

## **Garda Recruitment and Operations**

My first priority as Minister for Justice is to get more Gardaí out onto our streets preventing the commission of crime through high visibility patrols. Increased recruitment and appropriate civilianisation where possible are vital to achieving this as is modern technology and equipment and active management of Garda resources. The Programme for Government commits to recruiting at least 5,000 Gardaí in the coming five years. As we strengthen An Garda Síochána, we will see more Gardaí visible in our communities tackling and preventing crime.

Recruitment into An Garda Síochána has gathered real momentum. In 2025, 794 new recruits were welcomed into the Garda College in Templemore. This is the highest number recruited since 2018. Over 200 trainee Gardai entered Templemore in May, bringing the total number of current trainees to over 600. Earlier this month An Garda Síochána launched their latest recruitment drive. This competition will help to ensure that we maintain the steady pipeline of new recruits.

New Garda recruits are already making an impact in their communities and the ongoing recruitment of new Gardaí will see further progress in increasing Garda numbers across the State. The work completed by the An Garda Síochána Recruitment Training Capacity Group in 2025 has supported the increase in numbers. The Garda Training Review Group, which is currently examining the future training capacity needs for An Garda Síochána, will, I expect, further support the Government's Garda recruitment commitments.

I have also introduced the Garda Síochána (Powers) Bill and the Garda Síochána (Recording Devices) (Amendment) Bill, which will provide additional powers to An Garda Síochána in relation to search warrants and use of facial recognition technology in certain circumstances. Both Bills are progressing through the Houses of the Oireachtas.

## **Domestic, Sexual, and Gender-Based Violence Strategy**

Combatting all forms of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (DSGBV) has been a central priority for me since taking office.

An allocation of almost €80 million was secured through Budget 2026 to fund initiatives aimed at tackling DSGBV, an increase of 18% (€12.2 million) from 2025.

In June 2025, I published the final implementation plan of the five-year 'Zero Tolerance' National DSGBV Strategy setting out the delivery targets and collective action to end 2026. The plan contains 95 specific actions across the four pillars of the Istanbul Convention. There is a strong emphasis on delivery, collective responsibility, and meaningful outcomes. I will shortly publish a progress report on implementation in 2025.

Amongst the key deliverables are actions already underway in respect of significant legislative reform including:

- Prioritising the drafting of the Guardianship of Infants (Amendment) Bill that will, in certain situations, allow for the removal of guardianship rights from individuals convicted of killing the other parent or guardian of their child;

- Limiting the disclosure of counselling records in rape and sexual assault cases.
- Banning sex for rent under the Criminal Law and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2025;
- Introducing the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences, Domestic Violence, and International Instruments) Bill 2025 which will, inter alia, change the threshold from a subjective to an objective test for establishing consent in rape and sexual assault cases;
- Introducing the Domestic Violence Register of Judgments in a standalone Bill, bringing greater transparency and accountability for serious offenders;
- Establishing the necessary legislative basis to provide for Operation Encompass, which will enable An Garda Síochána to share information with schools when a child has been exposed to domestic violence.

As part of the Zero Tolerance Strategy, Government committed to doubling domestic violence accommodation capacity in Ireland by the end of 2026 from 141 to 282 family units. By the end of 2026, it is envisaged to have 94 safe homes and 193 refuge units completed, bringing total safe accommodation to 287, with 50 further refuge units under construction. I am continuing to work with Cuan, my Department and the Department of Housing to ensure we are exhausting all measures to increase the pace of delivery for this much needed additional capacity.

## **Immigration**

It is also a central priority for me to ensure that our immigration system is robust and rules based.

My Department has taken action to significantly improve immigration enforcement measures and increase removals. This includes the renewed use of chartered deportation and removal flights. In 2025, 4,700 deportation orders were signed, an increase of 96% compared to 2024, while 2,111 people had their departure confirmed under various mechanisms (i.e. enforced deportation, voluntary return etc.), an increase of 88% compared to 2024.

