific capital project in which the costs were incurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2264/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Health Service Executive is responsible for the delivery of capital projects, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly in relation to this matter.

### Drug and Alcohol Task Forces

185. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health the funding being provided to drug task forces in 2019; and the equivalent figures in each of the years 2015 to 2018, in tabular form. [2298/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** The following table outlines the funding allocated to Drug and Alcohol Task forces by the Department of Health and the HSE for the years 2015 to 2019.

The Deputy's attention is drawn to the fact that the HSE's allocation of approximately €22.394 million to Task Forces in 2018 does not include (a) one off funding of €0.25 million, announced in May 2018, to fund initiatives to strengthen the capacity of Task Forces to support the implementation of Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery and (b) allocations to Task Forces by the HSE from the provision of €0.71 million in one off funding for priority projects and services in CHO areas in quarter 4 of 2018.

LDATF	2015 DOH	2015 HSE	2016 DOH	2016 HSE	2017 DOH
Ballyfermot	€255,446	€1,231,286	€255,446	€1,231,286	€255,446
Ballymun	€422,958	€697,957	€422,958	€697,957	€422,958
Blanchardstown	€179,305	€913,589	€179,305	€913,589	€179,305
Bray	€573,860	€916,271	€573,860	€916,271	€573,860
Canal Communities	€338,605	€1,141,309	€338,605	€1,141,309	€338,605
Clondalkin	€388,114	€1,007,948	€388,114	€1,007,948	€388,114
Cork	€411,988	€1,108,299	€411,988	€1,108,299	€411,988
Dublin 12	€70,997	€993,150	€70,397	€993,750	€70,397
Dublin NE	€422,251	€594,836	€239,971	€777,116	€239,971
Dun Laoghaire	€94,676	€786,755	€94,676	€786,755	€94,676
Finglas Cabra	€263,277	€627,960	€263,277	€627,960	€263,277
NIC	€494,856	€1,734,723	€394,856	€1,834,723	€394,856
SIC	€176,043	€1,868,014	€176,043	€1,868,014	€176,043
Tallaght	€341,438	€893,514	€336,022	€898,930	€336,022
Total LDATF	€4,433,814	€14,515,611	€4,145,518	€14,803,907	€4,145,518
RDATF	2015 DOH	2015 HSE	2016 DOH	2016 HSE	2017 DOH
East Coast Area	€58,200	€508,500	€58,200	€508,500	€58,200
Midland	€136,816	€662,491	€136,816	€662,491	€136,816
Mid-West	€147,982	€1,260,007	€147,982	€1,260,007	€147,982
North East	€0	€927,813	€0	€927,813	€0
North West	€258,633	€461,730	€258,633	€461,730	€258,633
North Dublin City & Co.	€309,778	€467,486	€266,245	€511,019	€266,245
South East	€0	€1,065,760	€0	€1,065,760	€0
South West	€102,820	€696,497	€102,820	€696,497	€102,820
Southern	€0	€973,178	€0	€973,178	€0
Western	€136,994	€524,155	€136,994	€524,155	€136,994
Total RDATF	€1,151,223	€7,547,617	€1,107,690	€7,591,150	€1,107,690
Overall Total		€27,648,265		€27,648,265	

LDATF	2017 HSE	2018 DOH	2018 HSE	2019 DOH	2019 HSE
Ballyfermot	€1,231,286	€255,446	€1,231,286	€255,446	€1,231,286

Questions - Written Answers

LDATF	2017 HSE	2018 DOH	2018 HSE	2019 DOH	2019 HSE
Ballymun	€697,957	€422,958	€697,957	€422,958	€697,957
Blanchard-stown	€913,589	€179,305	€913,589	€179,305	€913,589
Bray	€916,271	€573,860	€916,271	€573,860	€916,271
Canal Communities	€1,141,309	€338,605	€1,141,309	€338,605	€1,141,309
Clondalkin	€1,007,948	€388,114	€1,007,948	€388,114	€1,007,948
Cork	€1,108,299	€411,988	€1,108,299	€411,988	€1,108,299
Dublin 12	€993,750	€70,397	€993,750	€70,397	€993,750
Dublin NE	€777,116	€239,971	€777,116	€239,971	€777,116
Dun Laoghaire	€786,755	€94,676	€786,755	€94,676	€786,755
Finglas Cabra	€627,960	€263,277	€627,960	€263,277	€627,960
NIC	€1,834,723	€394,856	€1,834,723	€394,856	€1,834,723
SIC	€1,868,014	€176,043	€1,868,014	€176,043	€1,868,014
Tallaght	€898,930	€336,022	€898,930	€336,022	€898,930
Total LDATF	€14,803,907	€4,145,518	€14,803,907	€4,145,518	€14,803,907
RDATF	2017 HSE	2018 DOH	2018 HSE	2018 DOH	2018 HSE
East Coast Area	€508,500	€58,200	€508,500	€58,200	€508,500
Midland	€662,491	€136,816	€662,491	€136,816	€662,491
Mid-West	€1,260,007	€147,982	€1,260,007	€147,982	€1,260,007
North East	€927,813	€0	€927,813	€0	€927,813
North West	€461,730	€258,633	€461,730	€258,633	€461,730
North Dublin City & Co.	€511,019	€266,245	€511,019	€266,245	€511,019
South East	€1,065,760	€0	€1,065,760	€0	€1,065,760
South West	€696,497	€102,820	€696,497	€102,820	€696,497
Southern	€973,178	€0	€973,178	€0	€973,178
Western	€524,155	€136,994	€524,155	€136,994	€524,155
Total RDATF	€7,591,150	€1,107,690	€7,591,150	€1,107,690	€7,591,150
Overall Total	€27,648,265		€27,648,265		€27,648,265

### GLAS Payments

186. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payments will issue to a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2063/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The above named was approved into GLAS 3 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2017 and has received all payments in respect of the scheme year 2017.

In relation to payment for 2018, a number of issues have arisen in relation to the Traditional Hay Meadow, Protection of Watercourses from Bovines and the Hen Harrier Actions. All cases

must clear validation checks before payment can issue. The case is being worked on by Department officials. Once this case clears validations the 2018 advance payment will be made. GLAS 2018 advance payments are issuing on a weekly basis.

### **Harbours and Piers Development**

187. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when applications will be invited from local authorities for the development and maintenance of piers under the fishery harbour development scheme; the amount of funding that has been allocated to the scheme in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2064/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I wish to inform the Deputy that my Department owns, operates and maintains six designated State-owned Fishery Harbour Centres, located at Castletownbere, Dingle, Dunmore East, Howth, Killybegs and Ros An Mhíl under statute.

In addition, my Department also has responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of North Harbour at Cape Clear, as well as the maintenance of a small number of specific piers, lights and beacons throughout Ireland, in accordance with the 1902 ex-congested Districts Board piers, lights and Beacons Act.

The responsibility for the development, and maintenance of Local Authority owned piers, harbours and slipways rests with each Local Authority in the first instance and their parent Department, the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government thereafter.

However, as part of its annual Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme, my Department has provided limited funding to assist coastal Local Authorities in carrying out small scale projects for the development and repair of piers, harbours and slipways in their ownership.

I expect to make a decision shortly as to the final construct of the 2019 Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme.

### **Basic Payment Scheme Payments**

188. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if 2018 farm payments will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [2067/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The applicant submitted a 2018 BPS application under a partnership number. The partnership was subsequently dissolved. A second BPS application was then submitted by the applicant on behalf of a company. This has resulted in additional administration work in the processing of the BPS application.

The Department is currently in the process of finalising the outstanding administrative work involved and pending completion of final verification checks, payment should issue to the applicant in the coming weeks.

### **Basic Payment Scheme Payments**

189. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if payments have issued to a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [2071/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The 2018 Basic Payment Scheme application was received from the person named on 12 May 2018. Processing of the application is now complete and the balancing payment has issued to the nominated bank account of the person named.

### **Veterinary Inspection Service**

190. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the relocation of laboratories under the aegis of his Department; and the projected timeframe for completion of the relocation. [2148/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department commissioned a cost-benefit analysis (CBA) of options that were proposed by a Working Group in 2016 for the future development of the Regional Veterinary Laboratories (RVLs). The team conducting the CBA included internationally-recognised, independent experts in economic analysis and animal disease surveillance. My Department has been presented with the CBA report and senior officials are currently considering the recommendations. Due consideration is also being given to feedback we received following consultation on two separate occasions with our stakeholders - following publication of the 2016 Working Group report and during the CBA process. A proposal on how best to redevelop the RVLs over the next few years will be informed by both of those consultative processes and by the findings of the CBA - the focus of my Department is now on securing and improving the service to the sector at best value to the tax payer and on securing the necessary capital funding for investment.

### **Brexit Staff**

191. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of additional staff relating to Brexit which will be in place by 29 March 2019; the areas in this regard; his plans to continue recruitment post March 2019; the plans in place in this regard; the number of additional Brexit related staff which will be hired in 2019; and the fields in which they will be recruited. [2243/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department is participating very actively in the Whole-of-Government approach to preparedness and contingency planning for Brexit. My officials are working closely with colleagues in other Departments and agencies across the public service to develop a joint approach in relation to the implementation at ports and airports of import controls on products coming from the UK.

These requirements are significant, and arise in relation to the carrying out of documentary, identity and physical checks on imports of animals, plants, and products of animal and plant origin, as set out in EU legislation. The Department has carried out an extensive analysis exercise, based on examination of trade and container movement data, together with close consultation with stakeholder organisations and individual companies, to establish as best we can the likely volumes of controls that will need to be carried out. This has been a difficult exercise, given the lack of detailed data as a result of the UK’s participation in the Single Market up to this point, but we have based our assumptions and planning on what we believe are reasonable estimates of the likely volumes.

On staffing, we have used this data analysis exercise to guide our planning in relation to putting in place the staff that will be required to carry out the range of controls needed. These controls are carried out by a combination of portal inspectorate staff and where necessary, the appropriate veterinary and technical supervision. The Department is working very effectively with Customs and others to provide the resources needed to apply the necessary controls. A significant number of staff have already been recruited for this work and I am confident that the state will be in a position to deliver the services required in terms of both imports and exports at the appropriate time.

### **Brexit Supports**

192. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the Brexit supports made available in 2018 to farmers and fishermen; the amount made available in 2018; the take-up of Brexit agriculture supports in 2018; and the amount drawn down in loans or given in grants. [2244/19]

193. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the Brexit supports available for 2019; the amount available; and the take-up of such supports. [2245/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 192 and 193 together.

In Budget 2018 I introduced a €50m dedicated Brexit package for investment, innovation and market development to assist all stakeholders in the agri food sector, including farmers and fishermen. Within that I allocated €25m to facilitate the development of a Brexit response loan scheme.

The payment of that €25m in 2018 is facilitating the development of the Future Growth Loan Scheme, which will provide up to €300m of long-term investment loans and will be available to eligible Irish businesses, including farmers and the agri-food & seafood sectors.

This is a source of finance for young and new entrant farmers, especially the cohort who do not have high levels of security. It will also serve smaller-scale farmers, who often do not have the leverage to negotiate for more favourable terms with their banking institution. Arrangements are currently being finalised to have the Scheme in place and ready to launch as soon as possible. The Scheme will run for three years and further announcements in this regard will be made shortly.

In Budget 2019 I introduced a €78m Brexit package for farmers, fishermen and food SMEs. The package includes €44m of direct aid for farmers, which comprises:

- an additional €23m for farmers in Areas of Natural Constraint;
- a new €20m Beef Environmental Efficiency Pilot scheme, targeted at suckler farmers with the aim of further improving the economic and carbon efficiency of Irish beef production; and.
- an additional €1m in funding for the horticulture sector.

These measures form an important part of the Government's Brexit response, alongside the Brexit Loan Scheme for food businesses, the provision of additional resources to the agri-food and enterprise State Agencies, and an intensification of Minister-led trade missions to promote market diversification.

**Brexit Issues**

194. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the contingency planning carried out to protect the agrifood sector from the impact of all Brexit scenarios and in particular a no-deal scenario. [2246/19]

195. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has conducted a regional assessment of the impacts of Brexit; and if so, the details of same. [2247/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 194 and 195 together.

A considerable amount of research into the impacts of Brexit, particularly those on the agri-food sector, has been undertaken by a range of agencies and bodies. This includes research by Teagasc into, for example, the effects on the sector more widely as well as on farm incomes, by the ESRI, by the Department of Finance, by Copenhagen Economics and by Inter Trade Ireland, which looked at the potential impact of WTO tariffs on cross-border trade. All of the analyses undertaken to date show that Brexit will be unambiguously bad for the sector, particularly given the fact that the sector's regional spread underpins the socio-economic development of rural areas in Ireland. The work is not based on a specific regional basis but analyses the overall sectoral impacts.

The most immediate challenge for industry has been the impact caused by the significant drop in the value of sterling against the euro. A considerable amount of work has also been put into intensifying our market diversification efforts in order to reduce our exposure to the UK market.

I have been addressing these challenges through a range of Budgetary measures aimed at improving competitiveness, and developing market and product diversification. These measures include a €150m low-cost loan scheme in 2017 to help reduce farm-gate business costs, and a dedicated €50m Brexit package in Budget 2018 which included further additional funding to Bord Bia and Teagasc as well as a contribution to a €300m (joint DAFM/DBEI) "Brexit Loan Scheme", at least 40% of which is available to food businesses. In Budget 2019 I announced a €78m Brexit package for farmers, fishermen, food SMEs and to cover additional costs related to Brexit.

On market and product diversification, the additional funding that I have provided to Bord Bia has been used, inter alia, to conduct a market prioritisation exercise which is now informing our approach to market diversification activities, including the choice of destinations for Trade Missions. Product diversification has also been supported through additional funding of €8.8 million to Teagasc to develop its National Food Innovation Hub, and funding to support investment in the prepared consumer foods sector.

It has been clear from the beginning that a hard Brexit would be very damaging for the agri-food sector given the potential impact of WTO tariffs on trade. We have been working very hard for quite some time to sensitise other Member States and the European Commission to these potential impacts, and to the likelihood of specific supports being required for the sector. The institutions of the European Union are very well aware of the likelihood of a significant impact of a disorderly Brexit on Ireland's economy because this has been part of the discussion from the beginning, and indeed this is explicitly recognised in the Commission's own communication on contingency planning.

