

Written Answers.

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

Questions Nos. 1 to 10, inclusive, answered orally.

Defence Forces Operations

11. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Defence the moneys received by the Defence Forces during each of the past ten years for providing escorts to those transporting explosives. [54707/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The roles of the Defence Forces as assigned by Government are set out in the White Paper on Defence which was published in February 2000. Among the assigned roles is Aid to the Civil Power (ATCP) meaning in practice to assist, when requested, An Garda Síochána who have primary responsibility for law and order, including the protection of the internal security of the State. The Defence Forces undertake a broad range of ATCP operations. One of the duties that the Defence Forces provide, pursuant to their role of rendering Aid to the Civil Power, is the provision of escorts during the transportation of explosives. As this is a role only carried out at the request of An Garda Síochána, no monies are received by the Department of Defence for the provision of this service.

Defence Forces Expenditure

12. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Defence the projected increase in fuel costs for the forthcoming year for the Defence Forces in view of the increases in travel that will result from the reduction in manpower; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54705/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The gravity of the current economic difficulties means that all areas of the public sector must deliver greater efficiencies and operate within a reduced resource envelope. In that regard, all elements of the Defence organisation's expenditure have been critically reviewed in order to reflect the current financial climate. Arising from the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure in 2011, the Government decided to stabilise the strength of the Permanent Defence Force at 9,500 personnel. A major reorganisation of the Permanent Defence Force and the Reserve is ongoing and this will ensure that within the reduced strength, the operational effectiveness of the Defence Forces is maintained. This is being achieved through the rationalising of headquarters, administrative and support functions and re-balancing force elements in favour of "front line" operational Units.

While the reorganisation means that certain units are being disbanded, amalgamated or re-located, it maintains, as far as possible, the existing organisational strengths within the current

locations.

Given the complexity of the reorganisation process and the associated logistics to be managed by the Defence Forces, it is too early to say as to whether there will be an increase or decrease in fuel costs. This will only be evident when the full reorganisation is in place for a reasonable period. To that end, I am advised that the Defence Forces are in the process of collating data on transportation costs with a view to determining the net costs involved.

Question No. 13 withdrawn.

Defence Forces Remuneration

14. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Defence if he is satisfied that remuneration levels for Defence Force personnel are adequate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54781/12]

22. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Defence his plans to improve the pay and conditions of members of the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54794/12]

167. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Defence his views on whether all ranks of the Defence Forces receive sufficient remuneration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54931/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 14, 22 and 167 together.

Rates of remuneration and conditions of employment in the Irish public sector have traditionally been set by reference to relative levels of pay across the various sectors of the Irish public sector. In this regard, the level of remuneration in the Defence sector has maintained relativity with the levels available in other related public sector employments.

A Scheme of Conciliation and Arbitration for members of the Permanent Defence Force was established in 1993. It provides a formal mechanism for the representative Associations, RACO and PDFORRA, to engage with the Official side. The purpose of the scheme is to provide a means for the determination of claims and proposals from the Associations relating to remuneration and conditions of service. Since 1993, there have been significant developments and improvements in the pay and conditions of military personnel. The Representative Associations have been to the fore in advancing the interests of their members in this regard, bringing them in line generally with the pay and conditions available in other public service employments.

As the Deputies will appreciate, it has proved necessary to take very significant action in terms of adjusting downwards the pay and conditions for staff right across the Public Service. The Defence Forces cannot be immune to these changes and indeed have had similar pay cuts and a radical reorganization of the Defence Forces structures, which has reduced numbers serving and promotional opportunities for personnel. As a result of the continuing economic challenges facing the country and the requirement for further measures to restore fiscal sustainability, discussions have opened with the public sector trade unions affiliated to ICTU about mechanisms to deliver required savings of up to €1 billion in the public sector pay bill in the period 2013 - 2015. In parallel, discussions are also taking place between officials of my Department and the Associations representing members of the Permanent Defence Force.

It is of course open to the Representative Associations of the members of the Permanent Defence Force, subject to the terms of the Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme and the Croke Park Agreement, to avail of the mechanisms in place should they wish to pursue any particular concerns in relation to the pay and conditions of their members.

Question No. 15 answered with Question No. 9.

Question No. 16 answered with Question No. 8.

Question No. 17 withdrawn.

Defence Forces Reserve Training

18. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Defence the number of Reserve Defence Force members who attend on a regular basis for training from the Lucan, Clondalkin, Palmerstown, Newcastle, Rathcoole and Saggart areas of County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54643/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the military authorities that the number of Reserve Defence Force (RDF) personnel that attend RDF training on a regular basis from the Lucan, Clondalkin, Palmerstown, Newcastle, Rathcoole and Saggart catchment area is currently 32. These are the numbers of personnel who regularly attend training with A Company, 62 Infantry Battalion, the sub unit who's catchment area encompasses the populated areas in question. I am advised that the figure of 32 is based on information available for the training year November 2011 to October 2012. The Deputy will be aware recently published a Value for Money Review of the Reserve Defence Force.

Having accepted the review's recommendations directed that proposals for new organisational structures be prepared, taking account of the VFM report and the major re-organisation of the PDF. The Chief of Staff and Secretary General submitted an agreed report which set out detailed re-organisation proposals, including Unit structures and the location of Reserve Units. I have accepted these proposals.

Work on implementing the recommendations of the VFM is underway. In this context I would like to emphasise that the contribution and commitment of each and every member of the Reserve is valued and appreciated and I sincerely hope that all members of the Reserve will continue to serve within the new organisation.

EU Battlegroups

19. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Defence his plans regarding Ireland's future participation in Battlegroup missions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54783/12]

26. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Defence his plans for Irish troops to participate in more EU Battlegroups in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54758/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 19 and 26 together.

The EU has the capability to deploy forces at high readiness, broadly based on the Battle-

group concept. The purpose of the EU Battlegroups is to provide a rapid level of response to developing international crises, allowing the EU to intervene during the critical early stages or to reinforce an existing operation. To date, no Battlegroup has been deployed.

Participation in Battlegroups is just one of a number of ways in which Ireland contributes to the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy. Ireland participated in the Nordic Battlegroup, which was on standby during the first six months of 2011, and previously participated in the Nordic Battlegroup in 2008. In 2010, the then Government approved Ireland's participation in the Austro-German Battlegroup, which is currently on stand-by for six months until the end of 2012. The other members of the Austro-German Battlegroup are Austria, Germany, Czech Republic, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).

Two invitations have been received by Ireland to participate in future EU Battlegroups. One invitation has been received to participate in the Nordic Battlegroup 2015, together with Sweden, acting as Framework Nation, Finland, Norway and Estonia. The second invitation has been received to participate in the EU Battlegroup 2016, with Germany, acting as Framework Nation, Luxembourg, Austria, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands. Discussions are ongoing with both the participants in both groups on Ireland's potential contribution to these future Battlegroups. In principle, I support Ireland's continued participation. However, any participation will be subject to formal Government approval at the appropriate time.

Overseas Missions

20. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Defence if he will report on the Defence Forces' mission in Syria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54776/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): Six (6) members of the Permanent Defence Force are deployed in Syria as part of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO). The Defence Forces have participated in UNTSO since 1958. Defence Forces personnel serving with this mission are based in Syria, Israel and Lebanon. The main functions of UNTSO are to maintain regional dialogue, monitor ceasefires, supervise armistice agreements and to assist UN peacekeeping operations in Lebanon and Syria. The six UNTSO Defence Forces personnel based in Syria are part of Observer Group Golan responsible for the Syrian side of the Golan Heights. One Irish officer is the Chief of Observer Group Golan and has responsibility for the conduct of operations by UN Military Observers within Israeli Occupied Golan and Syria. The remaining five (5) Defence Forces personnel are deployed as UN Military Observers and conduct their duties in support of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights. Their duties include manning Observation Posts, conducting fortnightly inspections of the deployment of Syrian Arab Armed Forces and conducting patrols within the Area of Limitation in order to ensure that no activities occur which could lead to the breach of the ceasefire between Israel and Syria.

As the security situation in Syria remains highly volatile, Defence Forces personnel normally based in Damascus were relocated by UNTSO to offices and accommodation at UNDOF Headquarters in the Golan Heights, on 15 October 2012, as a temporary force protection measure. The Irish personnel continue to fulfill their roles from this temporary location. It is intended that they will return to offices and accommodation in Damascus should there be an improvement in the security situation.

Six members of the Permanent Defence Force who had been deployed as unarmed military observers to the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) were withdrawn in August 2012 when the mission's mandate came to an end.

Overseas Missions

21. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Defence the date on which he proposes to withdraw the seven members of the Defence Forces serving in Afghanistan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54774/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Defence Forces are primarily deployed on overseas missions in support of international peace and security under UN mandates. On 20 December 2001, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1386 under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, authorising the establishment of an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, and there are fourteen UN Security Council Resolutions relating to ISAF, most recently UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2069 (2012), adopted on 9 October 2012. The latest UN Security Council Resolution extended ISAF's mandate for a further year until October 2013. Ireland has participated in the NATO-led UN mandated mission since 5 July 2002, following the Government Decision of 2 July 2002, authorising the provision of seven (7) members of the Permanent Defence Force for service with the force. The continued participation by seven (7) members of the Permanent Defence Force in ISAF is reviewed annually by the Government. The most recent decision by the Government was on 26 June 2012, when it agreed to continue to provide seven members of the Permanent Defence Force for service with ISAF for a further period from July 2012, subject to ongoing review by the Minister for Defence. Planning for the drawdown of ISAF generally is currently ongoing and the withdrawal of the Defence Forces personnel from the mission will be coordinated within the context of the overall ISAF drawdown plan.

Question No. 22 answered with Question No. 14.

Defence Forces Reorganisation

23. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Defence in view of his recent announcement of the reorganisation of the Reserve Defence Force and the consequent reduction in the number of RDF units, the criteria that will be used in deciding where the current PDF staff who support RDF units earmarked for discontinuance will be relocated and for his reassurance that considering the wide geographical spread of RDF posts as now re-structured that PDF staff so affected will be given the option of re-locating to their next closest RDF post; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54644/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The re-organisation of the Reserve Defence Force is a key element of the response to the findings and recommendations of a Value for Money Review of the Reserve Defence Force, which was recently completed and published and which concluded that the current Reserve organisation was not fit for purpose and required radical reform. The central recommendation from the VFM Steering Committee is for the retention of the Reserve with 4,000 personnel spread countrywide to be based in barracks and in 16 other locations. This requires the consolidation of existing Reserve Units throughout the country into a smaller number of full-strength Units. The retention of all locations was not a viable or sustainable option.

A new "Single Force" concept will see PDF Units having Reserve components, rather than a parallel Reserve as at present. Reserve Units within barracks will be supported by their parent PDF Unit and the 16 Units outside of PDF installations will be supported by dedicated full time PDF personnel. This concept offers significant potential advantages in terms of training and development of the Reserve. The initiative of locating Reserve Officers within the Defence

Forces command structure will likewise underpin the future of Reserve personnel.

All options to avoid the need for personnel to relocate are being explored as part of the re-organisation process. Personnel are being offered the opportunity for reassignment and every effort is being made to minimise the requirement to relocate. Inevitably, given the scale of the re-organisation, it will be necessary for some staff to move to new locations.

