An Overview of the Revised Estimates for 2020

The Revised Estimates are the detailed allocations of spending to be approved by the Dáil for each Ministerial portfolio...

2020’s starting allocation of €70 billion (gross) is a 6% increase on the equivalent figure for 2019. This prioritises investment in Health, Social Protection, Education, Transport and Housing.

Dáil Éireann must scrutinise and vote upon the Revised Estimates for the full budgetary allocation to be approved. The measures announced in response to COVID-19 will require changes to the allocations in the Revised Estimates.

Key Messages

- The Revised Estimates for Public Services elaborate upon, and update, the Abridged Estimates published with the Budget.
- The Revised Estimates for Public Services must be approved by Dáil Éireann to give effect to the budget allocations for government Departments.
- During the term of the 32nd Dáil, an additional €9.5 billion was allocated, with a focus on Health, Transport, Housing and Education.
- The Revised Estimates for Public Services 2020 allocate €70.4 billion in spending.
- This is a €3.7 billion increase over Revised Estimates for Public Services 2019.
- This increase is focused on Health, Social Protection, Education, Transport and Housing.

This document presents the initial budget for the Dáil-approved expenditure of government in 2020. Since the publication of the Revised Estimates, the government has published details of two packages in response to COVID-19 that contain a combined €6.7 billion in expenditure. For details of these packages, read the PBO’s notes on the initial package and the emergency measures bill.

The Revised Estimates for Public Services: the key publication for Dáil Éireann to approve budget allocations for Ministerial Portfolios

The Revised Estimates for Public Services are published about two months after the Estimates for Public Services that accompany the Budget, in the Expenditure Report. The Revised Estimates provide more detail about the allocation of Gross and Net Expenditure under each Ministerial Portfolio, organised into Votes. Gross Voted Expenditure describes the funding allocated to each Vote before subtracting income that accrues directly to that Vote. Voted Expenditure makes up roughly 80% of all public expenditure, and most other expenditure is outside of the direct control of central government.¹

Dáil Scrutiny of the Revised Estimates

Budgetary allocation is among the key duties² of Dáil Deputies. This duty is undertaken through the referral of Votes to Select Committees for scrutiny prior to approval of the content of the Revised Estimates. In non-election years, scrutiny meetings are held between February and May, after which the Revised Estimates are returned for approval on the Floor of the House. In the event that the Revised Estimates have not passed through the Houses, Departments may spend up to 80% of the previous year’s net allocation. Given the large fiscal response required for COVID-19, an emergency Estimate may need to be approved by the Dáil for 2020 if specific Departments risk exceeding 80% of their allocation for 2019.

¹ For more detail about the composition of public expenditure, and why Voted Expenditure makes up the key portion of it for Dáil Scrutiny, see PBO publication 26 of 2019: General Government Expenditure: How its composition constrains decisions about government spending.
² Article 15.2.1 of Bunreacht na hÉireann and Collins v. Minister for Finance (2013) IEHC 530.
Revised Estimates for Public Services 2016 – 2019: Introduced and Implemented under the 32nd Dáil

The Revised Estimates for 2016 to 2019 were voted upon and implemented during the 32nd Dáil. During this period, Gross Voted Expenditure increased from €56 billion to €66.6 billion. However, €1.1 billion of this €10.6 billion increase was the result of the movement of Irish Water onto the Housing Department’s Vote. Accounting for this change, the increase in expenditure during the term of the 32nd Dáil was €9.5 billion or 17%. This increase was relatively concentrated, with large proportional increases in the allocations for Housing, Transport and Health. Figure 2 illustrates the trend in Housing, Transport, Health and Education in comparison to the change in all other areas.

![Figure 2: Significant proportional increases in spending on Housing, Transport, Health and Education.](image)

Source: PBO based on DPER Databank. Change in Housing excludes the movement of Irish Water onto the Housing Vote.

Revised Estimates 2020: €3.7 billion in increased spending

The Estimate for 2020 is €70.37 billion, a €3.7 billion or 6% increase over the Revised Estimate for 2019. Five Votes account for 76% of this change: Health, Social Protection, Education, Transport and Housing. This shows a continuation in the priorities illustrated above, though the increase in funding for housing is significantly smaller, proportionally, than in previous years. However, this comes after very significant proportional increases for the Housing Vote from 2016-2019, beyond those shown in Figure 2 above (i.e. including the €1.1 billion added to the Vote by Irish Water). In addition, two new Votes have been established in 2020, for the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) and the Data Protection Commission (DPC). This brings the total number of Votes to 44. To see how the spending under all of these Votes is assigned to Ministerial Portfolio’s, see the PBO’s infographic depicting all 44.

![Figure 3: Year-on-year change from Revised Estimates 2019 in the Top 5 Votes by absolute value, in € millions and percentage change.](image)