In the case of agriculture, there is of course a toolbox available to assist with severe market

disruption in the Common Market Organisation Regulation put in place during Ireland's Presidency in 2013, and this will be part of the discussion. I am in regular and on-going contact with Commissioner Hogan on these issues.

As regards contingency planning, my Department has been actively participating in the Whole-of-Government approach to preparedness and contingency planning. We have fed into the overall Government Contingency Action Plan which was published on 19 December, and we have been working very closely with colleagues in other Departments and agencies to address in particular the requirements that will arise in relation to the implementation at ports and airports of import controls on agri-food products coming from the UK.

These requirements are significant, and arise in relation to the carrying out of documentary, identity and physical checks on imports of animals, plants, and products of animal and plant origin, as set out in EU legislation.

Work in this regard has been focused on three key areas, namely, infrastructure, staffing and information technology, and in three key locations, that is Dublin Port, Rosslare Port and Dublin Airport.

On infrastructure, we have been engaging very closely with the Office of Public Works, the Department of Transport, the Department of Health and the Revenue Commissioners in relation to the physical facilities that will be required to carry out import controls at the three locations. This work had been proceeding in any event in the context of dealing with the central case scenario, and has been adapted in order to meet the requirements in the event of a disorderly Brexit.

On staffing, the Department is working very effectively with Customs and others to provide the resources needed to apply the necessary controls, and I am confident that the state will be in a position to apply controls at the appropriate time.

On information technology, my Department has established a project to coordinate the identification and delivery of ICT Infrastructure and systems to support the additional requirements of staff engaged in control processes in Dublin Port, Rosslare and Dublin Airport. The delivery timelines in the event of a disorderly Brexit are extremely challenging, but officials are working with the greatest urgency to ensure that the required ICT services are in place by 29 March 2019.

Throughout all of this work, the focus of the Department will continue to be on the need to discharge its legal responsibilities while ensuring the minimum possible disruption to trade.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

196. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount spent in each year for the past five years on accountancy and consultancy firms in relation to capital projects; the specific capital project in which the costs were incurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2254/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The information requested by the Deputy on the amount spent in each of the past five years on consultancy firms in relation to capital projects can be found in the following tables. My Department did not engage any accountancy firms in relation to capital projects in the past five years.

**2014**

Questions - Written Answers

Consultancy Firm	Title of Capital project	Amount Spent €
Willis Risk Management	High Containment Laboratory, CVRL Backweston Campus	225
Carraig Consultants (via OPW)	High Containment Laboratory, CVRL Backweston Campus	1,520
Smith Carter USA LLC (via OPW)	High Containment Laboratory, CVRL Backweston Campus	115,230
Cyril Sweett Ltd t/a Sweett(Ireland) (via OPW)	High Containment Laboratory, CVRL Backweston Campus	7,228
Currie & Brown (via OPW)	High Containment Laboratory, CVRL Backweston Campus	2,410
RSM McClure Watters (Consulting)	Forestry Programme 2014-2020	96,770
Forest Solutions	New Forestry for Fibre scheme	2,214
Forest Solutions	Forest Roads Programme 2014-2020	2,952
WYG Consulting Engineers	Upgrade of Howth Fishery Harbour Centre (FHC)	21,782
Corrosion solutions	Upgrade of Howth FHC	369
Malachy Walsh	Upgrade of Howth FHC	22,676
Moore AES Ltd	Upgrade of Howth FHC	418
Ove Arup	Upgrade of Howth FHC	21,980
Cronin Millar Consulting Engineers	Upgrade of Rossaveel FHC	30,353
Mott McDonald	Upgrade of Rossaveel FHC	20,000
CST	Upgrade of Howth FHC	307
Malachy Walsh & Partners, Mahon Tech Park, Blackrock, Cork	Upgrade of Dunmore East FHC	6,888
J&N Security Consultants Ltd, Glenside House, Ballyard, Tralee, Co. Kerry	Upgrade of Dunmore East FHC	4,982
Michael Regan Architects Ltd. (E-Project), 21 Lower Main Street, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford	Upgrade of Dunmore East FHC	19,286
Arup, 20 Ringsend, Dublin 4	Upgrade of Dunmore East FHC	96,769
Collins Engineers Ltd, Unit G6, Riverview Business Park, Nangor Road, Dublin 12	Cape Clear Island Development Programme	3,149

Consultancy Firm	Title of Capital project	Amount Spent €
Malone O'Regan, St Catherine's House, Catherine Street, Waterford	Cape Clear Island Development Programme	262,835
Malone O'Regan, St Catherine's House, Catherine Street, Waterford	Cape Clear Island Development Programme	7,540
John O'Donovan & Associates	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	6,150
MHL & Associates	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	15,369
Malachy Walsh & Partners	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	17,607
Malachy Walsh & Partners	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	15,135
Malachy Walsh & Partners	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	34,723
RPS Ireland Ltd	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	5,419
Nicholas O'Dwyer Ltd.,	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	19,700
MHL & Associates	Upgrade of An Daingean FHC	15,369
Malachy Walsh & Partners	Upgrade of An Daingean FHC	71,162
RPS Ireland Ltd	Upgrade of An Daingean FHC	25,215
J&N Security Consultants Ltd	Upgrade of An Daingean FHC	4,120
Malachy Walsh & Partners	Upgrade of Howth FHC	22,675
Malachy Walsh & Partners	Pier, Lights & Beacons, Westcove, Co. Kerry	5,959
WYG Consulting Engineers	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	5,953
RPS	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	14,056
Pearlson RR	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	5,777
Mott McDonald	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	29,884
Jennings O'Donovan	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	1,224
Jennings O'Donovan	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	3,628
Jennings O'Donovan	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	26,537
ARUP	Upgrade of Howth FHC	21,980
CST	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	4,238
Corrosion Solutions	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	1,968
Corrosion Prevention	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	5,568
WYG	Upgrade of Howth FHC	57,051

2015

Consultancy Firm	Title of Capital project	Amount Spent €
Gavin & Doherty Geosolutions Ltd.	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	29,446
Hydrographic Surveys Ltd.	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	9,761
Corrosion Prevention Ltd.	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	5,190
Spica Ltd.	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	246
CST Group	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	855
Jennings O'Donovan & Partners	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	29,520
WYG Engineering (NI) Ltd.	Upgrading of Howth and Killybegs FHCs	72,805
Lenmar Developments Ltd.	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	15,375
RPS	Upgrade of Castletownbere, Howth and Killybegs FHCs	134,314
Captain Alan Coghlan	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	4,800
Orica BQS Ltd.	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	7,872
Doran Consulting Ltd.	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	250,913
Landmark Geomatics	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	9,225
Mott McDonald	Upgrade of Rossaveel and Killybegs FHCs	28,258
Frontier Engineering Group	Upgrade of Rossaveel FHC	4,182
Aquafact	Upgrade of Rossaveel FHC	5,843
Hydro Environmental	Upgrade of Rossaveel FHC	2,214
Cronin Millar Consulting Engineers	Upgrade of Rossaveel FHC	111,716
Eireco	Upgrade of Rossaveel FHC	1,776
JJ Campbell/Frontier	Upgrade of Rossaveel FHC	5,904
Sal Laboratories/Concept	Upgrade of Howth FHC	1,254
Ryan Hanley	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	4,484
JODA Engineering Consultants	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	16,033
Micheal Williams Architect	Upgrade of An Daingean FHC	8,149
Malachy Walsh & Partners	Upgrade of Howth FHC	47,379
Nicholas O'Dwyer	Upgrade of An Daingean FHC	18,573

2016

Consultancy Firm	Title of Capital project	Amount Spent €
Smith Carter USA LLC (via OPW)	High Containment Laboratory, CVRL Backweston Campus	122,960

Consultancy Firm	Title of Capital project	Amount Spent €
Cyril Sweett Ltd t/a Sweett (Ireland) (via OPW)	High Containment Laboratory, CVRL Backweston Campus	24,095
Currie & Brown (via OPW)	High Containment Laboratory, CVRL Backweston Campus	2,410
Corrosion Prevention Ltd.	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	28,135
Firewise Ltd.	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	246
CST Group	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	2,239
WYG Engineering (NI) Ltd.	Upgrade of Howth and Killybegs FHCs	48,190
RPS	Upgrade of Howth and Castletownbere FHCs	306,862
Gavin & Doherty Solutions	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	5,806
Doran Consulting Ltd.	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	451,960
Landmark Geomatics	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	6,716
Peter McLoughlin	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	305
C & A O'Connell	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	5,535
Cronin Millar Consulting Engineers	Upgrade of Rossaveel FHC	114,321
Mott McDonald	Upgrade of Rossaveel FHC	187,575
Frontier Engineering Group	Upgrade of Rossaveel FHC	4,920
Tadhg O'Keeffe	Residence Engineer for SCH PH2 Dredging	43,465
Malachy Walsh	Upgrade of Howth FHC	171,376
J&N Security	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	14,502
MHL	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	5,781
JJ Campbell/Frontier	Upgrade of Howth FHC	3,813
Sal Laboratories/Concept	Upgrade of Howth FHC	1,915
Ryan Hanley	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	21,607
JODA	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	9,100
Micheal Williams Architect	Upgrade of Castletownbere and An Daingean FHCs	100,917
Nicholas O'Dwyer	Upgrade of An Daingean FHC	153,438

2017

Consultancy Firm	Title of Capital project	Amount Spent €
Smith Carter USA LLC (via OPW)	High Containment Laboratory, CVRL Backweston Campus	43,800

Questions - Written Answers

Consultancy Firm	Title of Capital project	Amount Spent €
Currie & Brown (via OPW)	High Containment Laboratory, CVRL Backweston Campus	19,728
Aqua Fact Int. Services Ltd.	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	36,900
Corrosion Prevention Ltd.	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	4,360
Digital Land Surveyors Ltd.	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	738
CST Group	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	36,325
Corrosion Solutions & I.S Ltd.	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	738
WYG Engineering (NI) Ltd.	Upgrade of Howth and Killybegs FHCs	38,309
RPS	Upgrade of Howth, Castletownbere and Killybegs FHCs	190,659
Orica BQS Ltd.	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	3,444
Geomara Ltd.	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	4,743
Gavin & Doherty Solutions	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	19,096
Doran Consulting Ltd.	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	317,489
Landmark Geomatics	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	2,829
C & A O'Connell	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	4,428
M B A Planning	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	6,298
G & L Consultancy Ltd.	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	695
Fontus Environmental Solution	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	5,000
Cronin Millar Consulting Engineers	Upgrade of Rossaveel FHC	160,965
Mott McDonald	Upgrade of Rossaveel FHC	52,671
Archaeological Diving	Upgrade of Rossaveel FHC	12,227
Tadhg O'Keeffe	Resident engineer for SCH PH2 Piling Howth	74,229
Malachy Walsh	Upgrade of Howth and Castletownbere FHCs	63,623
JJ Campbell/Frontier	Upgrade of Howth FHC	7,826
Hydrographic Surveys	Upgrade of Howth FHC	3,326
SAL Laboratories/Concept	Upgrade of Howth FHC	2,018
Walsh Goodfellow	Upgrade of Howth FHC	3,813
Neat Design	Upgrade of Howth FHC	5,068
J&N Security	Upgrade of Howth, Dunmore East and Castletownbere FHCs	6,704
MDK Analytical	Asbestos Survey	1,919
Ryan Hanley	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	80,163
Micheal Williams Architect (Kane Williams)	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	178,228

Consultancy Firm	Title of Capital project	Amount Spent €
Remco	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	33,496
Nicholas O'Dwyer	Upgrade of An Daingean FHC	96,586
Michael Barrett Partnership	Haulbowline Remediation Works	52,699

2018

Consultancy Firm	Title of Capital project	Amount Spent €
Smith Carter USA LLC (via OPW)	High Containment Laboratory, CVRL Backweston Campus	95,522
Chancery Group (via OPW)	High Containment Laboratory, CVRL Backweston Campus	3,075
Chris Mee Safety Engineering	High Containment Laboratory, CVRL Backweston Campus	799
McCarthy Keville O'Sullivan	Forestry Programme 2014-2020 - Mid Term Review	7,503
Doran Consultants	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	69,812
Doran Consultants	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	46,277
Doran Consultants	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	2,639
GDG Gavin Doherty Geosolutions	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	24,268
GDG Gavin Doherty Geosolutions	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	5,227
WYG	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	28,682
WYG	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	4,500
Aquafact	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	57,650
CST	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	507
Techworks Marine	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	43,012
Geomara	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	4,858
Landmark Geomatics	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	393
Apex Geoservices	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	11,500
Geotechnical Environmental Services LTD	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	3,992
PAT Solutions	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	1,909
SM Designs	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	2,472
Hydrographic Surveys	Upgrade of Killybegs FHC	2,889
ADCO LTD	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	9,077
CMG Crime Management Ltd	Upgrade of Dunmore East FHC	5,457

Questions - Written Answers

Consultancy Firm	Title of Capital project	Amount Spent €
Cronin Millar Consulting Eng	Upgrade of Ros an Mhil FHC	12,300
Cronin Millar Consulting Eng	Upgrade of Rossaveel FHC	43,646
Gavin & Doherty Solutions	Upgrade of Ros an Mhil FHC	49,431
Kane Williams Architects Ltd	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	87,902
Malachy Walsh & Partners	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	12,517
Malachy Walsh & Partners	Upgrade of Howth FHC	29,108
Malachy Walsh & Partners	Upgrade of Howth FHC	3,029
Malachy Walsh & Partners	Upgrade of Howth FHC	6,316
Mitchell & Associates	Upgrade of Howth FHC	1,150
Nicholas De Jong Associates	Upgrade of Howth FHC	19,284
Nicholas O'dwyer Ltd	Upgrade of An Daingean FHC	269,118
Oconnor Sutton Cronin & Assoc	Upgrade of Howth FHC	30,858
Planbay Limited	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	7,041
REMCO LTD	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	4,339
REMCO LTD	Upgrade of Dunmore East FHC	85,952
REMCO LTD	Upgrade of Dunmore East FHC	1,046
REMCO LTD	Upgrade of Dunmore East FHC	12,915
REMCO LTD	Upgrade of Dunmore East FHC	9,446
RPS	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	373,604
Ryan Hanley Ltd	Upgrade of Castletownbere FHC	36,825
Stephen Foley Architects Ltd	Upgrade of Ros An Mhil FHC	12,300
Walsh & Goodfellow Ltd	Upgrade of Howth FHC	18,423
Michael Barrett Partnership	Haulbowline Remediation Works	82,379
Kane Williams Architects Ltd	Upgrade of An Daingean FHC	10,275
Kane Williams Architects Ltd	Upgrade of An Daingean FHC	8,788
Malachy Walsh & Partners	Upgrade of An Daingean FHC	7,995

## Beef Data and Genomics Programme

197. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of active participants in the beef data and genomics programme that have received the 85% advance payment of the 2018 payment by county; the number of persons that have passed all payment approval checks and are awaiting the 85% portion of 2018 payment; the number of beef data and genomics programme recipients that have yet to receive this portion of payment by county in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2270/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Beef Data and Genomics Programme provides for six year payments to farmers for completion of actions which deliver accelerated genetic improvement in the Irish national herd and improvement of its environmental sustainability.