Defence Forces Reorganisation

24. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence if he is satisfied that he continues to have adequate resources at his disposal to maintain the highest possible level of activity in the Defence Forces with particular reference to the need to ensure adequate operational strength and mobility with maximum rapid deployment potential at all levels including the capacity to meet any emergency that might arise; if he is satisfied in this regard in respect of the permanent and Reserve Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54795/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): In common with all areas of the public sector, the Defence Forces must operate within a reduced resource envelope. In response to these resource constraints, the Defence organisation has undertaken further significant re-organisation and reform. These changes have prioritised the operational capacity of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF).

A major re-organisation of the PDF is underway since last July and is now at an advanced stage. In response to the findings of a Value for Money Review which was recently published, the Reserve Defence Force is also being reformed and re-organised. These changes will ensure that the Defence Forces organisational structures are configured to maximise required capabilities. In addition, the procurement of military equipment is prioritising operational capacity and two new Naval Service vessels are being procured from within the existing resource envelope.

These measures will ensure that the Permanent Defence Force can continue to deliver required operational outputs for all approved Aid to the Civil Power and approved Aid to the Civil Authority requests. The PDF will also continue to meet Government requirements for overseas peace support operations. The full spectrum of Defence Forces personnel and equipment, is also available for deployments in response to emergencies and crises. I am satisfied that the Defence Forces can continue to fulfil all roles assigned by Government.

Defence Forces Operations

25. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Defence the steps being taken by the Defence Forces to deal with the new threats posed by dissident republicans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54645/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): Primary responsibility for the maintenance of law and order, including the protection of the internal security of the State, rests with An Garda Síochána. However, one of the roles assigned to the Defence Forces in the White Paper on Defence (2000) is to provide Aid to the Civil Power (ATCP) which, in practice, means to assist An Garda Síochána when requested to do so. A wide variety of military training activities are specifically designed to counter or respond to possible security emergencies. The Defence Forces hold regular coordination and liaison meetings with An Garda Síochána in relation to ATCP issues including identifying and responding effectively to any new or developing threats

to internal and external State security. While exact details in relation to the threat posed by dissident republicans cannot be made public for operational reasons, the Defence Forces maintain a strong and focussed operational awareness and response capability to all emerging threats within the State.

Question No. 26 answered with Question No. 19.

Defence Forces Operations

27. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Defence the moneys received by the Defence Forces during each of the past ten years for providing escorts to cash in transit. [54706/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The monies received by the Department of Defence in respect of the provision by the Defence Forces of assistance to An Garda Síochána in protecting movements of cash for the past ten years are as follows:

Year	Amount Received	Year	Amount Received
2002	€2.86m	2007	€7.34m
2003	€2.86m	2008	€7.45m
2004	€3.86m	2009	€7.39m
2005	€6.03m	2010	€7.47m
2006	€6.47m	2011	€7.34m

Previous to 2005, the contribution from the banks only part-covered the total costs to the State of providing cash escorts. An agreement that was signed with the Irish Banking Federation and its member Banks in 2005 provides that the banks will pay the total actual costs incurred in the provision by the Defence Forces of cash escorts for the banks. This agreement was subsequently renewed in 2011.

Defence Forces Ombudsman Appointment

28. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Defence the reason the Ombudsman for the Defence Forces will now be a part time position; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54703/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): As I indicated in reply to Parliamentary Question No. 4 of 7 November 2012, the office of the Ombudsman is now well established and a number of administrative and systemic issues identified by the outgoing Ombudsman have been addressed. This has contributed to improvements in procedures and policies within the Defence Forces. Recent trends show a significant increase in the number of redress of wrongs complaints being resolved within the military system, thus reducing the number of cases being referred to the Ombudsman for investigation, a fact I very much welcome. In addition, it is anticipated that the new and comprehensive promotion system for NCOs agreed and introduced earlier this year will eliminate the many complaint referrals to the Ombudsman relating to promotion. Such referrals currently account for about a third of the caseload in the Ombudsman's office. Against this background, the post of Ombudsman for the Defence Forces is being filled on a part time, three day week basis, subject to ongoing review of caseload and referrals. This remains the position.

Question No. 29 answered with Question No. 6.

Defence Forces Equipment

30. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Defence if he has examined the possibility of procuring smaller naval coastal patrol vessels for the purposes of intercepting drugs landings on Irish coastal areas. [54710/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Customs Service of the Revenue Commissioners has primary responsibility for the prevention of drug smuggling into the country and responsibility for the prevention of crime rests primarily with An Garda Síochána. The Revenue Commissioners deploy two cutters, the RCC Suirbheir and the RCC Faire, as part of the overall effort to prevent drugs landing in Irish Coastal areas.

The White Paper on Defence (2000) provides for a security role for the Naval Service and the Air Corps to support the civil authorities in this area and assistance in the prevention of drug smuggling is recognised as a very important part of their duties. Government measures to improve law enforcement in relation to drugs, including the establishment in 1993 of a Joint Task Force involving An Garda Síochána, the Customs Service and the Naval Service, have helped to maximise the effective use of Naval Service resources in combating drug trafficking.

The Naval Service, as a member of the Joint Task Force, is also committed to an international initiative, the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre – Narcotics, (MAOC-N). The Centre which was established in 2007 has led to a greater focus on intelligence exchange amongst countries to tackle large drug shipments by sea. MAOC-N was set up by seven European countries and is designed as an international co-ordination force with access to national tasking agencies and requires participation and resources from all active members. An Garda Síochána and the Customs Service have full-time officers based at its Centre in Lisbon. Irish Naval Service personnel travel to the Centre when requested by the Joint Task Force.

The Naval Service operates eight general purpose patrol ships, which are tasked with coastal and offshore patrolling and surveillance for the State. The Naval Service is committed to having at least three vessels on patrol within the Irish Exclusive Economic Zone at any one time. All vessels are multi-tasked in the sense that they also undertake general surveillance, security and other duties while on patrol. As the need arises, Naval Service vessels are deployed on drug interdiction operations.

A contract was placed in 2010 for the provision of two new Offshore Patrol Vessels with an overall length of 90 metres for the Naval Service. The acquisition of these new vessels will ensure that the Naval Service can continue to carry out its drug interdiction role in support of the Joint Task Force as well as its other taskings.

There are no plans to procure smaller coastal patrol vessels for the Naval Service. I am satisfied that Naval Service have the necessary resources to meet all their operational requirements including the support of the civil authorities in the prevention of drug smuggling into this country.

Defence Forces Equipment

31. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Defence if he will rule out the procurement of any Israeli technology through the European Defence Agency for use by the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54708/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy will appreciate that the prin-

principle of competitive tendering for Government contracts has to be used by the Department of Defence for the acquisition of defensive equipment for the Defence Forces. Central to those procedures is the requirement to allow fair competition between suppliers through the submission of tenders following advertising of the tender competition on the e-tenders site or on the European Defence Agency's Electronic Bulletin Board. Such tender competitions are open to any individual company or country in accordance with the terms of all UN, OSCE and EU arms embargos or restrictions. There are no such restrictions or embargos in place on Israel or Israeli companies.

The primary purpose for the procurement of defensive equipment by the Department of Defence is to enhance the capability of the Irish Defence Forces on overseas Peace Support Operations and to afford the greatest possible force protection to Irish troops whilst on such missions.

Question No. 32 answered with Question No. 9.

Question No. 33 answered with Question No. 6.

Naval Service Vessels

34. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Defence if he will provide an update on the procurement of new ships for the Naval Service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54704/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): There is a fleet of eight ships available to the Naval Service, seven of which are currently in operational service. In order to maintain maximum availability and serviceability, major maintenance for each vessel is planned in advance and is incorporated into an annual patrol plan for the Naval Fleet. LE Niamh is undergoing scheduled maintenance at present and will be back in service later this month. A strategy for the replacement of Naval Service Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) is currently in train. A contract was signed in October 2010 with Babcock Marine in the United Kingdom for the provision of two new ships.

The construction of the first ship is well underway in Appledore. The first ship is scheduled for delivery in early 2014. The second ship will follow one year later. I understand that the production schedule is proceeding on time and in accordance with the contract and that to date there are no difficulties foreseen. The acquisition of these modern new vessels is a priority for the Defence Forces. These acquisitions combined with a continuous process of refurbishment and repair, will ensure that the operational capability of the Naval Service is maintained at a satisfactory level in the coming years.

Departmental Contracts

35. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will provide details of each service in his Department that is currently outsourced; the company that provides such services and the total cost for these services; the other services which may be outsourced in the future that are currently being run in his Department; the names of the companies, fees paid and nature of service for all contracts awarded from his Department excluding legal, accounting, PR or building refurbishment related services since March 2011. [55831/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The

services to the public provided by my Department consist of the following:

- issuing of passports;
- the registration of certain Irish citizens born abroad in the Foreign Births Register;
- the provision of consular assistance and protection to Irish citizens abroad;
- the issue of documentation for citizens wishing to marry abroad; and
- the authentication of certain business documents for use abroad.

For public policy reasons, these services have been delivered directly by my Department and none of them have been outsourced.

The Certificate of Irish Heritage programme is operated on behalf of my Department by Killorglin based, Fexco. Under the terms of the concession agreement, which was awarded following a public tender, Fexco maintain the website, develop the necessary software, process applications, issue certificates and are the initial point of contact for all customer enquiries. The contract was renewed in September, 2012 for a second year.

There has been no substantial Departmental expenditure on developing the Certificate programme. €2,714 has been spent to date mainly on technical issues relating to the websites which the Department owns (registering domains and security validation procedures etc.) as well as travel costs to meetings in Killorglin and some photographs at the launch in New York.

The possibility of providing new services on a similar basis will be kept under review.

Election Monitoring Missions

36. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade further to Parliamentary Question No. 60 of 22 March 2012, if the review of the working of the election roster has been completed and if he will detail the outcomes of the review; if any actions have taken place on foot of the review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55883/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): International election monitoring missions play an important role in the promotion of democracy and human rights. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade maintains a roster of observers for election monitoring missions. We aim to ensure that, when requested, Ireland is represented at an appropriate level in international observation missions for both elections and constitutional referendums. Irish observers participate primarily in missions organised by the European Union (EU) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), but have also been involved in missions organised by the Council of Europe, the United Nations and the Carter Centre. There are currently some 300 people on the Election Observation Roster. So far in 2012, 57 Irish observers have been involved in missions organised by both the EU and OSCE, in eleven countries. A review of the election roster is currently underway and my intention is to have this completed by the end of the first quarter of 2013. The review will lead to the establishment of a new roster of individuals with the right mix of skills and experience to ensure that we maintain the excellent standard of election monitoring that Ireland has established.

International Relations

37. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of relations between Ireland and Kosovo; the way he hopes to build on these; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55912/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): Relations between Ireland and Kosovo are excellent. Ireland is a firm friend of Kosovo, having been active as part of the international presence there since 1999. Ireland was one of the first States to recognise Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008. We participated in the International Steering Group for Kosovo until the end of supervised independence on 10 September this year. Irish personnel continue to participate in the EU Rule of Law mission in Kosovo (EULEX Kosovo) and the UN-mandated, NATO-led KFOR mission. Ireland provides support to Kosovo through contributions to the EU, UN and other multilateral organisations. Irish Aid has also contributed funding to Kosovo through its Partnership Programme for Europe and Central Asia.