In keeping with the Government commitment to significantly enhance the delivery of public services digitally, phase one of my Department's Immigration Customer Service Portal, which enables applicants to check their immigration application status, book first-time registration appointments, and submit queries, has been operational since October 2024. Since the launch of the Portal more than 285,000 customers have registered, with over 243,000 queries resolved and in excess of 147,000 registration appointments made.

## **International Protection**

In 2025, the International Protection Office (IPO) delivered over 20,200 first decisions compared to approximately 14,100 in 2024, a 44% increase. The International Protection Appeals Tribunal (IPAT) more than doubled the number of appeals closed from 3,100 in 2024 to nearly 6,300 in 2025.

The International Protection Act 2026 will come into operation on 12 June. It is the most comprehensive reform of immigration law in the history of the State and will implement the EU Migration and Asylum Pact.

The Pact is a new EU framework to manage migration and asylum for the long-term. The overall objective of the Pact is to provide a fair, sustainable and efficient asylum procedure. These important changes include a more efficient decisions process, streamlining the returns process, a new 'Border procedure' with a three-month time limit for decisions, and new institutional arrangements for international protection decisions and appeals.

Ultimately, improved, faster processing will result in decreasing annual costs by reducing the time an applicant remains in the system.

### **State Owned Accommodation**

I am committed to reforming Ireland's international protection system to ensure its efficiency and robustness. A stable and sustainable accommodation network is a central element of that reform and a key PfG commitment. State-owned centres are part of the Government's long-term plan to reduce the reliance on private accommodation providers resulting in better value for money of public funds and a more efficient international protection system. The purchase of the Citywest Hotel last year June was a significant step in achieving this.

The viability of other properties that could be utilised as state-owned accommodation is currently being accessed.

### **Commencement of Policing, Security, and Community Safety Act**

On 2 April 2025, I was pleased to commence the landmark Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024.

As a result, the following bodies were established:

- The new Garda Board
- The Policing and Community Safety Authority (replacing the existing Policing Authority and Garda Síochána Inspectorate)
- Fiosrú – the Office of the Police Ombudsman
- The Office of the Independent Examiner of Security Legislation
- The National Office for Community Safety

The Act strengthens and consolidates independent, external oversight of An Garda Síochána; makes community safety a whole of government and multi-agency responsibility and enhances the internal governance of An Garda Síochána by establishing a new non-executive board which is a corporate governance standard across the public and private sectors.

## **Community Safety**

The National Office for Community Safety established in April 2025 is a central coordinating body to the new whole of government, collaborative, problem-solving approach to community safety as envisaged by the Commission for the Future of Policing in Ireland (CoFPI).

Last June, I signed regulations to allow for Local Community Safety Partnerships to begin their work across the country. These regulations provide for a total of 36 Local Community Safety Partnerships to be established across every Local Authority. At a local level, community safety partnerships will play a major role in enhancing community safety nationwide in collaboration with An Garda Síochána, local residents, businesses and state agencies. I secured an additional €2.5 million in Budget 2026 to support the establishment of all 36 Local Community Safety Partnerships across the country.

As of 28 May 2026, members have been appointed to 35 of these Safety Partnerships and 34 are fully operational having held inaugural meetings and elected their Chair and Vice Chair. It is expected that all Safety Partnerships will be operational in the first half of the year.

I was pleased on 13 April to launch a call for applications under the Community Safety Fund 2026 (CSF). This annual fund allows for the proceeds of crime, seized by the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) and An Garda Síochána, to be redirected into local projects that support and enhance community safety. This year's fund totalling €4.75 million is a significant increase since the initial allocation of €2 million in 2022. In 2025, grants totalling €4.4 million were provided for 42 projects through the CSF.