Payments under the 2018 Programme year for both BDGP I and BDGP II commenced in December 2018. As of 11th January 2019 a total of 22,032 participants have received a payment to date.

Advance payments do not issue under BDGP. Payments are issued based on the level of compliance reached under each requirement of the Programme.

All participants who have passed approval checks are paid. Further payments will continue to be made over the coming weeks as more participants become fully compliant with the requirements of the Programme.

Please see the following table by County breakdown.

County	Applicants Paid	Not yet passed all the required approval checks
CARLOW	276	44
CAVAN	1121	71
CLARE	1779	129
CORK	1516	237
DONEGAL	1263	120
DUBLIN	46	11
GALWAY	2447	271
KERRY	1186	107
KILDARE	243	63
KILKENNY	483	116
LAOIS	525	72
LEITRIM	909	61
LIMERICK	689	111
LONGFORD	571	70
LOUTH	197	30
MAYO	2116	202
MEATH	507	71
MONAGHAN	791	56
OFFALY	532	62
ROSCOMMON	1294	114
SLIGO	810	152

County	Applicants Paid	Not yet passed all the required approval checks
TIPPERARY	926	95
WATERFORD	289	49
WESTMEATH	665	68
WEXFORD	498	86
WICKLOW	353	43
TOTAL	22,032	2,511

### Organic Farming Scheme Data

198. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the financial allocations on an annual basis under the 2014 to 2020 RDP to the organic farming scheme; the amount expended on the programme in each year since established; the number of approved applicants in the scheme that have received payments in each year; and the number that have not received payments in each year of scheme since being established, in tabular form. [2271/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Organic Farming Scheme under the current RDP 2014 - 2020 was launched in 2015. The figures in the following table set out the financial allocation for each year together with the amount expended in those years. The figures regarding payees and the numbers awaiting payment refer to the scheme year in question. The scheme in question is on track to spend its entire allocation as later arrivals into the scheme will be paid in later years.

Year	Financial Allocation	Amount expended (in each year)	Payees (per scheme year)	Number awaiting payment
2015	12,000,000	8,030,000	1,580	0
2016	10,000,000	8,039,561	1,659	4
2017	10,500,000	8,822,131	1,541	47
2018	10,500,000	10,519,034	1,246	235
2019	11,000,000	n/a	n/a	n/a

### Organic Farming Scheme Data

199. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the targets committed to, that is, the number of hectares of new land into production and the number of hectares of converted land under the organic farming scheme, for the 2014 to 2020 RDP window; and the progress to date on the targets. [2272/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The target for Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 was to attract some 16,000 hectares of new land into organic production and to support 46,000 hectares of converted land over the lifetime of the programme. I am very pleased to report that this target was exceeded within the first year of the opening of the Organic Farming Scheme. Since 2015, a total of 26,000 ha of land has been added to the total utilisable agricultural area under organic production and supported through my Department's Organic Farming Scheme. There will also be additional land added to this figure as a result of the re-opening of the scheme at the end of last year. My Department is cur-

rently assessing the applications under this most recent round. The total area currently under organic production is 72,000 hectares.

### **Food Exports**

200. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the beef and ground beef manufactured here exported to the United States of America on an annual basis over the 2015 to 2018 period in volume and euro value terms, in tabular form. [2273/19]

201. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the exports of beef, lamb, pigmeat and dairy to the USA in volume and euro value on an annual basis over 2015 to 2018 period, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2274/19]

202. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the progress on gaining access for meat products, that is, beef, lamb and pigmeat to the USA; the remaining stages in the approval process outstanding; and the timeframe for all stages to be completed and full access granted. [2275/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 200 to 202, inclusive, together.

Access for beef and pigmeat to the US is already in place. Ireland was the first EU Member State to be granted beef market access to the USA in 2015. In July 2016, my Department received approval to send Beef Intended for Grinding (BIFG), also known as manufacturing beef to the US. A total of 10 Irish plants have been approved for the export of raw intact beef to the US, of which 2 are also approved for BIFG. Ireland does not have access for processed beef, which may also be called manufactured beef.

Ireland has enjoyed uninterrupted access to the US market for raw pork since 2001 and a total of 3 plants are approved for the export of raw pork to the USA.

Sheepmeat exports from the EU to the US are currently banned due to the presence of TSE in certain EU Member States. Sheepmeat access to the USA will depend in the first instance on the USA lifting its TSE ban on EU Sheepmeat. My Department submitted a sheepmeat questionnaire (SRT) in 2017 in preparation for the lifting of this ban and continues to raise this issue with US officials, both as part of the Trade Missions to the USA and with visiting US officials to Ireland. However, it is not possible to predict a timeline for sheepmeat market access to the USA.

The role of my Department is to open new markets and maintain existing markets for Irish food exports and overall targets are set out for agri-food exports in Foodwise 2025, in terms of an increase to €19 billion by 2025. My Department works very closely with the meat and dairy industry but once a market has been opened trade arrangements are left to individual companies and exporters and the actual trade volumes will vary depending on a range of factors such as currency fluctuations, global supply and demand, and local and international factors.

In 2018 Irish agri-food exports reached an estimated €13.6 billion. Within that, dairy exports exceeded €4 billion, an increase in volume of 5% on the 2017 levels and overall meat and livestock exports increased by 1% to an estimated €3.97 billion according to the Bord Bia Performance and Prospects 2018/2019 report which I launched last week.

In order to provide a country breakdown, as requested, it is necessary to use Central Statistics Office (CSO) trade statistics. The following table provides all the Beef, Pigmear and Dairy exports for each of the years 2015, 2016, 2017 and the January – October period in 2018 to the USA, the latest period for which data is available from the CSO, in both value and volume terms. The USA was the second biggest destination for Irish food exports in 2017 after the UK and up to the end of October 2018, after the UK.

-	2015		2016		2017		Jan – Oct 2018	
	€000s	tonnes	€000s	tonnes	€000s	tonnes	€000s	tonnes
Beef	5,452	912	9,840	1,772	7,719	1,571	7,749	1,766
Pigmear	27,465	6,827	25,427	6,360	19,021	4,860	14,723	4,170
Dairy	186,184	31,232	172,435	33,819	189,046	37,929	241,304	39,063

### Food Exports

203. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of the review of existing export markets in which conditions of certification present barriers to trade or additional costs for exporters. [2276/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I launched an action plan on Market Access in April 2017. This plan aims to increase international market access for Irish food and drink exports and focuses on seven particular elements including barriers to trade. My Department actively works and engages with various competent authorities in third countries in order to try and remove various technical barriers to trade and to improve certification conditions.

In relation to meat, my Department has undertaken a review of existing export markets in which conditions of certification present barriers to trade or additional costs for exporters. This review was carried out in collaboration with the industry. The work involved in this review is by its nature on-going and is subject to on-going review, again in collaboration with industry.

Barriers to trade tend to arise in relation to meat products rather than dairy and an example of the work around removing barriers to trade and improving certification conditions relates to the agreed bilateral veterinary health certificates for beef. During the period, since the launch of the Action plan, enhanced beef access has been achieved for the export of Irish Beef to Israel, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and South Africa as follows:

- Israel - the main changes from the previous certificate are that the new certificate provides for the export of bone-in beef cuts derived from cattle of all ages as well as boneless beef cuts and offal from cattle of all age. The previous certificate restricted exports to boneless beef only.

- Saudi Arabia - the new certificate covers the export of beef and processed beef products including minced beef and cooked beef

- Singapore - the new certificate provides for the export of boneless beef derived from cattle of all ages as well as bone-in beef from cattle aged less than thirty months. The previous certificate restricted exports to boneless beef only derived from cattle aged less than thirty months.

- South Africa - the main change is that there is no longer a requirement that animals aged over 72 months be tested for BSE.

My Department has also launched an online Market Access portal which provides a one-stop-shop for detailed market access and export information on open agri-food markets around the world, <http://www.marketaccess.agriculture.gov.ie/>.

The information on the portal includes certification arrangements, exporter terms and conditions, individual country trading statistics and the typical products exported to individual markets. This information is updated on an ongoing basis where there are changes in trading conditions or where new markets become open to export. The portal also contains specific email addresses per sector where further information may be requested. Feedback from Industry has been very positive in relation to the portal and it has proved to be an invaluable resource in assessing market conditions for exporters.

### Live Exports

204. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the countries to which Ireland has live exports; the breakdown of cattle exported to each country in 2018, by sector, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2277/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Live exports are a critical part of the infrastructure of our livestock industry. They play a significant role in stimulating price competition and provide an alternative market outlet for farmers. They are however commercial transactions which can be impacted on by various factors. My Department continues to engage with authorities in third countries to seek to agree market access and to agree relevant health certification requirements to facilitate such trade.

In 2018 live exports totalled 246,226 head of cattle, up 31% from 188,334 for on 2017. This change was driven by a significant increase in exports to other EU countries. Calf exports to Spain increased by 66%, to over 72,500 head in 2018. Exports of Irish calves to Italy and the Netherlands also increased last year, to over 12,500 and 48,500 head respectively. Calf exports to Belgium and France increased from 4,200 to 13,000 head and from 2,500 to 8,500 head, from 2017 to 2018 respectively.

Exports to third countries decreased in 2018 – due in part to currency fluctuations in the Turkish Lira. Nevertheless, nearly 13,000 head of cattle were exported to Turkey last year.

In November my Department reached agreement with the Libyan authorities on veterinary health certificates for the export of breeding, fattening and slaughter cattle. A new certificate for breeding cattle and an amended veterinary certificate for the export of fattening and slaughter cattle were agreed. Having an agreed health cert for breeding cattle provides much more clarity for exporters, as previously exports of breeding cattle to Libya had to be agreed on a load by load basis. The age of cattle that can be exported to Libya increased, from 24 to 30 months – this increases opportunities for exporters to export a wider range of cattle. Live exports to Libya more than doubled in 2018 over 2017 to 5,450 head.

Details of all cattle exports in 2018 are set out in the following table.

In December 2018, Minister of State for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection, Pat Breen TD, discussed animal health certificates with the Egyptian Deputy Minister for Agriculture. The Egyptian authorities indicated willingness to consider amending existing health certificates and putting a new certificate for breeding stock in place. My Department continues to work with the Egyptian authorities on re-establishing certification to facilitate live trade as soon as possible.

*Questions - Written Answers*

In December 2018 my Department extended an invitation to Kazakhstan to send a technical team to visit Ireland with a view to begin negotiations for live exports.

The prospects for live cattle exports remain good and my Department continues to engage with third countries and to seek out new markets for live exports.

Agreed health certificates with over 20 non-EU countries, including 11 for the export of cattle, and 7 for sheep, pigs and goats are overseen by my Department. The list of countries and the certificates are available on my Department's website.

Third Country/Territory	Type
Albania	Breeding and/or Production Cattle
Australia	Horses
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Breeding and Production Cattle
Canada	Horses
China	Pigs for BreedingHorses
Egypt	Slaughtering CattleFattening Cattle
Hong Kong	Horses
Kenya	Breeding Pigs
Korea, Republic of	Horses
Lebanon	Breeding Cattle &lt;36 mtsFattening/ Slaughter Cattle &lt;36 mts
Libya	Fattening and Slaughter Cattle/Males &lt;30 mtsSheep Fattening & SlaughterBreeding Cattle
Montenegro	Bovines for Breeding or Production
Morocco	Beef CattleBreeding Cattle
Russia	Breeding Cattle
Serbia	Breeding and Production Cattle
Singapore	Sheep/Goats for Slaughter
Tunisia	Fattening CattleBreeding Heifers
Turkey	Fattening Cattle Male Breeding Bovines- Cattle for SlaughterFemale Breeding Cattle- Horses
Ukraine	Breeding Pigs
UAE	Horses
USA	Horses

Live cattle exports by Country	2018
Great Britain	5,488
Northern Ireland	24,645
Belgium	13,459
France	9,055
Greece	1,559
Italy	24,145
Netherlands	48,922
Spain	92,495

Live cattle exports by Country	2018
Czech Republic	711
Hungary	193
Germany	185
Lebanon	355
Kosovo	61
Morocco	686
Poland	2,665
Portugal	136
Romania	792
Rwanda	79
Slovakia	1,820
Tunisia	164
Libya	5,450
Russia	291
Turkey	12,870

### Food Exports

205. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the countries to which Ireland exports beef; the volume and value in 2018 of such exports by country, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2278/19]

206. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the countries to which Ireland exports lamb; the volume and value in 2018 of such exports by country, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2279/19]

207. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the countries to which Ireland exports pork; the volume and value in 2018 of such exports by country, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2280/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 205 to 207, inclusive, together.

In 2018 Irish agri-food exports reached an estimated €13.6 billion. Within that, overall meat and livestock exports increased by 1% to an estimated €3.97 billion according to the Bord Bia Performance and Prospects 2018/2019 report which I launched last week.