Our strong bilateral relationship is also evidenced by the number of Irish Government Ministers who have visited Kosovo in recent years. Most recently, my colleague, the Minister of State for European Affairs, Lucinda Creighton visited Kosovo in September, in the capacity of Ireland's Chairmanship of the OSCE, and as incoming EU Presidency. While there she met with the Deputy Prime Minister and the Deputy Foreign Minister, among other interlocutors.

We are encouraged by the recent resumption of the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, and commend the efforts of Kosovar Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi and Serbian Prime Minister Ivica Dačić in this regard. We strongly encourage both sides to continue to work together to ensure further and sustainable progress. The improvement of relations between Serbia and Kosovo will be key for the EU aspirations of both. We would also encourage Kosovo to accelerate reforms in the areas of public administration, the rule of law, freedom of expression and the fight against corruption and organised crime.

We believe that the prospect of EU membership remains the EU's most effective tool in supporting reform and transformation for all of the countries of the Western Balkans. In that regard, we are supportive of Kosovo's EU perspective, as we are of the membership aspirations of all countries in the region. We will make every effort to progress Kosovo's EU perspective during our Presidency.

Illegal Israeli Imports

38. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has considered introducing a new labelling system for goods from illegal Israeli settlements as products of Israeli occupied West Bank; if his attention has been drawn to other international examples following that model; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55928/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I am familiar with voluntary guidelines on labelling of settlement products issued in the UK and more recently in Denmark. As the House has been informed, information on the UK guidelines has been carried on my Department's website for a number of years, for the guidance of importers and retailers if they wish it. My Department has recently participated in a workshop on this issue with the UK and Danish authorities, and others, and in the light of those discussions will be considering what further steps Ireland might take in this regard. The Deputy will be aware however that labelling of goods in Ireland is a matter for a number of domestic Departments, and not for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Northern Ireland Issues

39. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the contact he has had with the Northern Executive and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in relation to the outbreak of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland over the past number of days; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55929/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I would like to take this opportunity to once again condemn the outbreaks of violence related to the issue of flying of the Union Flag at Belfast City Hall that we have witnessed in Belfast and elsewhere in Northern Ireland over the last week. Peaceful protest is perfectly legitimate but respect for the rule of law is essential. The attacks on the homes of elected representatives of the Alliance party and their families, and the death threats issued against members of that party are particularly distressing. These attacks, along with the destruction and damage caused to Alliance party offices are attacks on the democratic process itself. Assaults directed at PSNI officers such as we have witnessed are reprehensible and have no place in a civilised society.

I spoke to David Ford on Thursday 6 December who is both Minister for Justice with devolved responsibility for policing and justice, and leader of the Alliance party. I conveyed to him the support of the Irish Government for the PSNI and solidarity with those members of his party who have had to endure assaults on themselves, their families and their property. Yesterday afternoon I discussed the ongoing efforts of the two Governments in support of political progress with the Secretary of State Theresa Villiers. Officials from my Department remain in close contact with members of the political parties, the PSNI and British officials on an ongoing basis.

The Northern Ireland Assembly passed a motion on Monday morning with cross-community support which unequivocally condemned the rioting and the campaign of violent attacks on elected representatives and expressed its sympathy to all those who have been attacked or threatened.

The Government will continue to do all in its power to support the political leaders in Northern Ireland as they work to move beyond the current tensions. Great progress has been made in Northern Ireland towards becoming a society governed by the rule of law, and respect for equality and diversity. The violent events of the past week are a throwback to dark days in the past and will be condemned by everyone committed to true reconciliation.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

40. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if temporary promotions or acting-up allowances have not been a feature of the staffing arrangements for this EU Presidency, if he will confirm that his Department has been given sanction to make such arrangements detailing the number by grade involved, and the date sanction was sought and the date it was given. [56300/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): No temporary promotions or acting-up allowances have been granted to staff of my Department in connection with Ireland's forthcoming Presidency of the EU.

Bond Markets

41. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide detailed figures for the total sovereign debt issued by the State through the sale of bonds for each year 1990 to date in 2012; if he will break down the nature of each of these issuances by amount, interest rate, maturity period and ownership; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55703/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The information requested by the Deputy concerning debt issued through the sale of bonds each year since 1990 is presently being compiled by the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA). I hope the Deputy will appreciate however that given the volume of information sought and the length of time covered by the request, some additional time is required in order to ensure that the answer furnished is the most comprehensive and accurate that it can be. I will provide the Deputy with the information requested as soon as possible. I hope and trust that the Deputy understands the position.

General Government Debt

42. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide figures of the total interest payment made by the State on general Government debt for each year 1990 to date in 2012 by amount and as a percentage of total Government expenditure in each year. [55705/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The information requested by the Deputy for the years 1995 to 2012 is provided in the following table.

Year	Interest Payments €m	Interest % of Govt. Expenditure
1995	2,718	12.76%
1996	2,625	11.40%
1997	2,935	11.09%
1998	2,608	9.50%
1999	2,090	6.72%
2000	2,144	6.50%
2001	1,825	4.68%
2002	1,854	4.23%
2003	1,805	3.86%
2004	1,739	3.45%
2005	1,750	3.17%
2006	1,865	3.05%
2007	1,975	2.84%
2008	2,402	3.12%
2009	3,294	4.20%
2010	4,975	4.81%
2011	5,326	6.96%
2012 (f)	6,292	9.11%

Source: Eurostat, DOF

Interest and expenditure payments 1995-2011 were sourced from Eurostat. 2012 figures were obtained from Budget 2013 receipts and expenditures of general government tables.

Interest from 1990-1994 is given in the following table sourced from CSO historical National Accounts. Total Expenditure by General Government consistent with the definition of Expenditure used in the table above is not available for these years.

Year	Interest Payments
1990	2,144
1991	1,825
1992	1,854
1993	1,805
1994	1,739

Source: CSO

The following revised reply was received on 24 January 2013:

The information requested by the Deputy for the years 1995 to 2012 is provided in the following table.

Year	Interest Payments	Interest as % of Govt. Expenditure
1995	2,718	12.76%
1996	2,625	11.40%
1997	2,935	11.09%
1998	2,608	9.50%
1999	2,090	6.72%
2000	2,144	6.50%
2001	1,825	4.68%
2002	1,854	4.23%
2003	1,805	3.86%
2004	1,739	3.45%
2005	1,750	3.17%
2006	1,865	3.05%
2007	1,975	2.84%
2008	2,402	3.12%
2009	3,294	4.20%
2010	4,975	4.81%
2011	5,326	6.96%
2012f	6,292	9.11%

Source: Eurostat, DOF

Interest and expenditure payments 1995-2011 were sourced from Eurostat. 2012 figures were obtained from Budget 2013 receipts and expenditures of general government tables.

Interest from 1990-1994 is given in the following table sourced from CSO historical National Accounts. Total Expenditure by General Government consistent with the definition of Expenditure used in the table above is not available for these years.

Year	Interest Payments
1990	2,856
1991	2,881
1992	2,850
1993	2,888
1994	2,789

Source: CSO

Tax Yield

43. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Finance the average and median individual amount of increased taxation in comparison to pre-July 2013 levels that women on maternity benefit will pay after July 2013 in a full tax year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55760/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the statistical information used to estimate the yield from taxing maternity benefit in 2013 is not sufficiently detailed to provide a reliable basis for ascertaining the precise information requested by the Deputy. However, I would point out that as a result of Maternity Benefit becoming taxable for all claimants with effect from 1 July 2013, three possible tax outcomes could arise:

1. An individual will pay no income tax on their maternity benefit as their tax credits will be sufficient to reduce their tax liability to zero.
2. An individual will pay tax on their maternity benefit at the standard rate of tax.
3. An individual will pay tax on their maternity benefit at the higher rate of tax.

Different Cases	Maternity Benefit	Tax liability on Maternity Benefit
Case 1 No tax due	€6,812	Nil
Case 2 (taxed at 20%)	€6,812	€1,362
Case 3 (taxed at 41%)	€6,812	€2,793

Tax and Social Welfare Codes

44. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Finance the reason behind the changes in taxation regarding maternity benefit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55761/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The position is that it is a general principle of taxation that, as far as possible, income from all sources should be subject to taxation. In line with this principle, the majority of social welfare payments are reckonable as income for tax purposes. These include long-term payments such as the Disablement Benefit, the State Pension, Widows, Invalidity and Blind Pensions, Carers Allowance and the One Parent Family Payment as well as short term benefits such as Job Seekers Benefit. Treating these payments as income for tax purposes is essentially a matter of equity. Of course, the extent, if any, to which taxation actually arises in a given case depends on the level of income that a recipient has in a tax year. If there is no other income besides the social welfare payment, the basic personal credits in force can be expected in most cases to ensure that no tax arises on the social welfare income itself.

In addition, prior to the Budget day measure to treat maternity benefit as a taxable source of income, there were situations where an employee continued to be paid by her employer, in full, while on maternity leave and, based on her PRSI contributions, was entitled to Maternity Benefit from the Department of Social Protection and the previous non-taxation of such benefit resulted in an employee having a greater net take-home pay for the period of maternity benefit, than applied if she was at work.

The rates of Maternity Benefit are earnings-related and are set to reflect post-tax income. It was never intended that a mother gain financially by being on maternity leave. The previous system that allows for a gain, for some recipients, was anomalous and not sustainable given the current budgetary constraints, hence the need to introduce taxation measures.

Tax Rebates

45. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of money the Revenue repaid in tax refunds under maternity benefit rates in 2011 and to date in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55762/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The position is that maternity benefit paid by the Department of Social Protection is not regarded as income for the purposes of the Income Tax Acts for 2011 and 2012 and is disregarded for all tax purposes. The Deputy will be aware, however, that in last week’s Budget, I announced that maternity benefit will become fully taxable from 1 July 2013. As maternity benefit was fully disregarded for tax purposes in 2011 and 2012, no direct refunds of tax were made by Revenue in respect of maternity benefit in those years. The Deputy may, however, be referring to the situation in which an employee resumes work after a period of maternity leave and has unused tax credits and rate bands available. Where this situation arises and the employee resumes work during the same year the employer would make any refund due on the first pay-date following return to work. In cases where the employee does not resume work until after the end of the year, she can apply to her local Revenue office for a review of her tax liability for the year.

It is not possible to provide details of the amounts repaid, in 2011 or to date in 2012, to employees who have been on maternity leave as refunds arising from maternity benefit cannot be distinguished from refunds arising for other reasons.

Investor Compensation Company Limited

46. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will lay before the Houses of the Oireachtas the latest report and accounts for the Investor Compensation Company Limited; and if he will confirm the estimate of annual funding provided to this company in 2012 and 2013 by the State or its agencies including the Central Bank of Ireland. [55771/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Investor Compensation Company Limited (ICCL) is an independent company established in accordance with the Investor Compensation Act 1998. Under that Act there is no requirement on the ICCL to lay its annual report and accounts before the Houses of the Oireachtas. However, the ICCL publishes this information on its website and the Deputy may wish to read the 2012 Annual Report and Accounts of the ICCL at the following web address: http://www.investorcompensation.ie/ICCL_Report_12.pdf. There is no state funding of the Investor Compensation Company Limited (ICCL). The funds of the ICCL are generated solely from contributions from investment firms. The Deputy may wish to access the following web address for further details on the funding mechanisms of the ICCL: <http://www.investorcompensation.ie/funding.php>

Economic Growth Rate

47. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide an explanation for the difference between the forecast contraction of gross national product by the Central Bank of Ireland produced in October 2012 for the full year 2012 of 0.4% and the forecast in the medium term fiscal statement produced by his Department in November 2012 which forecast real GNP growing at 1.4% in 2012. [55772/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): My Department’s latest forecasts are set

out in the *Economic and Fiscal Outlook* which accompanied the Budget and which was based on the *Medium Term Fiscal Statement* (MTFS) published on 24th November. My Department is projecting real GNP growth of 1.4 per cent for this year. This projection is based inter alia on data for the first half of the year which show annual GNP growth of 2¼ per cent relative to the first half of the previous year.