## **Youth Justice**

The Government's focus on youth diversion and interventions is a keystone in the Youth Justice Strategy, which is a forward-thinking plan designed to address the unique challenges faced by young people in Ireland. At its core, the Strategy emphasises early intervention, prevention, family support, and community engagement. It includes key objectives aimed at promoting positive behavioural change, and it is only by targeting this behaviour that we can break the cycle of offending by young people. YDPs work with young people at risk of crime and anti-social behaviour to divert them away from criminal behaviour and towards better life outcomes.

A key intervention under this Strategy is the network of Youth Diversion Projects (YDPs) which work with young people at risk of crime and anti-social behaviour to divert them away from criminal behaviour and towards better life outcomes.

In November 2025, I was pleased to announce with Minister of State, Niall Collins TD, that the State's network of Youth Diversion Projects (YDPs) has been successfully rolled out nationwide, making these critical interventions available to young people at risk of engaging in criminal activity no matter where they live in Ireland.

## **Criminal Assets Bureau**

The Proceeds of Crime and Related Matters Bill 2025, approved by Cabinet last July, represents the most significant update to Ireland's civil asset forfeiture laws since their

introduction in 1996. The Bill strengthens the State's ability to identify, freeze and confiscate assets linked to serious and organised crime.

The Bill strengthens CAB's investigative powers, with new provisions to freeze bank accounts when there is a reasonable suspicion that it is being used to hold proceeds of crime. To address the risk of funds being moved quickly or hidden, a direction can be given to a financial institution to freeze an account for up to seven days.

The Bill passed report and final stages in Dáil Éireann in December 2025 and is currently progressing through the Seanad.

### **Transfers of responsibilities**

Responsibility for integration, International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS), and the Ukraine Division transferred to my Department from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, and Equality on 1 May 2025. This transfer includes the transfer of all staff, approximately 340 people, alongside a substantial budget transfer of approximately €2.1 billion. As my Department had existing responsibility for immigration and migration and the processing of applications for international protection, this transfer underpins a more cohesive and strategic approach to migration and integration. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) also transferred to my Department from the Department of the Environment, Communications and Climate on 2 June 2025. The NCSC is the lead government agency on cyber security.

Responsibility for the Irish Film Classification Office (IFCO) transferred from my Department on 1 August to the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport. This transfer was carried out in line with the Programme for Government and aligns the work of IFCO with the Department responsible for culture. Ahead of the transfer, my Department completed a Periodic Critical Review of IFCO which had a focus on the ongoing business case for the entity, its performance, efficiency, effectiveness, and governance arrangements. The report from the review was published ahead of the transfer. Responsibility for the Property Services Regulatory Authority (PSRA), as well as the Property Services Appeal Board, also transferred from my Department on 1 August to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

### **Cyber Security**

Ireland's 2025 National Cyber Risk Assessment published in December 2025, set out a detailed cyber security focused assessment providing a strategic view of the systemic cyber risks facing the State, its Critical National Infrastructure (CNI), and the supply chain ecosystem upon which these services rely. It is also the foundation for Ireland's third National Cyber Security Strategy.

Work is well advanced in my Department on Ireland's third National Cyber Security Strategy 2030. The Strategy will give rise to a series of measures to build cyber security capability in the State, including in research, development, skills and training. It will also set out the commitment in the Programme for Government 2025 to build a Cyber Security Research

Centre of Excellence and providing targeted grant funding for SMEs to improve their cyber security.

Ireland is currently transposing the NIS2 Directive via the National Cyber Security Bill. The drafting of the Bill is at an advanced stage and is expected to be published later this year. It will include measures to ensure providers of critical services take measures to increase their cyber resilience and to protect themselves against cyber security incidents. The Bill also establishes the National Cyber Security Centre as an executive office of my Department and provides the NCSC with additional powers and responsibilities to monitor, detect and respond to cyber security incidents in the State.

### **Establishment of the Gambling Regulatory Authority of Ireland**

In March 2025, I established the independent Gambling Regulatory Authority of Ireland (GRAI). The GRAI is responsible for a new streamlined, simplified, and coherent licensing framework which reflects the nature of modern gambling in the State and for a robust regulatory regime to regulate gambling in-person and online that will replace the existing, fragmented systems which date back to 1929.