Bord Bia estimates the total value of beef exports, including offal, at just over €2.5 billion in 2018, an increase of 1% overall. The volume of beef exports, excluding offal, rose to an estimated 579,000 tonnes in 2018. The total volume of pigmeat exports is expected to increase to 264,000 tonnes while the value of pigmeat exports declined by 6% to an estimated €666 million. Sheepmeat exports in 2018 were estimated at €315 million, a 15% increase on the 2017 levels.

However, in order to provide a breakdown of exports at country level, as requested, it is necessary to use CSO trade statistics. CSO trade statistics for the whole of 2018 are not yet available. The following tables provide all the beef, pigmeat and sheepmeat exports for the period from the start of January to the end of October for 2018, the latest period for which data is available.

Questions - Written Answers

Beef	Jan-Oct 2018	
Country	€000	Tonnes
United Kingdom	986,815	220,418
France	192,711	41,221
Netherlands	161,404	32,130
Italy	149,940	21,474
Germany	110,518	13,807
Sweden	74,077	16,558
Hong Kong	50,567	16,198
Belgium	45,805	4,873
Spain	45,610	8,417
Denmark	34,100	9,096
Philippines	25,931	14,356
Switzerland	19,050	1,692
Portugal	14,065	2,778
Czech Republic	12,733	2,339
Poland	8,126	2,940
United States	7,749	1,766
Ghana	7,311	7,191
Malta	4,738	654
Luxembourg	3,892	297
Austria	3,887	1,24
Other	33,513	17,564

Pigmeat	Jan-Oct 2018	
Country	€000	Tonnes
United Kingdom	390,888	95,407
China	61,319	47,352
Denmark	47,722	18,433
Japan	32,795	11,895
Germany	26,977	13,931
France	16,491	2,704
Australia	14,909	5,391
United States	14,723	4,170
Czech Republic	13,433	5,308
South Korea	11,481	5,096
Spain	11,379	1,338
Netherlands	7,928	2,201
Philippines	6,837	7,193
Sweden	6,288	5,397
Canada	4,491	1,344
Poland	3,331	1,369
Italy	2,951	592

Pigmeat	Jan-Oct 2018	
Country	€000	Tonnes
Belgium	2,675	2,144
Hong Kong	2,106	1,050
Portugal	2,033	168
Other	15,355	7,917

Sheepmeat	Jan-Oct 2018	
Country	€000	Tonnes
France	85,606	15,700
United Kingdom	44,978	11,440
Germany	32,799	5,133
Belgium	23,565	3,216
Sweden	19,822	3,804
Switzerland	15,368	1,032
Italy	9,473	1,679
Denmark	9,277	1,224
Netherlands	6,048	1,308
Canada	3,611	841
Hong Kong	2,848	1,123
Austria	975	143
Spain	662	91
South Africa	574	708
Finland	553	105
Ivory Coast	526	748
Poland	450	139
Bulgaria	424	32
Luxembourg	421	52
Portugal	282	25
Other	2,0484	745

### Food Exports

208. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the countries to which Ireland exported food and drink products to in 2017 and 2018; the volume and value of such exports by country, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2281/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Irish Agri-food exports and imports are broken down into 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.

In 2018 as part of a wider exercise in relation to trade, my Department undertook an exercise examining the way in which we classify Agri-food sector products. This exercise aims to

provide an up-to-date and detailed statistical representative of Ireland's Agri-food sector. The exercise resulted in the addition of a number of combined nomenclature codes, mainly in the forestry and wood-based products categories and the deletion of other codes relating to waste paper products.

This brought the total of Irish Agri-food exports to approximately €13.8 billion in 2017, including non-edible products such as forestry, animal foodstuffs and animal hides and skins (which account for approximately €1.5 billion of the total).

In 2017 Irish Agri-Food goods were exported to over 180 countries worldwide; increased output and the consistency of global demand for key products were the driving force behind these results.

Full year figures for 2018 are not yet available. However projections based on exports from January – November indicate that total value of Agri-food exports for the full year 2018 will be down between 1.5-2% on full-year 2017 figures while it is estimated that the volume of exports for 2018 will be up by around 3-3.5% compared to 2017.

The table in the following link provides a full breakdown of export destinations in 2017 in respect of both value and volume of goods based on CSO data. The provisional 2018 export data from the CSO will be available in mid-February 2019 with final 2018 export data available in mid-March 2019.

[<a href="/debates%20authoring/webattachments.nsf/0/A4C4A74F80C2C92380258385005D4146/\$File/PQ208%20170119.xlsx?openelement">Tables</a>

## **Food Exports**

209. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the countries to which Ireland exports dairy products; the volume and value in 2018 of such exports by country, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2282/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In January to October 2018, Ireland exported dairy products, including dairy ingredients to 137 countries totalling over €3.7 billion worth of produce in the first 10 months of the year. The following table, based on CSO data, outlines details in respect of values and tonnage by country. It is understood that the first CSO estimates for the full year 2018 will be available in mid-February. 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 utmost importance, and this is particularly true in the context of a post-Brexit scenario.

Aggregate dairy exports in the January-October 2018 period increased by approx 2.7% in volume against 2017, indicating another robust performance by the Irish dairy sector in international markets. Where anomalies are identified in the statistical data, the Department will liaise with the Central Statistics Office to highlight and amend the information as required.

Exports of dairy from Ireland		
Country destination	€000	Tonnes
Afghanistan	5,153	2,833
Algeria	40,596	13,879
Angola	5,603	3,070
Argentina	2,722	1,080
Australia	3,659	659
Austria	9,731	2,786
Azerbaijan	77	9
Bahamas	1,783	255
Bahrain	4,185	804
Bangladesh	8,089	4,890
Barbados	255	37
Belarus	397	79
Belgium	130,480	26,763
Benin	183	119
Bermuda	289	41
Brazil	3,253	1,122
British Virgin Islands	407	239
Bulgaria	782	217
Burkina Faso	7,333	4,068
Burma	1,111	551
Cameroon	366	160
Canada	7,175	932
Cape Verde	647	200
Cayman Islands	256	38
Ceuta	80	52
Chad	927	624
Chile	3,862	558
China (inc Hong Kong)	457,025	79,824
Colombia	7,308	1,068
Congo	5,028	2,854
Congo (Dem Rep)	13,700	8,054
Costa Rica	2,948	1,063
Croatia	1,278	333
Cyprus	2,928	294
Czech Republic	3,504	816
Denmark	12,211	5,079
Dominica	482	415
Dominican Republic	3,812	897
Ecuador	1,117	141
Egypt	17,805	6,602
El Salvador	2,581	660
Ethiopia	425	48

Questions - Written Answers

Exports of dairy from Ireland		
Country destination	€000	Tonnes
Finland	230	53
France	163,257	44,780
Gabon	868	527
Gambia	2,050	1,149
Georgia	191	44
Germany	293,674	86,007
Ghana	12,829	8,426
Gibraltar	119	17
Greece	12,377	2,431
Guatemala	6,105	1,463
Guinea	3,596	2,031
Guyana	754	210
Honduras	1,184	296
Hungary	518	177
India	135	188
Indonesia	11,949	6,254
Iran	487	100
Iraq	42,007	19,462
Israel	19,420	2,498
Italy	23,161	8,347
Ivory Coast	7,847	4,787
Jamaica	1,109	496
Japan	30,025	9,186
Jordan	16,641	4,546
Kenya	923	463
Kuwait	11,833	1,646
Latvia	1,677	415
Lebanon	7,398	2,342
Liberia	744	429
Libya	13,513	3,274
Lithuania	139	23
Madagascar	544	191
Malawi	4,400	1,824
Malaysia	39,476	20,552
Maldives	35	47
Mali	24,371	15,906
Malta	3,814	1,320
Marshall Islands	31	3
Mauritania	2,754	1,599
Mauritius	1,820	681
Mexico	34,004	8,886
Morocco	14,869	3,884

Exports of dairy from Ireland		
Country destination	€000	Tonnes
Mozambique	21	14
Nepal	16	23
Netherlands	495,140	153,460
New Zealand	7,409	4,664
Nicaragua	63	5
Niger	4,250	2,554
Nigeria	63,394	35,643
United Kingdom	845,152	340,277
Norway	1,023	195
Occupied Palestine	5,059	513
Oman	8,469	1,390
Pakistan	8,682	4,928
Panama	3,227	275
Peru	8,553	1,876
Philippines	15,786	7,712
Poland	65,267	23,231
Portugal	3,357	935
Qatar	4,397	571
Romania	2,134	525
Russia	20,550	6,494
Sao Tome & Principe	46	27
Saudi Arabia	78,855	13,139
Senegal	37,931	21,484
Seychelles	666	94
Sierra Leone	302	172
Singapore	16,146	7,072
Slovakia	297	84
Slovenia	891	234
Somalia	597	80
South Africa	19,087	7,969
South Korea	2,785	809
Spain	48,463	12,712
Sri Lanka	40	7
St Vincent & Grenadines	142	69
Sudan	964	516
Surinam	1,487	471
Sweden	5,675	1,266
Switzerland	4,045	1,172
Syria	1,954	2,567
Taiwan	15,118	1,779
Tanzania United Rep	1,347	823
Thailand	20,540	8,104

Exports of dairy from Ireland		
Country destination	€000	Tonnes
Togo	9,760	5,869
Trinidad & Tabago	7,090	2,101
Tunisia	4,545	1,648
Turkey	30,372	6,006
Ukraine	0	0
United Arab Emirates	32,896	11,687
United States	241,304	39,063
Vietnam	8,170	1,735
Yemen	2,923	1,398
Zambia	1,621	775
Zimbabwe	1,392	860

### Departmental Bodies Data

210. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of additional staff to be taken on in all agencies and bodies under his aegis in 2019 (details supplied); the cost of hiring additional staff in each agency or body; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2283/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** As regards the twelve State Bodies under the aegis of my Department, the information requested is an operational matter for the State Bodies themselves. I have referred the Deputy's question to the Agencies and have requested that a response should issue within 10 days.

### Pesticide Use

211. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of the reauthorisation of chlorothalonil at EU level; and if a position paper has been submitted in relation to the issue to the European Commission in this regard. [2284/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department is acutely aware of the importance of chlorothalonil to the cereal producing sector in Ireland, not only as a primary disease control tool but more critically as a resistance management tool, protecting other chemical families from the development of pathogen resistance.

A key issue in the reauthorisation process is a change in the classification for carcinogenicity proposed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) following technical peer review. The ultimate decision on the appropriate classification will be based on an assessment that the Committee for Risk Assessment (RAC) of the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) will undertake when a dossier is submitted to it by EFSA. It is important that this process provides for all relevant information to be taken into account in a final decision on classification.

The ability of growers to use chlorothalonil products safely, without endangering themselves, consumers or the environment, and in compliance with regulatory approval criteria will be of primary importance in this process.

My officials have highlighted the importance of this substance in Ireland at meetings of the

Standing Committee relating to Plant Protection Products legislation and I have also identified the issue directly with Commissioner Andriukaitis. The EU Commission will give a short update in relation to this issue at the next meeting of the standing committee.

### **Beef Industry**

212. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if consideration has been given to pursuing protected designation of origin or protected geographical indication for Irish grass fed suckler beef at EU level. [2285/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The European Union scheme of geographical indications (GI) protects the names of quality agricultural products and foodstuffs where a strong link exists between the product's characteristics and a defined geographical area. In the case of a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) the product must be produced or processed or prepared in the geographical area and a specific quality, reputation or other characteristics must be attributable to that entire area.

My Department is actively engaging with the EU Commission and relevant stakeholders at industry level with a view to examining the possible options involved in applying for Protected Geographical Indication status for Irish beef.

### **Common Agricultural Policy Negotiations**

213. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if consideration has been given to proposals (details supplied) by an organisation. [2286/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department is evaluating relevant measures to feed into the next iteration of the CAP. Decisions on all aspects will be informed by the final outcome of CAP negotiations at EU level, the available budget, empirical data and extensive stakeholder consultation. The organisation referred to by the Deputy has made a submission as part of my Department's public consultation process. All such submissions will be considered in the context of developing a National CAP plan.

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. My view is that 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.

Earlier this year I was pleased to secure an allocation of €20 million in the 2019 Budget for a new pilot scheme for suckler farmers, specifically aimed at further improving the carbon efficiency of beef production. The Beef Environmental Efficiency Pilot (BEEP) will target the weaning efficiency of suckler cows and calves - measuring the liveweight of the calf at weaning as a percentage of the cow's liveweight. This data will be used to target improvements on a herd basis by giving the farmer detailed feedback on the performance of individual animals. The data collected will also be a valuable addition to Ireland's already impressive database on cattle genomics.

I am also confident that suckler farmers will be significant beneficiaries of the additional €23 million in funding which I announced in Budget 2019 for the Areas of Natural Constraint scheme.

The Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) provides Irish beef farmers with some €300 million in funding over the current Rural Development Programme (RDP) period. This will improve the environmental sustainability of the national suckler herd by increasing genetic merit. In addition to the BDGP, other supports which are available for beef farmers under Pillar II of the CAP include GLAS, ANCs and Knowledge Transfer Groups. Suckler farmers also benefit from the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and Greening payments under CAP Pillar I.

### **Beef Exports**

214. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on recent comments by the UK Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Mr. George Eustice (details supplied); and if he has contacted his counterparts in the UK Government since these comments were made. [2287/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The reported comments by George Eustice MP are somewhat speculative in nature, and I would point out by way of counter-argument that, according to the UK National Beef Association, the UK is about 75% self-sufficient in beef. In addition, Bord Bia's recently published Export Performance and Prospects 2018/2019 report, it states that exports of beef to the UK, continued to increase, increasing by 4% in 2018.

In any event, retention of the UK market for the Irish beef and other sectors is a key component of the Government's response to Brexit. For example, the range of support measures that I have introduced over the last three budgets has been particularly aimed at cost reduction so that our producers can maintain their competitiveness to the maximum possible extent. In addition, I have met with the chief executives of all of the major British retailers to impress upon them the commitment of Irish suppliers in continuing to supply the UK market post-Brexit.

It is also important to point out that the additional funding that I have provided to Bord Bia since the UK referendum - a total of €19.5 million - is being used, among other things, to provide direct support and advice to individual companies in the context of its Brexit Barometer initiative, including in relation to how they can maintain customer relationships, and deal with supply chain and logistics challenges.