The projection for GNP is in excess of that projected for GDP (0.9 per cent). As the Deputy will be aware, GNP equals GDP less net factor income from the rest of the world, the latter mainly relating to profit repatriation by multinational corporations. Net factor outflows recorded a sharp fall in the second quarter of 2012 boosting GNP growth relative to GDP. This development is also likely to contribute to a further improvement in the current account of the balance of payments, which is expected to record a surplus equivalent to 3.4 per cent of GDP this year.

I would stress that net factor income flows are very volatile on a quarterly basis as they can be heavily influenced by specific decisions made by individual firms which cannot be predicted with much certainty. In this context, the MTFS stresses that there is a wide degree of uncertainty around GNP growth and level forecasts both in the short- and medium-term.

Bond Markets

48. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance in respect of the €10 million of subordinated bondholders at what was Irish Life and Permanent, whose bonds fell due for payment on 4 December 2012 (details supplied) issued on 4 December 2000 denominated in euros, if he will confirm if these bonds were repaid; if so, when; if they were repaid in full; if so, the efforts that were made to secure discounts or haircuts on the sums paid. [55773/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware the subordinated bonds in issue are set out in the Annual Report each year. No such bond was listed in Page 151 of the 2011 Annual Report. I have been informed that the Deputy may be referring to the €10 million subordinated bond issued in 2000. As the bond was redeemed in 2008 no payment was made on 4 December 2012. Since the bond had already been redeemed no discounts or haircuts could have been applied to the nominal value.

Tax Yield

49. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the additional revenue expected to be raised in 2013 and in 2014 for all those tax measures on wealth contained in budget 2013 and if he will detail each of these measures with their individual projected yields for 2013 and 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55792/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): There are no specific tax measures relating to wealth. However I assume the Deputy is referring to Budget 2013 measures that impact on assets and investment income rather than earned income. Details of such measures are set out below.

Local Property Tax

The local property tax on residential properties will come into effect as of 1 July 2013. There will be a system of market value taxable bands for properties valued up to €1m. The tax rate will be 0.18% up to €1m. The tax liability is calculated by applying the tax rate to the mid-

point of the band. For residential properties valued over €1m banding will not be applicable. The rate will be 0.18% of actual market value for the first €1m with a rate of 0.25% applying to any excess value over €1m. A half-year of LPT will be payable in 2013 with a full year payable in subsequent years. The revenue expected to be raised in 2013 is €250m. The revenue expected to be raised in 2014 is €500m. However the Household charge will be abolished in 2013 and the Non Principal Private Residence charge (NPPR) will be abolished in 2014. Arrears of both will continue to be collected.

Deposit Interest Retention Tax and Exit Taxes on Life Assurance Policies and Investment Funds

The rate of retention tax that applies to deposit interest, together with the rates of exit tax that apply to life assurance policies and investment funds, are being increased by 3 percentage points and will now be 33% for payments made annually or more frequently and 36% for payments made less frequently than annually. The increased rates will apply to payments, including deemed payments, made on or after 1 January 2013. The revenue expected to be raised from the increase to DIRT is €47m for 2013 and is €60m for 2014. The revenue expected to be raised from the increase on exit taxes is €3m for 2013 and €4m for 2014.

Capital Gains Tax

The current rate of 30% is being increased to 33%. This increase applies in respect of disposals made after 5 December 2012. The yield is estimated at €47m in 2013 and €48m in 2014.

Capital Acquisitions Tax

The current rate of 30% is being increased to 33%. This increase applies in respect of gifts or inheritances taken after 5 December 2012. The measure is expected to yield €18m in 2013 and €27m in 2014. The current group tax free thresholds are being reduced by 10%. This reduction applies in respect of gifts or inheritances taken after 5 December 2012. This is expected to yield €10m in 2013 and €15m in 2014.

Tax Yield

50. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the revenue that would be raised for the Exchequer by increasing the rate of universal social charge by 3% on income earned in excess of €100,000 per annum for PAYE workers; and by increasing the rate by 3% for income received in excess of €100,000 for the self-employed. [55803/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that, assuming the enactment of changes announced in the 2013 Budget, the full year yield, estimated by reference to 2013 incomes, from increasing the rate of universal social charge by 3% on income earned in excess of €100,000 per annum by PAYE and self-employed income earners would be of the order of €71 million and €130 million respectively. The Universal Social Charge is an individualised charge and as such, the estimate of yield is based on individual incomes of more than €100,000. The estimated yield is based on confining the extension of the 3% rate to the portion of income which is in excess of €100,000, that is, the increase is not applied to the portion of total income earned up to €100,000.

The figure is an estimate from the Revenue tax-forecasting model using actual data for the year 2010 adjusted as necessary for income and employment trends in the interim. It is, therefore, provisional and likely to be revised.

Departmental Contracts

51. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide details of each service in his Department that is currently outsourced; the company that provides such services and the total cost for these services; the other services which may be outsourced in the future that are currently being run in his Department; the names of the companies, fees paid and nature of service for all contracts awarded from his Department excluding legal, accounting, PR or building refurbishment related services since March 2011. [55830/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In response to the Deputy's Question none of the work undertaken by officials of my Department is currently outsourced. In common with other Departments my Department undertakes functions in the areas of payroll, banking and financial management. These functions are currently being examined as part of an overall Civil Service approach to the feasibility of delivering these services on a shared service basis.

While this examination, which covers all Departments/Offices, is in progress, one of the options that may be evaluated as part of this work is the provision of these services on an out-sourcing basis. However, any decision to provide these services on an out-sourced basis will depend on the outcome of the current examinations which fall under the remit of my cabinet colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform Brendan Howlin.

Banking Sector Remuneration

52. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the practice of AIB of only paying wages paid into an AIB account; his views on whether this is an unfair practice that limits competition and if he has any powers to stop this practice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55884/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been informed by AIB that the statement made in the parliamentary question is incorrect. AIB's standard practice is to make payroll payments to the accounts of its employees regardless of which Bank they may be held in across the jurisdictions of Ireland and UK. The Bank does so on the basis of the instruction received from the employee who can change arrangements on request.

Social Insurance Rates

53. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Finance the names of the persons, trade or profession referred to by him during his budget speech on the removal of the blocked exemption from PRSI for income from a trade or profession; the reason these exemptions were in place up until now. [55895/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The position is as I stated in my Budget day speech on 6 December 2012, that Minister Burton will bring forward legislation to change PRSI contributions as follows:

- Where modified PRSI rate payers have income from a trade or profession, such income and any unearned income they have will be made subject to PRSI with effect from 1 January 2013.

- Unearned income for all employees will become subject to PRSI in 2014. This means that PRSI will be payable on all income generated from wealth such as rental income, investment

income, dividends and interest on deposit and savings.

Prior to Budget 2013, modified contributors paid PRSI on earnings derived from their employment but did not pay PRSI on any other stream of income e.g. from a trade or profession, or on unearned income (dividends etc.). As a result of Budget 2013, modified contributors who have income from a trade or profession will now be subject to PRSI (at a rate of 4%) on the profits from the trade or profession and also on any unearned income that they may have. Modified contributors are generally permanent and pensionable civil and public servants recruited before 6 April 1995 for example registered doctors and dentists employed in the civil service recruited prior to 6 April 1995. Trade or profession relates to any trade or profession within the meaning of section 18 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997.

As the Deputy will be aware, modified rate contributors are entitled to a state funded occupational pension based on their civil/public sector employment. Such contributors have been exempt from PRSI on other streams of earned income and unearned income on the basis that payment of PRSI on such income could give rise to additional entitlement to social insurance pensions. With the abolition of this exemption, PRSI will be charged on the earned and unearned income of modified rate contributors but will not give rise to entitlement to social insurance benefits based on the payment of this PRSI contribution.

NAMA Property Sales

54. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Finance the number of builders or developers on the books at the National Asset Management Agency; the number of these on salaries of €200,000 or more and the rationale behind paying these persons salaries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55896/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As at the 30th of June 2012 NAMA had assessed 800 Debtor Business Plans. NAMA advises me that it permits appropriate overheads where necessary for the preservation and enhancement of the value of property securing its loans. Overhead costs typically fall into two categories:

(1) Cost associated with the repair and maintenance of properties, insurance premia, local authority rates and professional fees. These are essential costs which would be incurred regardless of whether the assets are managed by debtors or receivers.

(2) Overhead costs also include allowances for the remuneration of debtors and the staff employed by the debtor to manage the assets. I am informed by NAMA that the alternative in these cases is to appoint receivers and that receiver costs tend to be substantially higher than debtor and associated staff salary costs.

As the Deputy may be aware, the NAMA Chief Executive advised the Dáil Committee of Public Accounts (PAC) in July and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform in recent weeks that the Agency has permitted 168 principals to retain salaries from rental and other income generated by cash producing assets. NAMA's analysis shows that 17% or 29 principals are authorised to retain income of up to €49,000; a further 43% or 73 principals are authorised to retain income of between €50,000 and €99,000; 23% or 38 principals are authorised to retain income of between €100,000 and €149,000; 15% or 25 principals are authorised to retain income of between €150,000 and €190,000; and 2% or 3 principals are authorised to retain income of €200,000. There are no cases in which principals have been authorised by NAMA to retain salaries in excess of €200,000.

Banking Sector Regulation

55. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance further to the announcement that Irish Bank Resolution Corporation is to sue a company (details supplied) for actions it took during its time as auditors of the bank in advance of its nationalisation, if he will detail if he was consulted in advance of this decision being made. [55914/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised that IBRC issued proceedings on 27 November 2012 against the company referred to. These proceedings relate to the role of the company as auditors to Anglo Irish Bank Plc. prior to nationalisation. As this matter is now the subject of litigation, it would be inappropriate for me to comment further at this time.

Mortgage Arrears Proposals

56. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 70 on 28 November 2012, if in view of the changed banking environment in Ireland since 1991 he intends to legislate to protect homeowners in the event a financial institution in Ireland does not comply with the voluntary code in the transfer of its residential mortgages; if he is concerned that the transfer of buy to let residential loans or owner occupier residential loans to a foreign capital provider runs the risk of that capital provider being more aggressive in repossessing people's primary residences than would be the case with a traditional bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55915/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As I stated, on 28 November 2012, in reply to a question regarding this matter, the 'Code of Practice on the Transfer of Mortgages' is a voluntary code. The Code was issued by the Central Bank in 1991 to financial institutions involved in the provision and transfer of mortgage credit. A copy of the Code and a list of regulated financial institutions are available at www.centralbank.ie. As the Code is voluntary in nature, it is not subject to the Central Bank's administrative sanctions procedure. The Code states that it applies to a loan secured by the mortgage on residential property. For the purposes of this Code, residential property is not limited to the principal private residence of the mortgagor. I have been advised by the Central Bank that, to date, the Bank has not received complaints regarding non compliance with this Code.