The regulatory powers of the GRAI take into account the harms associated with problem gambling and provide safeguards to protect people from those harms, including children, those vulnerable to problem gambling, and those affected by problem gambling. The GRAI will establish and maintain a National Gambling Exclusion Register, funded through licence fees, and establish a Social Impact Fund, financed by a levy on the industry, to support services to treat gambling addiction and fund public education and awareness raising programmes.

The GRAI is commencing licensing operations in 2026 as part of a phased stand-up of their functions under the Gambling Regulation Act 2024.

### **Data Protection Commission**

On 17 September 2025, the Government appointed a third Commissioner for Data Protection, with the appointment taking effect from 13 October 2025, for a five-year term. This follows the appointment of two new Commissioners for Data Protection in February 2024. The appointment completes the process to expand the number of commissioners to 3. As the responsibilities and scope of the DPC continue to grow, the 3 commissioners will now lead and manage this key regulatory body.

### **Improvements to international judicial cooperation**

Bilateral agreements between Ireland and the United Arab Emirates on extradition and mutual legal assistance (MLA) in criminal matters entered into force on 18 May 2025. The bilateral MLA and extradition treaties will ensure that criminals cannot evade the law. They will also serve to mitigate the harm caused by any perception that criminals can evade the law and

benefit from the ill-gotten gains of criminal activity abroad, which itself diminishes the trust and confidence of citizens in the rule of law.

I also recently received Cabinet approval to publish the Criminal Justice (International Cooperation on Electronic Evidence and Other Matters) Bill 2026. The Bill will establish a new Office of Director of Criminal Justice International Cooperation, to allow Ireland to meet the requirements of the EU e-Evidence package. The package will make it faster and easier for law enforcement and judicial authorities across the EU, to obtain electronic evidence from service providers as part of criminal investigations.

### **Omagh Inquiry**

In April 2025, I signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Chairman of the Omagh Bombing Inquiry on matters relating to the disclosure of materials to the Inquiry. This is a truly important step to delivering on the commitment in the Programme for Government, to “play our full part in legacy processes...including facilitating and supporting the Omagh Inquiry”. That is in the best interests of the victims’ families and survivors. In November, I implemented measures to further support the operation of the Memorandum of Understanding including signing Regulations under section 2B of the Data Protection Act 1988 to support the disclosure of personal data to the Inquiry by my Department.

On 13 March 2026, I published the International Co-operation (Omagh Bombing Inquiry) Bill. The Bill is designed to enable the taking of oral testimony before the Irish courts for the purposes of the Omagh Bombing Inquiry. The Bill has now completed its passage through the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Bill is another important step in delivering on the commitment to facilitate and support the Inquiry.

### **Independent Expert**

In September, following extensive work at official and political levels, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I announced the appointment of Fleur Ravensbergen as the Independent Expert to conduct a scoping and engagement exercise on whether there is a basis for a formal process of paramilitary group transition to disbandment in Northern Ireland. This appointment was made in line with recommendations by the Independent Reporting Commission. I look forward to receiving the report on the outcome of this exercise in the Autumn of this year.

### **Family Justice**

The ongoing reform of the Family Justice system, for the benefit of families and children, is another of my key priorities.

Work has commenced on the implementation of the Family Courts Act 2024. The Act introduces changes to the current delivery of family justice, including the introduction of specialist family law judges assigned and operating within new family court divisions. I recently announced details of the Implementation Plan for the Family Justice Act that will

result in some of the most significant reforms of the family justice system in the history of the State.

In May 2025, I published the Review of the Operation of the In Camera Rule in Family Law Proceedings. The review, a key action in the Family Justice Strategy, was conducted by a team from University College Cork and Trinity College Dublin and is an important piece of research which details the perspectives of many stakeholders regarding the current understanding and operation of the in-camera rule in family law proceedings. Importantly, it includes the views of those who have been parties in such proceedings.