More generally, the pursuit and development of new markets for Irish agri-food exports, including beef exports, is an ongoing and central component of the strategic development of the agri-food sector, as evidenced by its placement right at the centre of Food Wise 2025, the industry's strategy for development over the coming years. Food Wise 2025 outlines the huge potential for growth in agri-food exports to new and emerging markets, particularly in Asia, Africa, the Americas and the Gulf region. This is where our efforts will be focused for the foreseeable future, particularly given the need to diversify our markets and to reduce our reliance on traditional destinations such as the UK.

### **Electric Vehicle Grants**

215. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the reason a person (details supplied) who bought a 100% electric vehicle and applied for a grant was refused funding despite the vehicle complying with the conditions of the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2068/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard**

**Bruton):** I understand the Deputy is referring to the electric vehicle home charger grant which provide up to €600 to support the installation of a home charger. This grant, and the relevant appeals process, is administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland on behalf of my Department. Details of the scheme including eligibility criteria can be found on the website [www.drivingelectric.ie](http://www.drivingelectric.ie).

In order to be eligible for the home charger grant, the model of vehicle must be currently eligible or, at some stage in the past, have been eligible for the SEAI electric vehicle purchase grant. The list of vehicles and models that are, or have at one stage been, eligible for the grant is available on the SEAI's website.

In order for a car to be included on the home charger grant list, it is the responsibility of the importer to contact SEAI directly and register the vehicle with SEAI for the purchase grant, thereby confirming that the vehicle meets the eligibility criteria.

The applicant in question has queried this matter directly with my Department previously and a response issued on 11 January 2019.

### **Recycling Policy**

216. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his strategy for banning the purchase of single use plastics with regard to public contracts in which single use plastics are used; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2175/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** On 3 January 2019, the Government decided that Government Departments would no longer purchase, directly or indirectly, single use plastic beverage cups, cutlery or straws. From 1 March 2019, this policy will also apply to all public bodies. Certain limited exemptions are in place for reasons of public health and hygiene. Other aspects of the Government Decision include improving the way public bodies manage their resources such as water and energy, and materials such as paper and progressing Ireland's implementation of green public procurement policy.

The decision on single use plastic items pre-empts a more wide-ranging EU legislative proposal on plastics, which is expected to be agreed shortly.

My department, working with the Office of Government Procurement, will roll out guidance and supports to public bodies to ensure they can comply with the Government Decision. It will be important, for instance, that public bodies switching away from single use plastic items prioritise re-usable alternatives ahead of non-plastic disposable items.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

217. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount spent in each year for the past five years on accountancy and consultancy firms in relation to capital projects; the specific capital project in which the costs were incurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2257/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The information requested is being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

**Brexit Issues**

218. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the assessments and contingency planning carried out in relation to potential delays crossing the UK land bridge to mainland Europe and the way in which this may affect supply chains and the just-in-time delivery model used by many businesses. [2249/19]

230. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the Brexit related developments across all ports; the cost associated with each development; and the funding committed in 2019 for Brexit development at ports. [2239/19]

231. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans in relation to the UK land bridge in a deal and no-deal Brexit scenario; if he has assessed the impact on the road haulage sector here; and the supports being put in place to address same. [2240/19]

232. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated number of Irish trucks that use the UK land bridge weekly. [2241/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 218 and 230 to 232, inclusive, together.

The continued use of the landbridge as a key route connecting Ireland with the continent is a crucial concern given the level of imports and exports that are transported via this route, with 16% of the HGV traffic between Ireland and GB estimated to constitute landbridge traffic. The total value of our trade using the landbridge has been estimated to be approximately €21 billion. Goods using the landbridge include many time-sensitive or perishable goods, and are transported by truck on Roll-on / Roll-Off (“RoRo”) shipping services to and through the UK. Dublin and Rosslare ports handle almost all of this traffic

In a no-deal scenario, the ease with which these movements of goods currently take place will no longer be guaranteed. Additional customs, agriculture and health controls will be required at EU ports that trade with the UK. In the case of the landbridge route, the ports of Dublin, Rosslare, Holyhead and the Dover-Calais link are of paramount concern. In Ireland, the OPW, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Department of Health and the Revenue Commissioners are already preparing by developing the necessary plans within Dublin and Rosslare Ports to allow for these controls. I am aware that similar preparations are ongoing in Calais.

The scale of the checks required will likely result in delays for goods moving through the ports but there is a focus on preventing congestion through the provision of appropriate measures.

The Brexit-related infrastructure work for both the no-deal and central case scenarios is focused on Dublin Port, Rosslare Port, and also Dublin Airport. This is based on an assessment of the scale of trade in goods that are moving between these locations and ports/airports in the UK. Other ports are separately assessing and planning for Brexit as part of the internal organisational functions. Final costs of works for the establishment of additional controls in Dublin and Rosslare Ports have not yet been determined. Costs in relation to other ports are an operational matter for those ports.

Some trade currently using the landbridge route may, depending on the nature of the product, switch to the direct routes to the continent. For others, some delays at UK and other EU ports may not be such as to constitute a significant deterrent to the continued use of the land-

bridge. However, the use of the landbridge for some other products that are perishable or very time sensitive may become unviable and may also not be viable on the longer direct maritime links.

The Irish Maritime Development Office (IMDO) study into the implications of Brexit on the use of the landbridge, published last November, estimated that approximately 150,000 Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) travel between Ireland and the continent via the landbridge each year. This would equate to a weekly average of approximately 2,880 HGVs moving between Ireland and the continent via the landbridge, although there can be peak times within each week, and also on a seasonal basis.

Officials from my Department have assessed the maritime capacity for direct sailings between Ireland and continental EU ports as a potential alternative for trade that currently takes place using the Landbridge. Based on consultations with the shipping sector and wider stakeholders, my preliminary assessment is that sufficient capacity will be available on direct routes to continental ports from end March 2019, and should demand for further capacity arise, the shipping sector can respond quickly to meet such demands. I will, however, keep this under review and report back to Government with a further assessment before the end of February. I will keep under review, in particular the emerging picture in relation to the degree and nature of customs and SPS controls at domestic, UK and relevant EU ports and the likely impact on traffic flows.

A cross-departmental Landbridge Project Group, chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, was established in October 2017 and has been working on measures aimed at ensuring the ongoing effective and efficient use of the landbridge post-Brexit. The EU has agreed that the UK may join the Common Transit Convention upon its departure from the EU *on 29 March 2019*, and a number of formal steps were taken to allow this to happen on 4 December 2018. This will enable the use of the EU's internal transit procedure.

In its communication of 19 December, the European Commission states that in case of no deal, simplified border controls, limited to documentary checks for instance, would apply to live animals and animal products coming from a Member State but transiting through the UK. This would reflect the fact that this would be considered an intra-EU (Single Market) transfer.

The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI) has a range of supports available to business and details can be found on their website *www.dbei.gov.ie*. In addition, it has been very active in the 'Getting Ireland Brexit Ready' public information campaign. This campaign includes workshop events throughout the country aimed primarily at business and people most impacted by Brexit.

My Department is also working with Chambers Ireland to provide advice and information to their members throughout the country.

## Road Network

219. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when he expects the main construction work to commence at the Dunkettle interchange, County Cork; the expected duration of the works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2054/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. Under the Roads Acts 1993-2015, the planning, design and operation of individual roads is a matter for the relevant road authority in relation to local and

regional roads, or for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in conjunction with the local authorities concerned, in relation to national roads.

Noting the above position, I have referred the question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

### **Rail Services Provision**

220. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the steps taken in line with the National Development Plan 2018-2027 in support of a high speed rail link between Cork and Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2055/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The National Development Plan (NDP) states that the priority funding objective in relation to the mainline rail network is the maintenance and renewal of the existing network. This objective is in line with the recommendation of the International Monetary Fund's Public Investment Management Assessment (PIMA) – Ireland report as published in September 2017.

In line with that funding objective, the funding allocations committed under the NDP provide for a fully-funded, or steady state, level of maintenance and renewal across the Iarnród Éireann network, which represents a significant and recurring annual contribution from the taxpayer towards our heavy rail network.

The work-programme planned over the period 2019 to 2023 as funded by this significantly increased level of funding will allow for increased ballast cleaning, rail milling and track renewal with the Dublin – Cork line being a priority area of investment over the period. These investments will benefit passengers through an improved journey experience in the years ahead.

The NDP also states that the Dublin-Limerick Junction-Cork rail line will be subject to an examination to move to higher speeds leading to improved connectivity through improved rail journey times. It also commits toward an evaluation of high-speed rail on the line, as compared to higher speeds on the line, with this evaluation to be completed by 2020.

### **Sports Capital Programme Applications**

221. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of an application by a club (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2066/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** The Sports Capital Programme (SCP) is the primary vehicle for Government support for the development of sports and physical recreation facilities and the purchase of non-personal sports equipment throughout the country.

The deadline for the 2018 round of the programme was the 19th October and by that date a record 2,337 applications were submitted seeking a total of €162m in funding. Applicants that were deemed invalid under the 2017 round of the SCP were invited to correct their applications and have them considered as part of the 2018 round of the Programme. The club referred to by the Deputy was one of the organisations that availed of this opportunity and these applications have been assessed first. I expect to make an announcement concerning allocations to this category of applicant shortly.

## Driver Test Data

222. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the waiting times for persons awaiting a driver test; the average and longest times waiting, respectively, by each test centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2125/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The information the Deputy requests is available on the Road Safety Authority website at [www.rsa.ie](http://www.rsa.ie).

## Rail Services

223. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the situation for persons travelling with a free travel pass due to disability or pension age if Irish Rail proceed to remove staff ticket machines and the facility for staff to sell tickets from certain train stations at the end of March 2019 leaving only the self service machines (details supplied). [2146/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The issue raised is an operational matter for Iarnród Éireann and I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the company for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.

## Noise Pollution

224. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has considered appointing the Environmental Protection Agency as the aircraft noise regulator as required by EU regulation 598/2014 in view of its role and associated expertise as the national authority under the European Environmental Noise Directive, EC 2002/49/EC. [2176/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Once it became clear that the Irish Aviation Authority was no longer an option to be designated as the Noise Regulator for the purpose of EU Regulation 598/2014, a number of other options were considered.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was considered. The regulatory requirements in Regulation 598 are very different to the existing oversight, licencing, audit and inspection roles of the EPA. While it has an existing role pursuant to the European Environmental Noise Directive the role of Noise Regulator as required by Regulation 598 would represent a step change that would require significant new resources and expertise.

It was clear that whichever body was chosen would need to build up new capacity to carry out what is an entirely new function. The decision was therefore heavily influenced by which bodies already had some of the required capabilities and structures and which also could be expected to build up the other requirements within a reasonable timeframe. Given the close inter-relationship with the Planning and Development Act, the Government decided upon Fingal County Council as the most appropriate body to carry out this function. I have every confidence in the suitability and capacity of Fingal County Council to carry out this important role.

## Road Network

225. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a

matter regarding a turning lane (details supplied) in County Kerry will be addressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2177/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. Under the Roads Acts 1993-2015, the planning, design and operation of individual national roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Noting the above position, I have referred the question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

### **Public Transport Expenditure**

226. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the original cost estimate for the metro north to Dublin Airport; the current estimate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2229/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. The National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for the planning and development of public transport infrastructure in the Greater Dublin Area, including MetroLink.

The Deputy is presumably aware that the previously proposed project known as Metro North is a different project than the project known as MetroLink and which is included in the National Development Plan (NDP). The NDP provides an indicative allocation of €3billion toward development and construction of MetroLink, which will be a 26km metro service running from Sandyford in South County Dublin to north of Swords in North County Dublin.

Noting their responsibility in relation to this matter, I have forwarded your request to the NTA for their consideration and direct reply. Please notify my office if you have not received a reply within 10 working days.

### **Sports Funding**

227. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if consideration will be given to providing funding for the development of a project (details supplied). [2230/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** I am aware of the proposed project referred to by the Deputy.

With regard to the possible provision of public funding for the proposal, the National Sports Policy was published on 25th July 2018 and provided for a Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (LSSIF) with at least €100 million available over the coming years. The fund was launched in November and is open to applications until 17th April 2019. The fund will initially focus on the requirements and development plans of National Governing Bodies of Sport and Local Authorities, all of which received letters inviting them to make applications.

Accordingly, it is open to the promoters of the proposed facility to apply for funding under the programme. Any application received will be assessed along with other applications in line

with the aims of the programme.

Full details of the programme and application forms can be accessed on the Department's website at <http://www.dttas.gov.ie/sport/english/large-scale-sport-infrastructure-fund-lssif>.

### State Airports

228. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the original expected cost of the second runway at Dublin Airport; the estimated cost of the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2234/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As the deputy is aware, daa holds statutory responsibility for the management, operation and development of Dublin Airport, including the delivery of the North Runway project.

Work on the North Runway Project is underway, with preliminary works under the first phase of construction, including preparation of the site, realignment/building of new roads, fencing and landscaping completed in late 2017.

Following a competitive tender process, a contract has been awarded to a joint venture comprising Irish firm Roadbridge and Spanish infrastructure company FCC Construcción (FCC) for phase 2 (construction of runway). Work will commence shortly and the runway is expected to be operational in 2021. The cost of the runway had been estimated to be approximately €320m (in 2016 prices).

Once operational, the runway will provide much needed capacity to enhance connectivity e.g. 31% gain by 2034, underpinning Dublin's position as a leading European airport, a key European gateway to North America and an even greater driver of sustainable economic growth. In the short term, daa estimates that the project will support over 500 construction jobs and support a further 31,000 jobs over the next two decades, contributing €2.2 billion to GDP.

### State Airports

229. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the estimated cost of building a third terminal at Dublin Airport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2235/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The question of a potential third terminal at Dublin Airport is raised in the context of the high-level strategic capacity review of Ireland's State airports which I commissioned in line with a commitment in the National Aviation Policy, 2015.

Oxford Economics in conjunction with Cambridge Economic Policy Associates were contracted by my Department to conduct the review which was published on 24 October 2018. It provides an assessment which is both specific about short terms actions as well as identifying further work that needs to be undertaken to assist in decision-making for the longer term to 2050, including options for a third terminal at Dublin Airport.