The Deputy mentions concerns regarding foreign capital providers being more aggressive than traditional banks in the repossession of primary residences. The Central Bank has advised me that, to date, no complaints have been made to the Bank in this regard. I have no proposals to recommend to Government that legislation affecting this Code be introduced.

Banking Sector Remuneration

57. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 70 of the 28 November 2012, the reason it is the case that the increase in pay for Irish Bank Resolution Corporation employees which according to the chairman of Anglo Irish Bank in his statement in the Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform on 31 October 2012, was for a limited number of persons is not readily available; if he will confirm if this information which covers evidently only a limited number of persons is now readily available; if the information about current and increased salaries is not available if he will confirm the total limited number of persons who received a pay increase as referred to by the chairman

of IBRC; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55916/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by IBRC that a large volume of information regarding remuneration structures across the Bank has been recently supplied as part of the Mercer Remuneration Review as commissioned by the Department of Finance. This information is currently being analysed as part of the review. I have committed to publishing the details underpinning the review in view of the public interest in the matter. The report will provide a comprehensive and professional analysis of remuneration structures and levels across the Covered Banks both now and before the onset of the banking crisis.

Banking Sector Remuneration

58. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 72 of 28 November 2012, if he will detail the cumulative salary cost to Irish Bank Resolution Corporation for the estimated 230 full-time people in IBRC working on the National Asset Management Agency portfolio for 2010, 2011 and projected for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55917/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been informed that it is not IBRC practice to separately breakdown the staffing cost element of its recharge to NAMA. As disclosed in the Bank's 2012 Interim Report a total of 256 people either work directly in or provide support to the Bank's NAMA unit. IBRC's 2012 Interim Report, which covers the period from January to June 2012, disclosed that NAMA were charged €15m in relation to the servicing of loans acquired from the Bank. The corresponding charge for IBRC for 2011 was €28m (includes former INBS for H2 2011) and for the former Anglo Irish Bank for 2010 was €7m. The figures quoted include all costs, including staff costs, incurred in servicing this loan portfolio.

NAMA Operations

59. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 73 of the 28 November 2012, if he will explain the reason the other State debt management and collection agency, National Asset Management Agency discloses the number of borrowers who are or are not cooperating with NAMA, also discloses rental income received in relation to repossessed collateral but IBRC the State's second debt management and collection agency does not; if he will consider instructing IBRC management to follow similar transparency guidelines as NAMA in these regards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55918/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): IBRC is an asset recovery bank authorised and licensed by the Central Bank of Ireland under the Central Bank Act 1971 as a credit institution and an insurance intermediary. In line with its banking peers IBRC's current practice is to disclose information pertaining to the business on set reporting dates, twice annually.

Banking Sector Regulation

60. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 75 on the 28 November 2012, if he will explain the reason it would be commercially sensitive for Bank of Ireland to reveal the sought after information when the chief executive of Allied Irish Banks in their presentation to the Oireachtas Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform on 31 October 2012 detailed that of the €3.5 billion target, €600 million was

specifically new lending and they did not call giving someone a new facility new lending; if he will provide a like for like figure from Bank of Ireland with respect to the €600 million detailed by AIB; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55919/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The FOI Acts give a definition of “commercially sensitive information” as “information whose release could prejudice the competitive position of the organisation”. The pillar banks regularly supply information to my Department and the Central Bank and much of this information is described by the banks as commercially sensitive. In some cases, the banks may be willing to put the information requested into the public domain notwithstanding that it may be commercially sensitive. To my knowledge, neither pillar bank has published information on new lending to new customers.

As the Deputy pointed out, the CEO of AIB told the Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform that €600 million of its lending was specifically new lending. This includes both brand new facilities and top ups/increases to existing facilities but only the additional element of top ups is included in the €600 million.

The CEO of Bank of Ireland told the same Committee that at least 97% of the €3.5 billion will be new or increased lending to existing or new customers. He also said that Bank of Ireland do not count restructured lending in their targets. Officials in my Department are continuing to engage with both banks and with the Central Bank and Credit Review Office on these numbers.

The lending targets imposed on the two pillar banks are only a part of the Government’s strategy to ensure that viable SMEs are able to access the credit they need. In my recent budget statement, I announced a ten point tax reform plan to help small businesses. I also announced the sanctioning of the appointment of additional reviewers in the Credit Review Office to ensure that SMEs appealing the banks’ decisions to decline credit receive a considered and timely response to their application. We are currently engaged in a public consultation process in order to see what more the Credit Review Office can do to ensure SMEs are getting the support on bank lending they require and I would welcome any proposals from the Deputy on this topic which can be submitted to croassessment@finance.gov.ie. I would strongly urge viable SMEs to appeal any refusals of credit to the Credit Review Office.

Banking Sector Regulation

61. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 76 and 77 of 28 November 2012, if he will explain the reason it is the case that PTSB, AIB and the National Asset Management Agency, three State owned institutions can provide the requested data but Irish Bank Resolution Corporation deems this material commercially sensitive; if he will consider in view of this fact instructing Irish Bank Resolution Corporation to provide this data or at the very least provide an explanation for what distinguishes IBRC’s commercially sensitive concerns relating to this data from the other State owned institutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55920/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been informed by IBRC that this information is commercially sensitive to its operation due to the Bank’s unique position in the Irish market place as an asset recovery bank in wind down and cannot be disclosed for this reason.

Property Taxation Application

62. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the estimated €250 million revenue from the introduction of a property tax in 2013 is gross or net of the abolition of the household charge; if the budget projections take account of the abolition of the household charge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55992/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As I indicated in the Budget, the Local Property Tax will commence with effect from 1 July 2013 for the second half of the year. There will accordingly be a half year's property charge in 2013. The estimated yield of €250 million from the Local Property Tax in 2013 is solely related to that tax – it is the “gross” yield, in terms of the question asked by the Deputy. However, the overall Budget projections take account of the cessation of the Household Charge. Allowance has been made for the expected impact of waivers and deferrals during the year. The full year yield in 2014 from the Local Property Tax is estimated at €500m.

Property Taxation Application

63. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if his projections for revenue from the property tax are based on the estimates for the number of properties in each value band as contained in the Thornhill report and specifically that 0.04% of houses are valued at more than €1 million; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55993/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The projections for revenue from the Local Property Tax (LPT) are based on a blended average of three approaches:

An approach based on the data used in the Thornhill report updated to include regional variation in property prices;

A similar approach based on data from the property price register; and

An approach based on the ESRI tax-benefit model ‘SWITCH’.

The property price register published by the Property Services Regulatory Authority (PRSA) was not available at the time of the Thornhill Group report. The estimation approach in the Thornhill report was used to illustrate indicative yields only, using unpublished Central Statistics Office (CSO) data based on mortgage transactions and the CSO's property price index. In making the Budget forecast this was updated to include regional variation in house prices and stock using data for county level housing stock, and regional variation in values from the CSO property price index. This results in a higher yield because of the higher weighting of higher value properties in counties with larger volumes of properties.

In Autumn 2012, a national register of property values was published for the first time based on Stamp Duty data from the Revenue Commissioners on actual transactions in the years 2010-2012. The register is updated on an on-going basis. The distribution from the register results in a higher incidence of higher value properties. Using the same indicative rates an analysis based entirely on the register would result in a much higher yield compared with the method above. However, caution has been applied to this approach given the low number of transactions, the high percentage of non-mortgage (i.e. cash transactions) and the possible bias in recent transactions towards transactions of higher quality housing stock which may not represent the generality of housing valuations in the State.

A final method of estimation is based on the ESRI tax-benefit model SWITCH. In the SWITCH model, data on house prices come from the self-assessed value provided by the respondents to the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) in 2010 with these values in-

dexed to adjust to 2012 prices. The SILC data are based on a sample of all private households, giving it the potential to provide a broader picture than one based on transactions or mortgages. The SWITCH model produces an estimate lower than the first method.

The overall projections for revenue are a blended average of the approaches described above.

As indicated in reply to Parliamentary Question No. 55934/12, answered on 11 December 2012, the Property Price Register shows a higher percentage of houses valued over €1m (c. 1% of the housing stock) than does the Thornhill Report. However, the overall yield estimate does not solely rely on this data source for the reasons given above, in particular because properties which changed hands in the last two years are not necessarily representative of the overall stock of residential properties in the State.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

64. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if temporary promotions or acting-up allowances have not been a feature of the staffing arrangements for this EU Presidency, if he will confirm that his Department has been given sanction to make such arrangements detailing the number by grade involved, and the date sanction was sought and the date it was given. [56299/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): My Department has not awarded temporary promotions or acting-up allowances to any staff member for Presidency related work.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

65. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a Student Universal Support Ireland grant will be allocated in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55715/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) that further documentation was received from the student referred to by the Deputy on 1st December 2012 and this documentation is currently awaiting review. The student will be notified directly of the outcome.

Home Tuition Scheme Provision

66. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding home tuition in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5; if same will be extended; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55728/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be aware that the purpose of the Home Tuition Scheme is to provide a compensatory educational service for children who, for a number of reasons such as chronic illness, are unable to attend school. The scheme was extended in recent years to facilitate tuition for children awaiting a suitable educational placement and also to provide early educational intervention for pre-school children with autism. Home Tuition is provided as an interim provision only and should not be regarded as an optional alternative to a place in school.

As home tuition takes place outside the school environment it is a general condition of the

scheme that the tuition provider where possible should be a qualified teacher who is registered with the Teaching Council. Where this is not possible, as in the case in question, approval may be given for a tutor with alternative qualifications to undertake the tuition. In such circumstances approval for nominated non qualified tutors is made on a temporary basis. In the case referred to by the Deputy the child is awaiting placement and the tuition has been approved until the end of the school year. However the tuition provider is not a qualified teacher and therefore her approval is temporary pending a qualified teacher being sourced. In the event that it remains problematic to source a qualified teacher my Department in consultation with the family in question will consider an extension of the current tutor arrangements.

Student Grant Scheme Delays

67. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when students (details supplied) in County Mayo may expect to have their higher education grant applications processed; the reason for the delay in making a decision in respect of their applications; if he will now expedite these applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55733/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): In relation to the first named candidate officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI that further supporting documentation was requested on 11th December 2012. When the documentation is returned to SUSI the student will be notified directly of the outcome. In relation to the second named candidate officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI that the application is currently under review and SUSI will notify the student directly of the outcome.

In relation to the third named candidate officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI, that the student has been requested to submit his Final Course Acceptance Form. When the document is returned to SUSI the student will be notified directly of the outcome. In relation to the fourth named candidate officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI, that further supporting documentation was requested on 20th November 2012. When the documentation is returned to SUSI the student will be notified directly of the outcome.

In relation to the fifth named candidate officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI that further supporting documentation was requested on 3rd December 2012. When the documentation is returned to SUSI the student will be notified directly of the outcome. In relation to the sixth named candidate officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI that the application of the student referred to by the Deputy has already been awarded a grant and an award letter issued on 10th December 2012.

In relation to the seventh named candidate officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI that the application of the student referred to by the Deputy has already been awarded a grant and an award letter issued on 6th December 2012. In relation to the eighth named candidate officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI that the application of the student referred to by the Deputy that a decision has now been made and a letter will issue shortly directly to the student outlining the position. In relation to the ninth named candidate officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI that no application from the student referred to by the Deputy has been received to date.