Officials from my Department are currently engaging with a variety of stakeholders and working on a policy paper regarding how some of the recommendations made in the report could be implemented.

Last August, I published two tenders for the provision of new family law services aimed at making our system more transparent and better for children. The first is for a Private Family Law Reporting Project to provide transparency for the public and increase awareness and understanding of family law proceedings while ensuring that children's and parents' right to privacy is upheld. I am pleased to say that the Child Law Project has been contracted to deliver the three-year project and work on it has commenced.

The second is for a service to provide a new and innovative way to hear children's voices in private family law proceedings. The Children's Court Advocate Pilot Project will initially be established in Waterford and Clonmel, ensuring that all children to whom guardianship, custody or access applications relate can have the opportunity to be informed about the proceedings relating to them and have their voice heard without any cost to families.

In February 2026, I launched a new online child maintenance calculator to help parents in coming to arrangements on child maintenance payments. The launch of the calculator follows on from the publication of Ireland's first set of Child Maintenance Guidelines earlier this year. The development of the guidelines was a key recommendation of the 2024 Review of the Enforcement of Child Maintenance Orders.

## **Civil Reform**

In January, I published the General Scheme of the Civil Reform Bill. The Civil Reform Bill is a key measure that will see the implementation of the Review of the Administration of Civil Justice, also known as the Kelly Report, which was published in October 2020. The Report made over 90 recommendations aimed at improving access to justice for all by making it quicker, more efficient and more cost effective.

As part of the Bill, it is my intention to introduce provisions which will codify the existing law on judicial review by placing it on a statutory basis. The measures should achieve greater transparency in the law and lead to a more streamlined review process. Key reforms should ensure that the system cannot be misused on purely technical grounds, that the public interest is taken into account, costs are reduced where possible and litigants have sufficient standing to properly challenge decisions. Given the significant challenges currently facing our State in terms of housing shortages, energy deficits, inadequate water supplies and climate change, all

of which are exacerbated by the demands of a rising population, we can no longer delay on reform of the judicial review system.

I am confident that the Bill will remove weaknesses in the current law, eliminate impediments to progress and deliver reform for the public benefit. I am also confident that measures in the Bill preserve the right of the citizen to ensure that public bodies act lawfully and are accountable for their decisions.

### **Judicial numbers**

The Courts and Civil law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2025 was enacted in December 2025 to provide for an increase in the maximum numbers of judges in the District Court, the Circuit Court, the High Court and the Court of Appeal. The Act provides for a total increase in judicial numbers of 21, delivering on Programme for Government commitments.

### **General Scheme of the Criminal Law and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2026**

In December 2025, I secured Government approval to publish the Criminal Law and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2026 which was subsequently presented to Dáil Éireann on 9 January 2026. The Dáil Second Stage debate took place on 22 January.

The Bill responds to a range of pressing challenges for the justice system. Among other provisions, the Bill includes measures to:

- criminalise the highly exploitative behaviour commonly known as ‘sex for rent’;
- amend legislation relating to disclosure of counselling records in sexual assault trials;
- encourage greater use of community service orders as an alternative to imprisonment in suitable cases;
- remove the legal prohibition on the possession and use of incapacitant spray by prison officers;
- allow the use of more advanced DNA analysis in missing persons cases;
- further facilitate video link hearings in the criminal courts by enabling bail bonds and suspended sentence bonds to be taken by Gardai and prison officers respectively;
- establish a permanent regulatory basis under which licenced premises may provide outdoor seating on public land;
- provide for the refusal of bail for persons charged with offences relating to forced marriage or coercive control, and
- empower the Chief Justice to delegate certain non-judicial functions to other members of the judiciary.