I am now consulting with stakeholders through a public consultation process to get their views on the consultants' findings. I have also asked my officials to undertake additional work on issues relating to Dublin Airport with regard to the cross wind runway and surface transport access.

The review and public consultation represent the first stages in a process to make strategic decisions on the long-term development of the three State airports to 2050. When I have all the views and information, I will carefully assess the issues and make recommendations to Government in the matter. In the meantime, it is far too early in the process for estimates to be made on the cost of a third terminal or any other infrastructural projects referred to in the review. The assessment by the consultants in the review is based upon a base cost for a new terminal similar to that of Terminal 2 and simulations of regulated charges indicate that airport charges would most likely end up no more than 5 percent higher than 2016 charges as a result of the construction of a third terminal.

It is important to note, however, that any terminal being built, past, present or future is ultimately paid for by the travelling public that use it. That is a given, regardless of who finances it initially, State or private sector.

*Questions Nos. 230 to 232, inclusive, answered with Question No. 218.*

### **Departmental Expenditure**

233. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount spent in each year for the past five years on accountancy and consultancy firms in relation to capital projects; the specific capital project in which the costs were incurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2269/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The information requested by the Deputy is currently being collated by my officials and will be forwarded to the Deputy within 10 working days.

### **Childcare Services**

234. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she is satisfied with the level of childcare that exists in Dunshaughlin, County Meath providing for the amount of housing that is planned for the coming years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2041/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Each year Pobal conducts research on behalf of my Department to examine a number of factors related to childcare services in Ireland, including the monitoring of capacity. The Early Years Sector Profile report, which was published in November and relates to the 2017/2018 programme year, indicates that existing childcare provision, in general, meets current needs nationwide in terms of capacity whilst recognising that small pockets of undersupply may exist within this.

The report outlines a 5% vacancy rate as a percentage of children enrolled in County Meath, ie. 6,996 children enrolled in registered services with 355 vacant childcare places. It also identifies waiting lists totalling 396 children. Pobal reports that nationally the trend for waiting lists suggests a reduction in waiting lists for older children and an increase for under twos. Pobal cautions that its data on waiting lists cannot by itself be used to inform capacity decisions as parents often place their children on more than one waiting list.

The Deputy may be aware that my Department funds 30 City and County Childcare Committees across the country. Part of their role is to advise my Department on capacity issues. I have asked officials to make contact with Meath Childcare Committee to follow up on your

question.

With regard to building capacity generally, I am delighted to have secured €8.86m in capital funding for childcare in 2019. While the precise details of the 2019 Capital offering have yet to be finalised, this funding will be used to meet the most pressing needs of the sector with the ultimate aim of benefiting parents and children through improving our childcare infrastructure and capacity. A particular focus in 2019 will be to expand service provision for children under three years of age. This is necessary in advance of the introduction of the Affordable Childcare Scheme later this year which is expected to increase demand for registered childcare.

Finally, under the National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan published in 2018, I ensured that Childcare was identified as one of our nation's strategic priorities. I am delighted that €250 million in additional funding has been committed to for the expansion of high quality, early learning and care and school age childcare over the duration of the Plan.

### **Early Childhood Care and Education**

235. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the employer in relation to staff approved to be recruited under level 7 support to provide additional assistance in the preschool room for a child with special needs in the context of the access and inclusion model as part of the ECCE; the person or body responsible for paying PRSI for the employee, holiday entitlements and so on; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2083/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) is a model of supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the ECCE programme. AIM is a child-centred model, involving seven levels of progressive support, moving from the universal to the targeted, based on the needs of the child and the pre-school service. The model is designed to be responsive to the needs of each individual child in the context of their pre-school setting. It offers tailored, practical supports based on need and does not require a formal diagnosis of disability.

Level 7 of AIM provides additional assistance in the pre-school room where this is critical to ensuring a child's participation in the ECCE Programme. In line with emerging best practice to support the integration and independence of children with a disability, AIM does not fund Special Needs Assistants (SNAs). Rather, it provides financial support to the pre-school provider, which can be used either to reduce the adult to child ratio in the pre-school room or to buy in additional assistance to the pre-school room. Accordingly, Level 7 assistance is a shared resource for the pre-school setting.

The funding is disbursed to the pre-school provider, through Pobal, who are charged with administration of DCYA programmes. There are restrictions on the use to which AIM funding can be put, as is only right and appropriate to guidelines on grant funding and use of public money. Pre-school providers are awarded AIM level 7 funding as a result of an assessment carried out by an Early Years Specialist, and guidance and support on how best to utilise the funding may be provided. However, as with all DCYA Early Learning and Care funding programmes, the pre-school provider is the employer of the staff who work in the setting. It is therefore for the pre-school provider to take all necessary steps to ensure they are meeting their legal obligations as an employer.

236. **Deputy Sean Sherlock** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the protocol for users and clients of Tusla in respect of access to information on personal files held by Tusla, its agencies or partners. [2111/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I am advised by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, that it has procured and implemented a portal for handling subject access requests. The portal allows an individual to submit a request to access information on a personal file held by Tusla. The portal is a secure online tool that is accessible through the Tusla website at <https://www.tusla.ie/about/your-personal-information/new-data-protection/how-do-i-access-information-under-data-protection/>

Tusla has advised that when a data access request is received through the portal, Tusla's data protection team confirms the identity of the requester, confirms the scope of the request, and distributes the request to any relevant service areas. Tusla also has arrangements to support internal queries on the matter and tracks the timeframes involved in line with the Data Protection Act, 2018.

Should an individual prefer not to use the online portal, he or she can also submit a data access request by post, phone, or email to Tusla's Head Office or to the relevant local office. Tusla has advised that it assists individuals throughout the process as required. Some requests are made under the Freedom of Information Act and are processed accordingly.

With regard to information which may be held by Tusla's agencies or partners, Tusla requests individuals seeking such information to provide details of any contact points involved in their dealings with Tusla. Where an agency or partner carrying out services on Tusla's behalf is involved, Tusla engages with the agency or partner in question from the initial record retrieval process onwards.

Tusla has advised my Department that its processing of data access requests is under constant review, and that enhancements to the system are made in line with the nature and volume of data access requests received.

### Childcare Services Funding

237. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the steps she is taking to fund crèches required to meet standards being set down by Tusla following random inspections; if her attention has been drawn to the financial pressures being experienced by the sector as it struggles to meet the rising cost of regulation; her views on the discussion her officials had with a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2178/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** It is the duty of an Early Learning and Care (ELC) service provider to take all reasonable measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the children attending the service and to comply with the *Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016*. The Child and Family Agency, Tusla, has a statutory responsibility to assess levels of compliance with these Regulations, and has the power to carry out inspections of ELC services under the Child Care Act 1991. Tusla will work with service providers in partnership to promote a culture of compliance with the Regulations. This does not preclude Tusla from escalating to enforcement actions following an inspection, if deemed necessary. The health, safety and welfare of the children remain paramount for Tusla and my Department.

All registered ELC services are subject to unannounced inspections. Unannounced inspec-

tions allow the inspection team to see the service as it works on an everyday basis.

In the particular case to which the Deputy refers, it is my understanding that the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate did carry out an unannounced visit. It is also my understanding that the officials referred to in the question were from Tusla and not from my Department, and that the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate are continuing to engage with the service in question to address the issues raised as a result of that visit.

I am aware that regulatory requirements for ELC services, which were last changed in 2016, do impose costs on providers, in particular through the adult-child ratios they require services to meet that are in the best interest of children. Given the cost of delivering ELC services, my Department provides substantial funding to services to limit the fees that services charge to parents. Funding for early learning and care and school age childcare has increased by 118% in the last four budgets to address quality, access and affordability. In the case of the ECCE pre-school programme, my Department provides sufficient funding to allow free access for families. We increased the capitation fee for ECCE by 7% last September to assist providers. My Department recently commissioned an Independent Review of the Cost of Delivering Quality Childcare, which is examining the factors that impact on the cost of delivering quality childcare. When complete, this will inform policy development and funding decisions.

In addition, my Department makes capital grants available on an annual basis. Capital funding is aimed at increasing the capacity of services, creating new services, and maintaining and improving existing services. Each year my Department reviews the capital programme as a whole and determines funding priorities for the sector, while working within budget limitations. My Department will focus the funding of the 2019 Capital programme under three strands:

1. The expansion of early learning and care places for 0-3 year olds
2. Fire safety for community services.
3. School age childcare places

The second strand, fire safety, will specifically provide funding to not for profit services to address fire safety issues highlighted in inspection reports.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

238. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount spent in each year for the past five years on accountancy and consultancy firms in relation to capital projects; the specific capital project in which the costs were incurred; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2256/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The Deputy might note that my Department administered a number of capital programmes and schemes over the past five years. An examination is underway to identify what costs, if any, were incurred on accountancy and consultancy services and I will revert to the Deputy on the matter again in the near future when the required information is available.

### **National Indemnity Scheme for Landowners**

239. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development his views on a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2079/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** My Department has been working to develop a scheme to indemnify private land owners with regard to the use of their lands for recreational purposes. In this context, my officials have been in contact with the State Claims Agency and the Attorney General's Office with a view to progressing the matter.

My Department has been advised that the proposed indemnity scheme should be underpinned by legislation, and my officials are now in the process of identifying the precise legislative requirements and/or processes required give effect to the scheme.

I have asked my officials to prioritise this work and to develop clear proposals to have the scheme progressed and rolled out as soon as possible on a phased basis. I anticipate that the area referred to by the Deputy will be amongst the first to be included in the Scheme, once established.

### **Departmental Funding**

240. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount expended in 2018 to LAGs, county councils and other bodies for work not completed to date or for which no receipts or claims have been received for the work, by organisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2157/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** As the Deputy will be aware, the preparation of the 2018 Appropriation Account for my Department has just commenced. A provisional appropriation account will be submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General by the 31st March 2018.

The prepayments made by the Department in 2018 are compiled as part of this work and the information will therefore be available, on a provisional basis, at the end of March 2019. The final audited account will then be published in September 2019. Prepayments have been made in a limited number of instances and in line with sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

### **Departmental Funding**

241. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount of prepayments made in 2016 to local authorities for work which has not been carried out to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2158/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** As the Deputy will be aware, my Department was not established until July 2017. That said, there were some pre-existing programmes, including a number of Rural Schemes, which my Department now has responsibility for, some of which are listed in the following table.

In 2016, pre-funding of approximately €28 million was released to the Local Authorities in respect of four Rural Schemes, see the following table.

On 13 September 2018 I wrote to each Local Authority advising them that all of the 2016 projects were to be completed and closed off by the end of September 2018 and that any unspent monies were to be returned to my Department. As of 30 September 2018, there was a reported spend of €26.6m on these schemes. This equates to 94% of the allocated funding. I advised the Local Authorities that any outstanding costs required to complete the projects would have to be

met from within their own resources.

#### Funding allocated to Local Authorities under Rural Schemes in 2016

Scheme	Funding Amount	Funding spent by 30 Sept 2018	% spent by 30 Sept 2018
REDZ	€6,142,842	€5,668,633	92%
Town and Village	€9,880,000	€9,599,123	97%
CLÁR	€8,238,867	€7,882,779	96%
Rural Recreation Scheme	€4,130,154	€3,469,456	84%
Overall	€28,391,863	€26,619,991	94%

#### National Indemnity Scheme for Landowners

242. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the progress made to date since 2010 in introducing an insurance indemnity for participants in the mountain access project in the MacGillycuddy Reeks and Beann Shléibhe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2163/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** My Department has been working to develop a scheme to indemnify private land owners with regard to the use of their lands for recreational purposes. In this context, my officials have been in contact with the State Claims Agency and the Attorney General's Office with a view to progressing the matter.

While good progress has been made, my Department has been advised that the proposed indemnity scheme should be underpinned by legislation, and my officials are now in the process of identifying the precise legislative requirements and/or processes required give effect to the scheme.

This is a complex matter, but I have asked my officials to prioritise the work and to develop clear proposals to have the scheme rolled out as soon as possible on a phased basis. I anticipate that the projects referred to by the Deputy will be amongst the first to be included in the Scheme, once established.

#### Departmental Expenditure

243. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount spent in each year for the past five years on accountancy and consultancy firms in relation to capital projects; the specific capital project in which the costs were incurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2268/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The following table details the amount spent on accountancy and consultancy firms in relation to capital projects since the establishment of my Department in July 2017.

Purpose of Consultancy	Capital project/programme relating	Cost of Consultancy (€)
Provision of Development of Local Digital Strategies for all Local Authorities	Local Digital Strategies will assist local authorities in being prepared for the rollout of the National Broadband Plan.	€121,339.00 (Ex. VAT) €149,247.00 (Incl. VAT)

### Personal Micro Credit Scheme

244. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of loans and the overall amount lent under the personal micro credit loan scheme since it was introduced; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2126/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Personal Micro Credit Scheme (PMC) provides for small scale loans, known as It Makes Sense loans, by credit unions to borrowers who have difficulty accessing low cost credit. Currently 111 credit unions, at 272 locations are participating in the scheme.

Loans under the scheme range from €100 to a maximum of €2,000 and have a maximum interest rate of 12% per annum.

The aggregate value of loans drawn down since the scheme was introduced, to date, is not readily available. Each credit union is an autonomous body and is not obliged to report on the volume of its lending, under this category of loan, to my Department.

The PMC Implementation Group is engaging with participating credit unions in Q 1, 2019 to gather relevant data on the scheme and when available, I will make this information available to the Deputy.

An Post facilitates the repayment of PMC loans for social welfare recipients who receive their payment through the post office, by utilising the Household Budgeting facility to deduct the repayment amount from the social welfare payment and transmitting it onward to the relevant credit union.

Currently, there are almost 6,500 PMC loan repayments being made via deductions through the Household Budgeting facility, with an unknown additional number, estimated at 10% using direct debit or standing orders.

The aggregate value of repayments made to the participating Credit Unions since the scheme was initiated is €9.9 million by over 7,000 customers of the Department. This amount includes the interest rate charged by the credit unions.

The Implementation Group continues to engage with the Credit Union representative bodies and individual credit unions to encourage participation in the scheme.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Working Family Payment Payments

245. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a person (details supplied) will receive a FIS payment. [2039/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Working Family Payment (formerly Family Income Supplement) is a weekly in-work payment which provides additional income support to employees on low earnings with children.