Disadvantaged Status

68. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will clarify the situation regarding a school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[55734/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Government has protected frontline services in schools to the greatest extent possible in the recent budget and there will no reduction in teacher numbers in primary schools and in free second level schools for the 2013/14 school year as a result of the budget. The DEIS scheme for disadvantaged schools is also fully protected with no overall changes to staffing levels or funding as a result of the budget. The school referred to by the Deputy continues to receive the DEIS grant which has not been affected by the Budget measures. In addition, the following resources continue to be provided:

- additional Book Grant over and above that paid to other schools
- additional staffing to implement more favourable class sizes
- allocation of administrative principals on lower enrolment than applies in primary schools generally
- access to School Completion and Home School Community Liaison
- access to School Meals provision
- access to literacy/numeracy supports such as reading recovery, maths recovery, first steps
- access to a range of professional development supports
- access to homework clubs and transfer programmes
- access to planning supports

I acknowledge that the various budget measures that have taken place in recent years have impacted on schools however my Department, like all other Government Departments, is operating within a budgetary programme that is designed to return the Government finances to a sustainable basis. All public servants are required to do more with less and teachers in our schools are not exempt from this requirement.

Student Grant Scheme Expenditure

69. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost to his Department if the income threshold for liability to pay the registration fee was increased by €10,000 and €20,000 respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55763/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): In order to estimate the potential savings arising from the 3% reduction in income thresholds for the 2013/14 academic year announced in the Budget, an analysis of the available information on the reckonable incomes of students currently in receipt of a grant was utilised.

However, in order to carry out the exercise requested by the Deputy, related to the estimation of the potential cost involved in increasing the income thresholds for payment of the Student Contribution under the Student Grant Scheme, information on those students whose reckonable income would be between €55,920 - €65,920 and €65,920 - €75,920 respectively would be required. In general terms we would need to know how many students would come from families whose income would come within the ranges put forward by the Deputy. The Deputy will appreciate that this information is not readily available to the Department.

Student Grant Scheme Payments

70. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he proposes to increase the funding for the student assistance fund, to €12 million per annum, in view of the high demand for this fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55764/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The objective of the Student Assistance Fund is to assist students, in a sensitive and compassionate manner, who might otherwise, due to their financial circumstances, be unable to continue their third level studies. The Fund is managed by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) on behalf of my Department and is administered by the individual third level institutions.

My Department has recently received an up to date report on the demand for the scheme from the HEA and this report is currently being considered.

Student Support Schemes Issues

71. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he intends to negotiate a low-interest loan scheme with credit unions that would be guaranteed by the State for postgraduate students; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55765/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I have no plans at present to negotiate a State-guaranteed loan scheme for postgraduate students with the credit unions.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

72. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Education and Skills following his budget announcement of 2013 and his Department's decision in relation to a teacher-student ratio of 1:19 in PLCs and colleges of further education, if his attention has been drawn to the fact that this decision will result in the loss of five teachers in Inchicore College of Further Education and approximately 50 to 55 teachers in the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee colleges, and impact in terms of the success rate in institutes of further education and the vocational education committees in providing access to those who have been long-term unemployed or even disadvantaged in their own education some 20 to 30 years ago and now seek an opportunity to retrain, re-educate and seek a second chance of career development; if he will examine this decision and its impact; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55776/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The pupil-teacher ratio for Post Leaving Cert (PLC) courses - which are mainly geared at school leavers and adults returning to education - is more favourable than the ratio in second level schools. The Government has decided to raise the pupil teacher ratio for PLC courses to the same level as that which applies in all free second-level schools - 19:1, from next September.

This decision is being made at a time when the Government has succeeded in protecting the class sizes in primary and free second-level schools for the coming year, ensuring that our limited resources are rightly focussed on the children in our education system.

While it would be preferable not to have to make any changes, it is hard to justify providing more generous pupil-teacher ratios to PLCs which educates adults, than second-level schools which cater for teenagers.

This change will reduce the number of teaching posts by 200 in PLC courses and may lead to some reduction in subject choices for students. The further education sector has expanded rapidly over the past few decades, developing many innovative programmes for its students. It is now up to the CEOs of each VEC to look at the resources available to them and to work with their Principals and staff to ensure they can continue to deliver programmes which closely meet the needs of both students and employers.

PLC providers have been enrolling significantly above their allocation of places in recent years, and I do not expect that this measure will impact on the number of PLC places available.

This necessary change will result in an estimated saving of €12mn in a full year. As the change will be introduced at the start of the academic year in September 2013 the savings from Sept to Dec 2013 will be €4mn. It is not possible to amend this measure without introducing additional Budget measures in education which would impact on other frontline services.

There will be no change to the number of PLC places sanctioned by my Department. City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC) currently have an allocation of 457 teaching posts. Their revised allocation will be 409 teaching posts.

These changes will not take effect until September 2013. In the meantime CDVEC will have an opportunity to plan for the reduced allocation across the schools/colleges under their remit.

Student Grant Scheme Delays

73. **Deputy Michael P. Kitt** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the overdue grant payment will be processed by Student Universal Support Ireland in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55777/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI, the new centralised grant awarding authority, that in the case of the student referred to by the Deputy a decision has now been made and a letter will issue directly to the student outlining the position in the coming days.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

74. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a third level grant will issue to a person (details supplied) in respect of their application to Student Universal Support Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55790/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The decision on eligibility for new student grant applications from the 2012/13 academic year is a matter for the new centralised grant awarding authority, SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland).

The student referred to by the Deputy had his application cancelled by SUSI as it was incomplete. On 7th November, 2012 a letter was issued by SUSI to the student informing him that his application was cancelled and advising him to reapply.

When re-applying for a student grant it will be necessary for the student to complete all sections of the application form.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

75. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills in view of announcements made in budget 2013, if he will give assurances to students in receipt of a maintenance and top-up grant for the academic year 2012-2013 under the category NA1-T, that second and subsequent instalments are guaranteed and have not been affected by budget 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55817/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As announced in the Budget, the income thresholds for student grants will be reduced by 3% for the 2013/14 academic year. This change will not affect Special Rate students, who are the most vulnerable category of students in receipt of grant support. This change will not affect grant entitlement for any students in the 2012/13 academic year.

Student Grant Scheme Delays

76. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) in County Mayo who has been awarded and paid the higher education grant has yet to receive the confirmation letter that they require for their college from Student Universal Support Ireland stating that their tuition fees are covered. [55822/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland that, in the case of the student referred to by the Deputy, a revised grant award letter issued on 11th December 2012 outlining the level of award including the decision in relation to her fees.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

77. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a top-up grant in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55824/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I understand that in the case of the student referred to by the Deputy, her student grant application was unsuccessful and that she appealed the decision to the appeals officer in SUSI and their original decision was upheld.

Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down, in writing, by SUSI, and remains of the view that SUSI has not interpreted the scheme correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board.

Departmental Contracts

78. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide details of each service in his Department that is currently outsourced; the company that provides such services and the total cost for these services; the other services which may be outsourced in the future that are currently being run in his Department; the names of the companies, fees paid and nature of service for all contracts awarded from his Department excluding legal, accounting, PR or building refurbishment related services since March 2011. [55828/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department procures a broad spectrum of goods, services and works in support of its role in administering the wider

education sector. These goods, services and works are not procured centrally. Rather they are procured by many different business units and, in accordance with national and European Union procurement procedures, the method of procurement varies depending on the value of the contracts in question. My Department does not centrally collate details of all contracts awarded.

The external delivery of services is one of the key areas highlighted in the Government's Public Service Reform Plan published in November 2011. Arising from a Government Decision in July, Departments are required, when evaluating any proposed new service, to include an appraisal of the costs and benefits of delivering the service using external providers. While, to date, no proposal for a new Department service has been considered under this provision, my Department is addressing the issue of external service delivery in the context of other initiatives underway across the Education sector, such as the use of aggregated procurement and shared services.

For the information of the Deputy my Department outsourced the provision of security services for the Marlborough Street complex in June 2011. This service was previously provided by the Office of Public Works. The annual cost of the contract is €273,454.

Psychological Services

79. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on correspondence regarding a psychological assessment in respect of a person (details supplied). [55839/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I can inform the Deputy that an official from my Department's National Educational Psychological Service has been in communication with the authorities in St. Pauls Secondary School in relation to the student referred to in his question, in order to assess the need and appropriateness of undertaking an educational psychological assessment. I shall revert to the Deputy when a determination is made in this connection.

Computerisation Programme Expenditure

80. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will make funding available for computer upgrading or replacement to a school (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55842/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As you will be aware, integrating ICT into teaching and learning in schools is a major priority for this Government. My Department's ICT in Schools programme sets out a clear agenda to be pursued in this regard, focusing on four main priorities: ICT Infrastructure in schools, the Schools Broadband Scheme, the development of teacher skills, and the provision of curriculum-relevant digital content.

On the infrastructure side, the Department has distributed more than €90m in ICT Infrastructure grants to schools nationwide since 2009, including allocations of €22,663.65 and €24,809.74 in 2010 to the school referred to by the Deputy. The priority under this grant scheme was the equipping of all classrooms with a digital projector, teaching computer and wireless keyboard and mouse. This ICT infrastructure grant schemes is now fully disbursed. There are no plans to introduce a new Infrastructure Grant Scheme in 2012 in view of budgetary pressures.

Work has commenced on the development of a new ICT Strategy for schools. The first step in this process is the completion of an ICT Infrastructure census in schools. Drafting of the census is currently taking place. The new ICT Strategy will address the new policy challenges and opportunities arising from major developments in curricular reform, digital publishing, digital content dissemination tools generally, cloud services, portable computing and student devices and the deployment of high speed broadband at post-primary level.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

81. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the options open to a person (details supplied) in County Cork in terms of financial assistance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55857/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I understand that in the case of the student referred to by the Deputy, his student grant application was unsuccessful and that she appealed the decision to the appeals officer in SUSI and their original decision was upheld.

Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down, in writing, by SUSI, and remains of the view that SUSI has not interpreted the scheme correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board.

Departmental Expenditure

82. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will outline the full list of cuts to the education budget in 2013 including cuts that were announced as part of budget 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55868/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Details of the savings measures for the Education and Skills Vote announced as part of Budget 2013 are available on my Department's website as follows: My Department's Budget Press Release and an accompanying listing of the main Budget features are at <http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2012-Press-Releases/PR2012-12-05.html>. This material also includes information regarding previous Budget measures that will impact in 2013.

Details of the 2013 Budget skeleton for the Education and Skills Vote, in both the new Performance Budgeting format and the old format, are at: <http://www.education.ie/en/publications/estimates>. In addition, 'The Department of Public Expenditure & Reform Expenditure Report 2013', which gives overall budget expenditure details, including details by individual Department, is available at: <http://per.gov.ie/estpubexp2013/>.

Back to Education Allowance Payments

83. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has had any discussions with the Department of Social Protection in relation to cuts to the back to education allowance and to the cost of education allowance and the impact these would have on young persons accessing further education and training; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55870/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Back to Education Al-

lowance and decisions in relation to funding for that scheme are a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Social Protection. Officials in my Department are in ongoing contact with officials in the Department of Social Protection in relation to issues affecting learners who are also clients of that Department.