In February, I secured further Government approval to introduce additional amendments to the Bill. These amendments concern, *inter alia*:

- the establishment of an application-based legislative scheme for the disregard of certain historical convictions relating to consensual sexual activity between men;
- further amendments to provide for a presumption of non-disclosure in relation to counselling notes and other sensitive personal records in sexual offence trials;
- an amendment of the Prisons Act 2015 to provide that, where two years or less of the applicable prison term remains to be served, a person may be taken from prison for the purpose of effecting a deportation or removal order;
- a further amendment to the Bail Act 1997 to provide for refusal of bail for persons charged with offences relating to witness intimidation or failure to comply with requirements under the Sex Offenders Act 2001.

In March, I also secured Government approval to introduce an additional amendment to the Miscellaneous Provisions Bill to provide for the use of Passenger Name Record data for intra-EU flights.

Drafting of these amendments, along with a number of outstanding measures from the General Scheme of the Bill, is at an advanced stage and I intend to bring these provisions as amendments to the Bill as it progresses through the Dáil.

### **Prisons and penal reform**

A multi-year building programme is progressing at several key sites across the prison estate. To accelerate delivery, I sought and secured an exemption from the Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation for six major projects (960 prison spaces) to move straight to Approval Gate 2 - Pre-Tender Approval of the Infrastructure Guidelines. This decision is expected to bring forward delivery timelines on those six projects by 12 to 18 months, while freeing up internal capacity within IPS to advance the wider programme. This acceleration reflects the priority placed by Government on strengthening the prison system's resilience and providing safe, secure and humane accommodation. This is part of the funded plan to deliver over 1,500 new spaces.

In April 2025, I approved the publication of the Probation Service's 'Community Service - New Directions' Implementation Plan 2025-2027. This plan sets out commitments to drive the delivery and support the increased use of Community Service as a robust and meaningful alternative to imprisonment. Engagement with the Judiciary, imbedding the principles of desistance, restorative justice and social justice, and increasing the visibility and accessibility of community service are part of this plan.

A key recommendation of the High-Level Taskforce (HLTF) on mental health and addiction was the establishment of a Community Access Support Team (CAST) to divert those experiencing situational trauma or a mental health crisis away from the criminal justice system, and towards the healthcare system. The CAST project commenced in January 2025 and is a partnership pilot between An Garda Síochána and the Mental Health Services of HSE Mid-West Community Healthcare which is currently being trialled in the Limerick Garda Division.

This has resulted in multiple diversions from arrest and subsequent detentions under Section 12 of the Mental Health Act 2001 to the benefit of individual patients and increased public safety.

### **Building Pathways Together: Criminal Justice Reintegration Through Employment Strategy 2025-2027**

The Building Pathways Together employment strategy launched in November 2024 for implementation during the period 2025 to 2027. The first Annual Report on the Strategy was published on 5 May 2026, detailing the good progress made to date on implementation, including the establishment of a Criminal Justice Employers Network and Criminal Justice Employment Advisory Committee. The Annual Report is published online here:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-justice-home-affairs-and-migration/publications/building-pathways-together-criminal-justice-reintegration-through-employment-strategy-2025-2027/>

Through a commitment in the Strategy a fourth round of the KickStart Fund has been confirmed for roll out in 2026 and Pobal will administer the fund on behalf of my Department, the Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service. The Fund's objective is to support new and existing social enterprises to create meaningful jobs for people with criminal convictions as a stepping stone to mainstream employment. It is anticipated that the Programme will open for applications in Q2 2026.

The KickStart Scholarship Fund will also be continued for the academic year 2025/26. This fund was established by the Probation Service, and supported by the Irish Prison Service, will assist persons with a criminal justice history experiencing socio-economic disadvantage in accessing Higher Education (HE) across the MEND cluster of 4 HEIs (Technological University of the Shannon Athlone Campus, Dublin City University, Dundalk Institute of Technology and Maynooth University).