An application for Working Family Payment (WFP) was received from the person concerned on 11 December 2018.

The Department wrote to the person concerned on 14 January 2019 and has requested additional details in respect of their current employment and housing costs.

On receipt of the requested details from the person concerned, their WFP application will be processed without delay and they will be notified of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Working Family Payment Waiting Times**

246. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she is satisfied with the efficiency of the way in which her Department is processing FIS payments; and the turnaround times of applications. [2040/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Working Family Payment (formerly Family Income Supplement) is an in-work payment which provides additional income support to employees on low earnings with children. Working Family Payment (WFP) is payable for a 52 week period from award date and a person must reapply at the end of this period to have their payment renewed.

My Department is committed to providing a quality service to all its customers. This includes ensuring that applications are processed and that decisions on entitlement are made in a timely fashion.

The average waiting time for processing new WFP applications is currently 8 weeks.

Operational processes, procedures and the organisation of work are continually being monitored and reviewed in the WFP area to ensure that the best use is made of all available resources and that application processing capacity is maximised.

All possible steps are being taken to improve processing times in this area. All available staff are assigned to claims processing to ensure that new applications are dealt with as quickly and efficiently as possible. As a consequence of the above measures, it is expected that WFP new application processing times will improve significantly in the coming weeks.

WFP renewal forms are issued to customers 8 weeks before the expiry of the 52 week period and these applications are generally processed within 2 weeks of expiry.

In view of the above factors the Department is satisfied that the WFP applications are being processed efficiently and waiting times will reduce.

### **Carer's Allowance Review**

247. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a decision will issue in relation to a carer's allowance review in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2061/19]

**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 child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

Once claims are in payment, my Department periodically reviews them to ensure that there is continued entitlement.

In order to continue to receive CA, the carer must be providing full-time care and attention.

Following a home visit by a social welfare inspector (SWI), the SWI reported that full-time care and attention was not being provided to the care recipient.

On 19 November 2018 a deciding officer wrote to the person concerned advising her that her claim was under review which could result in the payment being terminated and affording her an opportunity to submit any statement or evidence she wished to have considered.

On 26 November 2018 the person concerned was notified that CA would cease from 28 November 2018, the reason for this decision and of her right of review and appeal.

Further information was received by my Department on 18 December 2018 from the person concerned, seeking a review of this decision. That review is currently underway and once complete, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Working Family Payment Waiting Times**

248. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to delays in the processing times of working family payment applications; the processing times for the payment; the measures being taken to reduce processing times; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2080/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Working Family Payment (WFP) is an in-work payment which provides additional income support to employees on low earnings with children. WFP is payable for a 52 week period from award date and a person must reapply at the end of this period to have their payment renewed.

My Department is committed to providing a quality service to all its customers. This includes ensuring that applications are processed and that decisions on entitlement are made in a timely fashion.

The average waiting time for processing new WFP applications is currently 8 weeks.

All possible steps are being taken to improve processing times in this area. All available staff are assigned to claims processing to ensure that new applications are dealt with as quickly as possible. As a consequence of the above measures, it is expected that WFP new application processing times will improve significantly in the coming weeks.

WFP renewal forms are issued to customers 8 weeks before the expiry of the 52 week period and these applications are generally processed within 2 weeks of expiry.

### **Illness Benefit Payments**

17 January 2019

249. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if illness benefit payments made to a person (details supplied) who has not received their full rate of payment will be examined. [2086/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Illness Benefit claim from the person concerned is fully paid and certified up to the 16th January 2019.

A payment of €627 issued to her bank account on the 19th December 2018 that paid her for the dates 11th December 2018 - 1st January 2019. A further payment of €429 issued to her on the 14th January 2019 that paid her for the period of 2nd January - 16th January. She is now paid in full up to the 16th January 2019.

If the person concerned remains ill and unfit for work, a further medical certificate should be submitted to the Department as soon as possible in order for further payments to issue.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Illness Benefit Applications**

250. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will address a matter regarding the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2092/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Department administers the Illness Benefit scheme to those customers who cannot work because they are sick or ill provided they are covered by the appropriate class of social insurance (PRSI) and satisfy the PRSI conditions.

The Illness Benefit claim from the person concerned is both paid and medically certified up to the 15th January 2019.

Payment is due to reach the customers bank account on Tuesday each week provided she has been medically certified for the period by her Doctor.

I hope trust this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

### **Community Employment Schemes Eligibility**

251. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person (details supplied) will be permitted to remain on a community employment scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2112/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Requests for extending participants on Community Employment Schemes are only considered by this Department at the request of the Project Sponsor, which in this case is Abbeydorney Development Co Ltd.

A request for an extension has not yet been made by the sponsor.

I trust this clarifies that matter.

### **Social Insurance**

252. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a decision has issued in relation to a self-employment insurability appeal by a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2147/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Scope section in my Department was requested to investigate the class S contributions from 2001 to 2017 on the record of the person referred to by the Deputy.

The class S contributions were returned under her spouse's personal public service number (PPSN).

A social welfare inspector interviewed the person in November 2018 and she was asked if she wished to be considered for partnership status as she has worked with her spouse for a number of years. The person indicated that she wished to consult her accountant on the matter.

I am advised that the accountant spoke to the social welfare inspector at the end of November and is to provide further information. Once that is provided the inspector will prepare a report for Scope section and a determination can be made in this case.

I hope that clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Pensions Data**

253. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of pension recipients that had their cases reviewed to date under the new total contributions and home caring credit scheme introduced in 2018; the number that on review have been awarded a higher payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2159/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Since the end of September 2018, my Department has been examining the social insurance records of pensioners born on or after 1 September 1946 who were awarded state pension (contributory) on reduced post Budget 2012 rate bands. Information letters were issued to these pensioners explaining that my Department will contact them again to either inform them about the outcome of their review or to request further information in order to complete their review. All of the claims involved will be individually examined and reviewed, starting with those aged 72. The process will take a number of months to complete.

Where possible, my Department will use information already held to assist in these reviews. For example, a deciding officer will consider awarding HomeCaring Periods where a person's gap in employment coincides directly with a period for which they received a social welfare payment such as Child Benefit (for a child up to age 12) or Carers Allowance or Benefit. Additional information will be requested in writing from pensioners in relation to unexplained gaps in their social insurance record if required to complete their review. Information requests will also explain how to access my Department's on-line service to provide the relevant information. On receipt of the requested information, the person's state pension (contributory) pension will be reviewed and they will be informed of the outcome in writing.

Information requests have started to issue to some pensioners since the beginning of this month. It is expected that the first review outcomes will be notified to pensioners during Quarter 1 2019.

It is noteworthy that regardless of when a pensioner's review is completed, where they qualify for an increase, that increase will be paid with their next due payment and arrears back-dated to March 2018, or their 66th birthday if later, will be paid. If a pensioner does not qualify for an increase, they will continue to receive their existing rate of payment. No personal pension entitlement rates will be reduced as a result of this review.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme**

254. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the Departments represented on the interdepartmental group she has set up to review the operation of the community employment scheme and other activation measures; the names and grade of the officials on the group; the terms of reference of the group; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2162/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** As the Deputy will be aware, I secured Government agreement Wednesday 9th January (Government Decision **S180/20/10/0861**) to establish an Interdepartmental Group to explore the most appropriate organisational arrangements, including which Department should host Community Employment (CE) Social Inclusion schemes.

The group will comprise of senior officials from my own Department and from the Departments of Public Expenditure and Reform; Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Rural and Community Development; Children and Youth Affairs; Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht; Health; Justice and Equality and Housing, Planning and Local Government. My Department is currently in the process of seeking nominations from Departments.

The terms of reference for the Group are being finalised.

### **Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme**

255. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) has been refused a back to work enterprise allowance in view of the confirmation of the Revenue Commissioners to the effect that they were not self-employed in the past and have been in receipt of jobseeker's allowance for the past two years; if the case will be examined with a view to awarding payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2192/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The person concerned applied for back to work enterprise allowance (BTWEA) on 13th July 2018 and a decision on the application was sent to the person concerned on 23rd September 2018. The application was not successful as the business was not a new enterprise.

I trust that this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Employment Support Services**

256. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person (details supplied) qualifies for an appropriate allowance; and if she will

make a statement on the matter. [2196/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The person concerned is not currently engaged with the Department's Employment Support Services.

A Case Officer has issued a letter to the person concerned asking them to make contact with the Department, and an appointment at a time which is convenient for them will be made once contact has been established..

The Case Officer will then meet with the person concerned to advise them of appropriate allowances based on their personal circumstances.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Illness Benefit Eligibility**

257. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when outstanding sick benefit and or disability allowance will issue in the case of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2205/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Department administers the Illness Benefit scheme to those customers who cannot work because they are sick or ill provided they are covered by the appropriate class of social insurance (PRSI) and satisfy the PRSI conditions.

The person concerned submitted an Illness Benefit claim from 3rd September 2018 to the 13th October 2018. He was advised by letter dated 17th September 2018 that he was not entitled to payment of Illness Benefit as he does not satisfy both of the contribution conditions.

In order to qualify for Illness Benefit payment a person must have

1. A minimum of 104 PRSI contributions paid
2. 39 weeks of PRSI contributions paid or credited in the relevant tax year, **Or** 26 weeks of PRSI contributions paid in the relevant tax year, **and** 26 weeks of PRSI contributions paid in the tax year immediately before the relevant tax year.

The relevant tax year is the second-last complete tax year before the year in which the claim for Illness Benefit begins.

The person concerned had a total of 84 PRSI contributions paid with 34 contributions paid in the relevant tax year, resulting in him not qualify for payment. The customer has been awarded 'credits' for the period.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the deputy.

### **Child Benefit Eligibility**

258. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a person (details supplied) qualifies for child benefit in respect of their child; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2211/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Child benefit is payable to the parents or guardians of children under 16 years of age. Benefit continues to be payable up to 18 years of age if the child is in full-time education, full-time training, or has a disability and is unable to support themselves. Attendance in full-time education must be certified by the relevant institution.

The person concerned last received payment in respect of the child in question in June 2018, in accordance with the last certificate received. A form was issued on the 7th of August 2018, for the purpose of applying for extended payment up to the child's 18th birthday. No response has been received from the person concerned to date.

A duplicate form has been issued, which must be certified by the relevant institution. On receipt of the completed form, a decision will be made on the claim and the person concerned will be informed of the outcome.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Disability Allowance Applications**

259. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied) for a review of means in relation to an application for disability allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2232/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** I confirm that a request for a means review from this lady for disability allowance (DA) was received by the Department on 6 December 2018.

The application has been referred to a Social Welfare Inspector (SWI) for a report on the person's means and circumstances. Once the SWI has completed their report, a decision will be made and this lady will be notified directly of the outcome.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

260. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount spent in each year for the past five years on accountancy and consultancy firms in relation to capital projects; the specific capital project in which the costs were incurred; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2261/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My Department has not spent any monies in the past five years on accountancy or consultancy firms in relation to any capital projects. The capital allocation for my Department is primarily used to deliver IT modernisation and carry out refurbishments on the Department's buildings.

The Deputy may wish to note that in relation to refurbishment costs, all accommodation works are contracted by the Office of Public Works (OPW) and if any such services had been required it would be the OPW who would have contracted and paid for them.

### **Registration of Title**

261. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if an application by persons (details supplied) to the Land Registry will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2073/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Under the Registration of Deeds and Title Act 2006, the Property Registration Authority (PRA) was established as and from 4 November 2006. The PRA replaced the Registrar of Deeds and Titles as the registering authority in relation to property registration in Ireland and, subject to the above Act, is independent in the performance of its functions.

A service for Oireachtas members was introduced in 2006 through which information can be obtained on the current status of applications to the PRA, such as the case referred to. This provides a speedy, efficient and cost effective system through which the PRA can address queries of this kind. The Deputy's query has been forwarded to the PRA for attention and direct reply via this mentioned service.

### **Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Report**

262. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his views on a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2091/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy John Paul Phelan):** Following the completion of reports by the two Local Area Boundary Committees established to review and make recommendations on local electoral areas, maps of local electoral areas and of municipal districts are currently being prepared on behalf of my Department by Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI). It is expected these will be completed and made available in the near future.

### **Social and Affordable Housing Eligibility**

263. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason the income thresholds for social housing are so low; his plans to increase these thresholds in view of the fact that persons above the thresholds are not eligible for a mortgage; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2044/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Social Housing Assessment Regulations 2011 prescribe maximum net income limits for each local authority, in different bands according to the area concerned, with income being defined and assessed according to a standard Household Means Policy.

The income bands and the authority area assigned to each band were based on an assessment of the income needed to provide for a household's basic needs, plus a comparative analysis of the local rental cost of housing accommodation across the country. It is important to note that the limits introduced at that time also reflected a blanket increase of €5,000 introduced prior to the new system coming into operation, in order to broaden the base from which social housing tenants are drawn, both promoting sustainable communities and also providing a degree of future-proofing.

Whilst I am satisfied that in general these limits remain broadly reflective of accommodation costs across most parts of the country I am committed as part of the broader social hous-

ing reform agenda, to a review of income eligibility for social housing supports in each local authority area. This review is underway. The Housing Agency is continuing to carry out the detailed statistical work, which will underpin this review, on behalf of my Department.

The review will also have regard to current initiatives being brought forward in terms of affordability and cost rental and will be completed when the impacts of these parallel initiatives have been considered.

### **Local Authority Housing Eligibility**

264. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding the purchasing of local authority homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2049/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme came into operation on 1 January 2016. The Scheme is open to eligible tenants, including joint tenants, of local authority houses that are available for sale under the Scheme. To be eligible, tenants must meet certain criteria, including having a minimum reckonable income of €15,000 per annum and having been in receipt of social housing support for at least one year.

The minimum reckonable income for eligibility under the scheme is determined by the relevant local authority in accordance with the detailed provisions of the Ministerial Direction issued under Sections 24(3) and (4) of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014. In the determination of the minimum reckonable income, local authorities include income from a number of different sources and classes, such as from employment, private pensions, maintenance payments and certain social welfare payments, including pensions, where the social welfare payment is secondary to employment income.