Vocational Education Committees Staff

84. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the impact that the budget cuts to the vocational education committee sector will have on the delivery of services and how VECs will be able to maintain services at the same level in view of such significant cuts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55871/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I want to clarify for the Deputy that while the budget measure I announced in relation to VEC funding involves a reduction in the allocation for 2013 it is not a cut in real terms. This is because it takes account of the capacity of VECs to utilise cash balances on a once off basis. As I announced on budget day, VECs will in 2013 be required to manage their services from within the resources they will carryover and the new funding they will receive throughout 2013 which will be sufficient to maintain services. On average the reduction across the sector is €400,000 but this will vary depending on the carryover situation in each VEC. My Department will finalise the reduction for each VEC as part of the normal communication that takes place each year to settle individual budgets.

Student Grant Scheme Application Numbers

85. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of students that will be affected by the 3% reduction in the income threshold for student maintenance grants in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55872/12]

86. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the 3% reduction in the qualifying income threshold for grants will affect students currently in the system or only those entering the system next year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55873/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 85 and 86 together.

As announced in the Budget, the income thresholds for student grants will be reduced by 3% for the 2013/14 academic year. Between 1997 and 2009, the income limits were increased by 82%. The income limits have remained unchanged over the past three years due to the absence of data from the CSO, but data now indicates that average wages have fallen by 7.9% during that time. The changes to the income thresholds will apply to all students, not just new entrants and existing students will have to be re-assessed. Some 6,400 (8%) of the total estimated 80,000 grant recipients are expected to be affected by this change, and 220 of these, on the lowest level of grant support - 50% Student Contribution only, will lose their current entitlement altogether. This change will not affect Special Rate students, who are the most vulnerable category of students in receipt of grant support.

Further Education and Training Programmes Provision

87. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills how he can

justify a cut to training allowances for young persons in the vocational training opportunities scheme, Youthreach and FÁS at a time when he is meant to be encouraging persons to upskill and help them with the costs of accessing further education; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55874/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): Persons on Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), Youthreach and FAS programmes are paid a training allowance in lieu of their Department of Social Protection payment. Currently learners on these programmes who are in receipt of a Jobseekers allowance which is less than the maximum personal rate of €188 per week can have their training allowances increased to the maximum rate. This practise favoured those who were assessed as having means which lead to a reduction in their Jobseekers Allowance payment. The maxing up of the training allowance allowed them to receive the maximum of this payment while on a training course. Learners who did not have means and were already on the maximum of the Jobseekers Allowance could not benefit from this. This lead to an inequitable situation which has been addressed in Budget 2013. The new arrangement will come into force for all new entrants with effect from 1 January 2013. An exception to this will apply to those learners under 25 who will have their payment increased to a maximum of €160 per week. This is being introduced to continue providing an incentive to young people to take up further education and training places. Those learners on the VTOS, Youthreach and FÁS training schemes will continue to be eligible for Meal, Travel and Accommodation Allowances. They may also be eligible for the long term bonus if they are more than a year unemployed.

Further Education and Training Programmes Places

88. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of persons currently in receipt of training allowances under further education and training programmes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55875/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): Training allowances are paid to participants on FÁS, Youthreach and VTOS programmes. A small number of pro-rata training allowances are also paid to learners on the part-time Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) programme. As at the end of November 2012 there are approximately 15,000 persons on FÁS courses currently in receipt of a training allowance. Over the year as a whole 47,000 people received training allowances while on FAS courses. The latest available figures for Youthreach and VTOS come from the Learners Surveys of 31 December 2011. These show 4,211 VTOS learners and 3,159 Youthreach learners were in receipt of a training allowance. These figures are expected to be replicated this year. Additionally, in 2012, 227 learners on the BTEI programme received a training allowance.

School Staffing

89. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the loss of 75 teachers in small schools in 2013 will result in the closure of any of these schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55876/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The staffing arrangements in small primary schools are considerably more favourable than other medium to larger schools. The measure that was announced in Budget 2012 is focused on dealing with this cost premium, on a phased basis, through progressively increasing the pupil thresholds for the allocation of

classroom teachers in small primary schools. This budget measure relates to the number of teachers allocated to small primary schools. I want to make clear that the budget measure does not require any of these schools to close. In these current difficult budgetary times all public servants are being asked to do more with less and teachers in small schools cannot be exempt from this requirement.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

90. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) was refused a student maintenance grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55877/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland that, in the case of the student referred to by the Deputy, a fee grant has been awarded and an award letter issued on 4th December 2012. Under the Student Grant Scheme this student is not eligible for a maintenance grant as he is in receipt of the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA).

Student Grant Scheme Applications

91. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will expedite a student grant application in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55878/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland that, in the case of the student referred to by the Deputy, a grant has been awarded and an award letter issued on 11th December 2012.

Institutes of Technology Issues

92. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if Dundalk Institute of Technology will suffer any cuts to funding or resources as a result of spending cuts in budget 2013. [55892/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy will be aware the recurrent provision for the higher education sector has reduced as announced in Budget 2013. The recurrent provision made available for 2012 to the University and Institutes of Technology sectors was some €1.119 billion while the provision for 2013 is €1.036 billion which includes a 2% reduction in both core pay and non-pay as announced in Budget 2012. Taking into account increased income in respect of the Student Contribution, the 2013 provision represents a net reduction of 4.5%. In terms of funding resources, the reality of the economic situation presents challenges right across the public sector, including higher education. My Department allocates recurrent funding to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) for direct disbursement to the HEA institutions. The HEA allocates this grant to institutions for free fees and core grant funding and other specific earmarked initiatives. The HEA uses a Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM) to determine the amount of core funding (grant) provided to each institution. Therefore the funding provision for the institution referred to by the Deputy will be decided by the HEA taking account of the overall provision for 2013 and the funding allocation model for the sector.

Early Retirement Scheme

93. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a decision on early retirement will be made in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55894/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have made enquiries with the employer of the person to whom the Deputy refers and established the facts of the case. An application for ill health retirement pension benefit was made by the person to whom the Deputy refers and the application was processed by the employer in accordance with my Department's guidelines. The application for retirement pension benefit on grounds of permanent ill-health was not successful and the person to whom the Deputy refers was informed of this outcome and provided with details of the appeals process. The person to whom the Deputy refers subsequently appealed and in line with the procedures the person to whom the Deputy refers chose from the approved list provided the medical physician to carry out the medical assessment for the appeal. The appeal was unsuccessful and the person to whom the Deputy refers was notified of this by the employer on 26 June 2012 and informed that it is open to pension scheme members to make application for a determination in relation to a complaint or dispute through the Internal Disputes Resolution procedure operated by the Department of Education and Skills. The person referred to by the Deputy was also informed that scheme members should establish whether or not the complaint or dispute is one in respect of which the Pensions Ombudsman has jurisdiction to investigate under section 131 of the Pensions Act 1990 (No. 25 of 1990). My Department has not received an application for a determination through the Internal Disputes Resolution procedure from the person to whom the Deputy refers.

Appendix A

Information on Internal Disputes Resolution and Pension Ombudsman Office

It is open to you to make application for a determination in relation to a complaint or dispute through the Internal Disputes Resolution procedure operated by the Department of Education and Skills.

The procedure is as follows:

Application

An application shall be in writing, signed by or on behalf of the actual or potential beneficiary and shall contain the following details;

- the full name, address and date of birth of the actual or potential beneficiary
- the address to be used for service of documents in connection with the application
- a statement concerning the nature of the complaint or dispute with sufficient details to show why the actual or potential beneficiary is aggrieved
- such other information as the Minister may reasonably require

Determination

The Minister shall make a determination in relation to the application and notify in writing the complainant of the determination within 3 months from the date on which all the details specified above are received.

The determination shall include:

- a statement of the determination
- a reference to any legislation (other than the pension scheme), legal precedent, ruling of the Pensions Board, ruling or practice of the Revenue Commissioners or other material relied upon in making the Determination
- a reference to the provisions of the pension scheme relied upon in making the determination and, where a discretion has been exercised, a reference to those of its provisions by which such discretion is conferred
- a statement that the determination is not binding upon any person unless, upon or after he making of the determination, the person assents, in writing, to be bound by it, and
- a statement that the applicant should establish whether or not the complaint or dispute is one in respect of which the Pensions Ombudsman has jurisdiction to investigate under section 131 of the Pensions Act 1990 (No. 25 of 1990) and that further information can be found in an information booklet available from the Officer of the Pensions Ombudsman, The Pensions Ombudsman Office, 36, Upper Mount St., Dublin 2. Telephone (01)6471650 or www.pension-sombudsman.ie.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

94. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will respond to concerns that up to 40 plus teaching posts have been placed at risk as a result of the decision announced in budget 2013 to increase the pupil-teacher ratio to 19:2, 19:1 in post leaving certificate courses; if he will provide details of any findings by his Department carried out in advance of this decision. [55901/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): The pupil-teacher ratio for Post Leaving Cert (PLC) courses - which are mainly geared at school leavers and adults returning to education - is more favourable than the ratio in second level schools. The Government has decided to raise the pupil teacher ratio for PLC courses to the same level as that which applies in all free second-level schools - 19:1, from next September. This decision is being made at a time when the Government has succeeded in protecting the class sizes in primary and free second-level schools for the coming year, ensuring that our limited resources are rightly focussed on the children in our education system. While it would be preferable not to have to make any changes, it is hard to justify providing more generous pupil-teacher ratios to PLCs which educates adults, than second-level schools which cater for teenagers. This change will reduce the number of teaching posts by 200 in PLC courses and may lead to some reduction in subject choices for students. The further education sector has expanded rapidly over the past few decades, developing many innovative programmes for its students. It is now up to the CEOs of each VEC to look at the resources available to them and to work with their Principals and staff to ensure they can continue to deliver programmes which closely meet the needs of both students and employers. PLC providers have been enrolling significantly above their allocation of places in recent years, and I do not expect that this measure will impact on the number of PLC places available. This necessary change will result in an estimated saving of €12mn in a full year. As the change will be introduced at the start of the academic year in September 2013 the savings from Sept to Dec 2013 will be €4mn. It is not possible to amend this measure without introducing additional Budget measures in education which would impact on other frontline services. The overall number of approved PLC places

available nationwide will remain at 32,688.

Student Grant Scheme Expenditure

95. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of setting up the Student Universal Support Ireland third level grant administration body; the envisaged running costs up to the end of 2012; the envisaged cost for 2013; and the cost of administration of each of the existing third level education grant renewal bodies, vocational education committees and local authorities nationally for 2012. [55913/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The total set-up cost for Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) to end of December 2012 is €1.6m. The estimated operational cost to the end of December 2012 is €5.1m and the estimated operational cost for 2013 will be in the region of €5.3m. This will be kept under review. The Deputy will appreciate that staffing resources and staffing costs associated with the processing of student grant applications are met by local authorities and vocational education committees within their overall resources and a breakdown of this data is not readily available. It was however estimated in 2011 that the cost of administration of student grants by the other 66 grant awarding authorities was in the region of €10.5m.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

96. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if temporary promotions or acting-up allowances have not been a feature of the staffing arrangements for this EU Presidency, if he will confirm that his Department has been given sanction to make such arrangements detailing the number by grade involved, the date sanction was sought and the date it was given. [56297/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Government agreed on 20 December, 2011, that some additional resources would be required to carry out the responsibilities of the EU Presidency which included the provision of temporary acting-up allowances where staff are assigned to positions in the Presidency normally carried out by staff of a higher grade. Appropriate staffing required by this Department relates primarily to the need for Ireland to take forward a full agenda including negotiation of the next generation of the EU education and training programme, chairing of Council working groups addressing the negotiation of the technical regulations related to operationalising the next round of European Social Fund and European Globalisation Fund funding and the negotiations on the legislative proposal published by the Commission in late 2011 for the revision of Directive 2005/36 on the recognition of professional qualifications. One of the staffing measures taken by my Department was to assign acting-up allowances to three staff currently serving in the EU Policy Unit, International Section of my Department, to enhance the section's capacity to meet the challenges of the EU Presidency. The grades are set out as follows.