### **Electronic Monitoring**

My Department is leading a cross-agency project to introduce electronic monitoring for specific categories of individuals, as committed to in the Programme for Government, and in line with existing legal provisions.

Existing legislation, including the Bail Act 1997, as amended, the Criminal Justice Act 2006, as amended and the Sex Offender Act 2001, as amended, provide for electronic monitoring, in certain circumstances.

I had committed to the publication of a Request for Tender (RFT) for the provision of an electronic monitoring service provider by the end of 2025. The tender for electronic monitoring was published on 4 December 2025 and closed at 5pm on 6th February without any compliant responses being received, therefore, the competition was cancelled. My Department made a small number of changes to the technical specification and re-issued the RFT. This closed on 7 April 2026.

The intention is to appoint an EM service provider for a 12-month pilot phase, which will focus on individuals on temporary release nationally and those admitted to bail in a pilot area. It is proposed to utilise 30 to 50 electronic tags during this phase. This is expected to provide capacity to electronically monitor between 90 and 150 people in a year, but exact numbers monitored will depend on a range of factors including individuals' lengths of time on bail or on TR, and individuals' personal circumstances, including ongoing suitability and compliance with conditions.

The pilot approach will allow for processes and procedures to be tested before a wider scale national rollout, while also supporting the agencies involved to build capability and knowledge of the EM system. Insights from the pilot will inform any future national rollout and procurement.

The pilot is expected to be operational in 2026. I have secured funding of €2.1m in Budget 2026 for the project to allow for staffing, procurement, and other set up costs.

## **Counter-terrorism**

I received Cabinet approval to strengthen Ireland's counter-terrorism laws with the publication of the Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) (Amendment) Bill 2025 in June of last year. The Terrorist Offences Bill will allow for the prosecution of a broader range of terrorist activities in light of the evolving nature of terrorism. These include terrorist acts with a cross-border element, and cyber-attacks where the aim is to cause widespread harm.

The Bill will bring Ireland's counter-terrorism laws into line with those of other EU member states. This alignment will facilitate Ireland's participation in enhanced counter-terrorism networks across the EU, enabling An Garda Síochána to tap into those networks to respond to both domestic and cross-border terrorist threats.

The Bill is currently making its way through the Houses of the Oireachtas.

## **Interception**

In January this year, I announced that the Government had approved my proposals to draft a new Communications (Interception and Lawful Access) Bill which will update and replace the Interception of Postal Packets and Telecommunications Messages (Regulation) Act 1993.

Updating this longstanding legislation is essential to ensure that the law in this area can yield the intelligence that is vital to combat serious and organised crime and threats to the security of the State, including terrorism. The legislation will include a general principle that interception powers apply to all forms of communications, whether encrypted or not, and can be used to obtain either content data or related metadata, such as phone call or email time and date and the sender and receiver of a communication.

There will also be a provision for the use of covert surveillance software to gain lawful access to electronic devices and networks for the investigation of serious crime and security threats. These technologies can play a legitimate role when used in a lawful manner that is consistent with respect for human rights.

The legislation will set out robust legal safeguards. At present, the Minister for Justice has responsibility for authorising interception requests. In the new legislation, there will still be a role for the Minister but for the first time there will also be provision for judicial authorisation of interception requests. There will also be a requirement that agencies requesting an interception will have to outline any issues with regard to privileged material.

### **Sectoral Investment Plan for Justice**

I have secured Cabinet approval for the Sectoral Investment Plan for Justice under the 2025 National Development Plan (NDP) Review. The National Development Plan Review is the largest ever capital investment plan in the history of the State. The funding allocation of €2.18 billion will support major capital projects in the Justice sector from 2026-2030, an increase of over €800 million on the previous NDP in 2021.

The Sectoral Investment Plan for Justice was published on 4 December 2025. The plan sets out the strategic investment priorities over the next five years and outlines key capital projects that will be delivered to keep our people and communities safe. This record funding boost for capital development is essential and will deliver a wide range of vital major projects across the justice sector.