In determining reckonable income, the income of all tenants of the house, including adult children that are joint tenants, is included, as is the income of the spouse, civil partner or other partner/co-habitant of a tenant who lives in the house with them, thus ensuring the appropriate level of discount is applied to the purchase price.

The minimum income criterion was introduced in order to ensure the sustainability of the scheme. Applicants must demonstrate that they have an income that is long-term and sustainable in nature. This ensures that the tenant purchasing the house is in a financial position, as the owner, to maintain and insure the property for the duration of the charged period, in compliance with the conditions of the order transferring the ownership of, and responsibility for, the house from the local authority to the tenant.

In line with the commitment given in Rebuilding Ireland a review of the first 12 months of the Scheme's operation has been completed and a full report has been prepared setting out findings and recommendations.

I hope to be in a position to publish the review shortly, following completion of consideration of a number of implementation issues arising.

### **Social and Affordable Housing Data**

265. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of houses, apartments and accommodation units owned or leased by Clare

County Council as vacant social housing stock; the length of time each unit has been vacant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2060/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Statistics in relation to social housing stock are published by the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) in their annual reports on Performance Indicators in Local Authorities. These reports provide a range of information in relation to social housing stock, including the number of dwellings in the ownership of each local authority and percentages vacant. The most recent report, relating to 2017, is available on the NOAC website at the following link: <http://noac.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/NOAC-Performance-Indicators-Report-2017.pdf> Information on leased properties should be available from the individual local authorities.

While information on vacancies in social housing stock is contained in the NOAC reports, I should point out that the number of houses/apartments owned by local authorities that are vacant is not a fixed number and it varies at any given time. This is to be expected as tenancies end and properties are re-let on a continuous basis.

### **Social and Affordable Housing**

266. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will provide a copy of submissions made by Louth County Council to the 2014 housing plan, Social Housing Strategy 2020. [2116/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department has no record of receiving a submission on the Social Housing Strategy 2020 from Louth County Council.

### **Referendum Campaigns**

267. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when it is planned to hold a referendum on lowering the voting age; the reason for the delay of the original proposed date of May 2019; if the referendum will take place in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2117/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** At its meeting on 4 December 2018, the Government reviewed the progress on the overall programme of Bills to amend the Constitution. Having regard to other referenda proposed to be progressed in the short term, the Government agreed that further consideration would be given to the timing of a referendum on reducing the voting age to 16 although it is not proposed that this referendum be held in 2019.

### **Rent Pressure Zones**

268. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government his plans to retain the rent pressure zones beyond December 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2127/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Section 24A of the Residential Tenancies Acts provides that the Housing Agency, in consultation with housing authorities, may make a proposal to me, as Minister that an area should be

considered as a Rent Pressure Zone. Following receipt of such a proposal, the Minister requests the Director of the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) to conduct an assessment of the area to establish whether or not it meets the criteria for designation and to report to the Minister on whether the area should be designated as a Rent Pressure Zone.

For an area to be designated a Rent Pressure Zone, it must satisfy the following criteria set out in section 24A(4) of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004, as amended:

(i) The annual rate of rent inflation in the area must have been 7% or more in four of the last six quarters; and

(ii) The average rent for tenancies registered in the area with the RTB in the last quarter must be above the average national rent (the National Standardised Rent in the RTB's Rent Index Report) in the last quarter (€1,122 per month in Q3 2018).

The RTB Rent Index Report also includes a summary of the data used as the criteria for designating Rent Pressure Zones in relation to all Local Electoral Areas in the country. This allows full visibility regarding exactly where individual areas stand in relation to average rent levels and increases.

For the purpose of the Act, 'area' is defined as either the administrative area of a housing authority or a local electoral area within the meaning of section 2 of the Local Government Act 2001. There is no provision for any other type of area to be designated as a Rent Pressure Zone.

The Housing Agency continues to monitor the rental market and may recommend further areas for designation. Where, following the procedures set out in the Act, it is found at a future date that additional areas meet the criteria, they will be designated as Rent Pressure Zones.

The RTB publishes its quarterly Rent Index and advises my Department on the residential rental market on a continuous basis. This and wider ongoing careful analysis of the rental market will inform future policy decisions in relation to the rental sector, including decisions regarding the future of RPZ designations and exemptions from the RPZ regime.

## **Rental Sector**

269. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if proposed legislation will deal with security of tenure for tenants in rent pressure zones that may face eviction on grounds of refurbishment, sale or the relocation of family members into a dwelling; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2128/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Residential Tenancies (Amendment)(No. 2) Bill 2018 was published in December 2018 to strengthen further the rights of tenants in the private rented sector, building on initiatives already taken. Among the key provisions of the Bill are measures to empower the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) to investigate and sanction landlords who engage in improper conduct including non-compliance with rent increase restrictions in Rent Pressure Zones (RPZs); the creation of criminal offences for landlords connected with non-compliance with rent increase restrictions in RPZs; and increasing notice periods for tenancy terminations by landlords.

Security of tenure provisions under the Residential Tenancies Acts 2004-2016 apply, both inside and outside of Rent Pressure Zones, once a tenant has been in occupation of a dwelling for a continuous period of 6 months without a valid notice of termination having been served during that time. On completion of the 6 month period, the tenant accrues specific protections

under the Residential Tenancies Acts as long as the tenant complies with their own obligations. One of the protections relates to the tenant's entitlement to remain in occupation for up to 6 years from the commencement of the tenancy, where the tenancy commenced on or after 24 December 2016, or for up to 4 years where the tenancy commenced prior to 24 December 2016.

Section 62 of the Residential Tenancies Act requires a landlord to state in a tenancy termination notice the reason, or reasons, for termination. The table to section 34 of the Acts sets out the legal grounds for termination by a landlord.

It is important to note that where a tenancy is terminated for the purposes of substantial refurbishment or renovation and the required works are completed with the dwelling becoming available for re-letting within 6 months of the termination, it must be offered for re-letting to the former tenant.

The landlord must include a statement accompanying a relevant notice of termination to the effect that the existing or current tenant has the option of returning to the refurbished or renovated dwelling, if it becomes available within 6 months from the end of the termination notice period given (or where a dispute on the validity of the termination notice has been referred to the RTB, within 6 months of the determination of the dispute). The duty to offer to re-let the property to the tenant arises where the tenant has provided contact details to the landlord in accordance with section 35(5) of the Acts.

If the landlord or a family member intend to live in the property, the tenancy can be terminated by the landlord. A statutory declaration must be included by the landlord in, or accompanying, the notice of termination specifying:

- (1) the intended occupant's identity and, if not the landlord, his or her relationship to the landlord, and
- (2) The expected duration of their occupation.

Similarly, a statutory declaration is required to the effect that the existing or current tenant has the option of returning to the dwelling, if it becomes available within 6 months from the end of the termination notice period given (or where a dispute on the validity of the termination notice has been referred to the RTB, within 6 months of the determination of the dispute).

A tenancy can be ended if the landlord intends to sell the property within 3 months of the termination date. A statutory declaration must accompany the notice of termination confirming the landlord's intention to sell. Section 35A of the Act restricts the landlord's legal ground to terminate a tenancy based on his or her intention to sell, where such a landlord intends to sell 10 or more dwellings within the same development within 6 months.

Section 56 of the Residential Tenancies Act provides for the award of damages for abuse of the termination procedure, and the RTB can make a direction that a landlord pay an amount by way of damages for the deprivation of the tenancy and/or may make a direction that the tenant be permitted to resume occupation of the premises.

My Department keeps tenancy legislation under ongoing review and any changes considered necessary would be the subject of amendments to the Residential Tenancies Acts in due course.

## **Water Charges Data**

270. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of households that have been charged for excessive water use in 2018, by county and administrative area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2171/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** In keeping with the relevant recommendations of the Report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Future Funding of Domestic Water Services approved by both Houses in April 2017, legislative provision to discourage the excessive use of water services has been included in the Water Services Acts 2007 to 2017. Excessive usage is determined by reference to the threshold amount of 213,000 litres per household per annum as specified by ministerial order with effect from 1 January 2018, in line with provisions contained in sections 8 and 9 of the Water Services Act 2017.

Irish Water is responsible for developing and implementing the necessary administrative arrangements, including billing arrangements, subject to oversight and approval by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU). The amount to be charged will be determined by the CRU and I understand the process that is to lead to a decision in this regard will commence early in 2019.

Once administrative arrangements and charges have been approved by the CRU, Irish Water will be in a position later this year to notify relevant customers who, having regard to their consumption patterns during 2018, appear to be consuming water services excessively and therefore potentially liable for excessive usage charges. Only customers who continue to consume water services excessively during the six month period following receipt of a formal notice in this way, will become liable for charges to cover excessive usage during the six month notice period and any subsequent periods.

The overall aim is to encourage water conservation rather than to generate revenue. On this basis, I understand that Irish Water will work proactively with relevant customers to identify whatever practical steps may be necessary in order to address their situation and bring their consumption back within the threshold level. Additional allowance amounts for water usage will be available to larger households (where the number of residents exceeds four) and exemptions will be available in cases of medical need.

### Departmental Expenditure

271. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount spent in each year for the past five years on accountancy and consultancy firms in relation to capital projects; the specific capital project in which the costs were incurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [2265/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** An examination of records indicates that no amounts were paid to accountancy firms in the past five years in relation to capital projects for which my Department is responsible. Information regarding expenditure on consultancy firms in respect of such projects is set out in the following table:

Capital Project	2014€	2015 €	2016€	2017€	2018€
C trí Project (Emergency Call Handling System)	Nil	37,713	53,294	328,928	394,826

Capital Project	2014€	2015 €	2016€	2017€	2018€
Aviation Modernisation and Automation Project (Met Éireann)	Nil	Nil	7,257	88,142	Nil
Climate Modernisation Project (Met Éireann)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	738

Local authorities, and bodies under the aegis of my Department, also engage professional expertise to support their work relating to planning, design and delivery of capital projects. This is a matter for the bodies in question.

### Departmental Funding

272. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the position in relation to the financial commitment towards the development of a centre (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2057/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** In 2013, a grant of €10m was awarded to the local authority for the development of the centre referred to by the Deputy. This was increased to €12m in 2015. To date €1m has been drawn down by the local authority. In December 2018, my Department wrote to the local authority in response to a request for the provision of additional public funding. The letter advised that additional public funding could be made available in accordance with public procurement rules and sought clarification on matters relating to the Public Spending Code and Public Financial Procedures.

Officials in my Department will meet with the local authority shortly to discuss aspects around the public funding elements of the project.

### Hare Coursing

273. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if an incident of suspected hare recapture in the aftermath of a hare coursing meeting in Tralee, County Kerry on 26 and 27 December 2018 has been reported to NPWS officers in the area. [2138/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department has no information in relation to an incident of this nature following the hare coursing meeting in question. My officials will, as before, be in touch with the Deputy to obtain any evidence she has and investigate the matter further at that point.

### Wildlife Regulations

274. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if a licence is required to shoot wildfowl in a location (details supplied); if so, the number of licences issued for this purpose in this location; the conditions of the licences; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2160/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** Under the Wildlife Acts there is an Open Season for hunting game bird species which extends from 1 September to varying dates up to the end of January depending on the species concerned and

there is no separate licence required from my Department to shoot wildfowl in the location in question.

### Special Protection Areas

275. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to make a bird sanctuary out of an area (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2161/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The area in question is designated as a Special Protection Area designated under the EU Birds Directive and a Special Area of Conservation designated under the EU Habitats Directive and benefits from a range of measures aimed at the protection and conservation of species and habitats. There are no immediate plans in my Department to designate the area in question as a wildfowl sanctuary under the Wildlife Acts.

### Departmental Expenditure

276. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount spent in each year for the past five years on accountancy and consultancy firms in relation to capital projects; the specific capital project in which the costs were incurred; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [2258/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** Details of expenditure on external consultancy reports commissioned by my Department, in the period since its establishment in 2011, has been provided to the House in response to Parliamentary Question No. 727 of 4th December 2018 of and Question No. 767 of 14th December 2017.

The information requested by the Deputy in respect of professional services and fees relating to capital projects and schemes is set out in the following Table.

Year	Capital Project or Scheme	Expenditure
2014	Projects funded under Cultural Infrastructure and Development support schemes: Pálás Art-house Cinema Theatre Royal Waterford West Cork Arts Centre Athlone Art Gallery	€13,346
2015	Architectural Consultancy Services in respect of Projects funded under Cultural Infrastructure: Pálás Arthouse Cinema Bank of Ireland Cultural Centre and Development support schemes	€8,109
	Moore Street Multi Criteria Analysis Report	€11,685
	Ionad na n-Imirceach, Carna – Engineering Consultancy	€10,419
2016	Architectural Consultancy Services in respect of Projects funded under Cultural Infrastructure and Development support schemes: Pálás Art-house Cinema Bank of Ireland Cultural Centre	€6,952

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Year	Capital Project or Scheme	Expenditure
	Costs associated with the development of a Master Plan for the NMI	€50,000
	Ionad na nImirceach, and Halla Naomh Fhionáin, An Fál Carrach – Engineering Consultancy	€10,008
2017	Architectural Consultancy Services in respect of Projects funded under Cultural Infrastructure and Development: support schemes: Pálás Art-house Cinema	€2,807
	National Library re-development project, Cost Benefit Analysis	€23,985
	Engineering Consultancy Services in relation to na nImirceach, and Halla Naomh Fhionáin	€15,401
	Engineering Consultancy Services in relation to Pier development on Inis Oírr, County Galway	€20,799
	Feasibility study at 6 Harcourt St., Headquarters of Conradh na Gaeilge	€12,269
2018	Architectural Consultancy Services in respect of Projects funded under Cultural Infrastructure and Development support schemes: Pálás Art-house Cinema Theatre Royal Waterford West Cork Arts Centre Athlone Art Gallery	€3,464
	Boyle Monograph Specialist Publication Services	€11,347
	Engineering Consultancy Services in relation to Na nImirceach, and Halla Naomh Fhionáin	€10,626
	Feasibility study at 6 Harcourt St., Headquarters of Conradh na Gaeilge	€22,000
	Engineering Consultancy Services in relation to Pier development on Inis Oírr, County Galway	€109,113