Administrative Officer assigned to acting Assistant Principal Officer

Executive Officer assigned to acting Higher Executive Officer; and

Staff Officer assigned to acting Executive Officer.

Sanction was sought from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for these assignments on 28th June, 2012, and granted on 12th July, 2012.

Departmental Contracts

97. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide details of each service in his Department that is currently outsourced; the company that provides such services and the total cost for these services; the other services which may be outsourced in the future that are currently being run in his Department; the names of the companies, fees paid and nature of service for all contracts awarded from his Department excluding legal, accounting, PR or building refurbishment related services since March 2011. [55834/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): In response to the Deputy's question the only service that is currently outsourced by my Department is the audit of the operations of the seven Civil Service crèches, to ensure that each crèche is being operated to a high standard and complies with all the necessary Childcare, HSE, and Environmental Health Regulations. In 2011 and 2012 these audits were carried out by a company called Canavan & Byrne and the fees paid in 2011 and 2012 were 8,046.50 and 8,179.50 respectively.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

98. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if temporary promotions or acting-up allowances have not been a feature of the staffing arrangements within his Department for this EU Presidency; if he will provide a list detailing the number by grade involved in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55882/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Temporary promotions or acting-up allowances have not been a feature of the staffing arrangements for the EU Presidency in my Department. While there are a number of officials at different grade levels working on Presidency related business there is no one currently working solely on Presidency related work.

An interdivisional group has been established within my Department to co-ordinate preparation for the 2013 Presidency of the Council of Ministers. The group is chaired by the EU/ North South Unit and includes those sections that will have a role in the Presidency.

Appointments to State Boards

99. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of executives of multinational companies who have offered to serve on State boards; the members of the Irish diaspora who have been appointed to State boards under the remit of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55800/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): In line with Government Policy, the process for making appointments to State Boards has, since mid-2011, been administered through the Public Appointments Service (PAS). PAS publicly invites Expressions of Interest from all interested parties, including those of the type referred to in the question. These applications are not categorised by reference to the occupational background of the applicants within their own organisation or on whether they form part of the Irish diaspora.

In parallel with the formal system administered through PAS, I occasionally receive expressions of interest directly from individuals for consideration for appointment to State Boards. While the occupational background of these individuals may not be explicit, I am not aware of any multinational executives having expressed interest through this channel. In all cases,

however, any such applicants have been referred to formal process administered the Public Appointments Service.

Departmental Contracts

100. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide details of each service in his Department that is currently outsourced; the company that provides such services and the total cost for these services; the other services which may be outsourced in the future that are currently being run in his Department; the names of the companies, fees paid and nature of service for all contracts awarded from his Department excluding legal, accounting, PR or building refurbishment related services since March 2011. [55832/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): In the time available since this Question was tabled, my Department has not been able to collect information in relation to the services listed by the Deputy.

Once the available information is collated, I will arrange for it to be forwarded to the Deputy.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

101. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if temporary promotions or acting-up allowances have not been a feature of the staffing arrangements for this EU Presidency, if he will confirm that his Department has been given sanction to make such arrangements detailing the number by grade involved, the date sanction was sought and the date it was given. [56302/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Sanction was sought from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) by my Department on 27th February 2012 to enhance staff deployment to assist with EU presidency preparations. Sanction was given to my Department on 24th July 2012 for temporary promotions (as set out in tabular format below) from within my Department's existing resources to assist my Department's Trade Policy and EU Sections in the co-ordination and management of key aspects of logistics and information gathering for policy development and synthesis for hosting of the EU Presidency.

This is in addition to eight officials of my Department on temporary secondment in their substantive grades, to the Department of Foreign Affairs to the Permanent Representations in Brussels and Geneva for the period of the EU presidency.

Temporary Assignments/Promotions within DJEI:

Substantive Grade	Temporary Promotion Grade	Number	Appointment from	Appointment to
CO	EO	2	3/12/12	26/7/13
EO	HEO	2	17/12/12	26/7/13

Insolvency Payments Scheme Applications

102. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a claim under the insolvency payment scheme will be paid in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55697/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A claim under the insolvency payment scheme was submitted on line on behalf of the person concerned on 25 October 2012 in respect of arrears of holiday pay and minimum notice. The Department is currently processing on line claims received in June 2012.

Every effort is being made to process claims as quickly as possible but, unfortunately, it is likely to be a number of months before the claim in question is finalised.

Questions Nos. 103 to 105, inclusive, withdrawn.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

106. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a decision has been made on a review of a domiciliary care allowance application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55722/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Applications for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) were received from the person concerned in respect of two children on the 17th August 2012. These applications were referred to one of the Department's Medical Assessors who found that the children were not medically eligible for DCA. Letters issued on the 3rd October 2012 refusing the allowance. The person concerned subsequently lodged an appeal against the decision to disallow her applications.

As part of the appeal process, the files have been forwarded to another of the Department's Medical Assessors for further consideration, including a review of any new information supplied. Upon receipt of the Medical Assessor's opinion, the case will be further examined and will be forwarded for consideration by the appeals office, if necessary.

Family Income Supplement Applications

107. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason for the delay in processing family income supplement applications in relation to claims that were lodged up to the end of October 2012 and the situation regarding processing claims lodged since that time; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55730/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The 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 as quickly as possible.

FIS claims, both new and renewal, received on or after the 5th November 2012 are currently being processed on receipt.

An in-depth business process improvement (BPI) project has recently been completed for the FIS scheme. This project focused on optimising output, improving customer service and the elimination of backlogs. Part of the project was a detailed examination of workloads and a full assessment of existing capacity within the area and what capacity is needed in order to process the volumes of claims, both new and renewal, being received on a weekly basis.

The outcome of this review is a detailed plan outlining the process required to manage both the continuous weekly intake and backlog claims clearance. This plan sees the current weekly new claim and renewal intake processed by one team, while the backlog is ring-fenced and a focused team assigned to this work with a clear plan for its elimination.

This team including additional temporary resources has been identified and is already assigned and working on the backlog claims. In order to reduce the time it will take to eliminate the backlog, some claims are being processed outside of Longford Social Welfare Services Office. This team is fully focussed on the elimination of the backlog of claims in the shortest possible timeframe, concentrating in the first instance on those claims which were previously in payment but where payment has expired and continuing on to first-time new claims. Within those categories, those waiting the longest will be processed first.

It is expected that the backlog will be fully eliminated by the end of March 2013. Claims which are approved by the backlog team will be backdated to the date of claim or the date of expiry of the previous claim, as appropriate, and all arrears due will be paid.

Question No. 108 withdrawn.

Family Income Supplement Eligibility

109. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 369 of 27 November 2012, regarding the report she is reviewing from the advisory group on tax and social welfare regarding cost-effective solutions as to how employment incentives can be implemented and better poverty outcomes achieved; if she will release the report to Dáil Éireann for consideration; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55755/12]

111. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she has held discussions with the Revenue Commissioners with the aim of taxing certain benefits paid to high earners; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55775/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 109 and 111 together.

In line with a commitment in the Programme for Government, I established an Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare last year, which has been asked to recommend cost-effective solutions as to how employment incentives can be improved and better poverty outcomes achieved, particularly child poverty outcomes. The Advisory Group prioritised the area of family and child income supports and has completed its work on this area. The Group has presented its report on this issue to me and I intend to publish this in the New Year.

Achieving a better design of the overall system of child income supports raises complex issues about the effectiveness and efficiency of the full range of income supports currently provided to families and their children. The issues involved in this area are quite complex and further consideration, informed by the Advisory Group's Report will be required in deciding how reform in this area might be progressed. Issues of taxation are primarily a matter for my colleague the Minister for Finance. While I have had discussions with the Revenue Commissioners about the operational implications of certain issues related to the interaction of the tax and social welfare system, the taxing of certain benefits paid to high earners would primarily be a policy matter for consideration with my cabinet colleagues.

Mortgage Arrears Rate

110. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to her announcement on 6 September 2012 when she launched a scheme giving certain mortgage bor-

rowers access to a consultation with an accountant worth up to €250, if she will confirm the number of borrowers who have to date partaken in this scheme. [55774/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Mortgage Arrears Information and Advice Service was established to provide the necessary supports to assist people in mortgage distress. The approach differentiates between mortgage information and mortgage advice. The first two elements involve the enhancement of the website www.keepingyourhome.ie and the establishment of a Mortgage Arrears Information Helpline within the Citizens Information Board (CIB), both of which focus on the provision of comprehensive mortgage arrears information in particular to people in arrears or pre-arrears.

The third element of the service is the provision of independent financial advice to mortgage holders who are being presented with long term mortgage resolution proposals by their lenders. This advice will be provided by a panel of accountants drawn from members of the main accountancy institutes in Ireland who have agreed to participate and support this independent service.

When a lender is proposing longer-term mortgage resolutions, the lender will advise the borrower to obtain independent financial advice on the proposed arrangement and, if the borrower wishes to avail of this option, that the lender will pay €250 to an accountant of the borrower's choosing for the provision of this advice. The independent financial advice will be available to all mortgage holders in respect of a mortgage secured on a primary residence who have been offered longterm forbearance options by their lenders.

An operating protocol for the provision of this advice has been agreed between the main accountancy bodies and the Irish Banking Federation. To date, some 2,700 accountants have confirmed to their accounting body that they wish to be part of the panel and their details are listed on a county by county basis on the website www.keepingyourhome.ie.

The Central Bank of Ireland is engaging with lenders on the reporting requirements in relation to this new service and statistical details on the number of borrowers who have availed of the financial advice service should be available in early 2013.

Question No. 111 answered with Question No. 109.

Disability Allowance Appeals

112. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite an appeal that was lodged last February in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55812/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned applied for disability allowance on 3 June 2011. The medical evidence supplied with her claim was referred to one of the department's medical assessors who was of the opinion, based on the information supplied, that the person was not medically suitable for disability allowance. The deciding officer accepted this opinion and the claim was refused and the person was notified in writing of this decision on 27 September 2011.

The person submitted further medical evidence which was referred to a second medical assessor who was also of the opinion that the person was not medically suitable for disability allowance. The deciding officer accepted this opinion and there was no change to the decision to refuse disability allowance.

The person appealed this decision to the Social Welfare Appeals Office and submitted further medical evidence in support of the appeal. As part of the appeals process, the department referred all the medical evidence received including the evidence received by the Appeals office to a third medical assessor for review. When the deciding officer receives the opinion of the medical assessor a decision will be made and the appeal will be referred, if necessary, to the Social Welfare Appeals Office for determination.

Departmental Contracts

113. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide details of each service in her Department that is currently outsourced; the company that provides such services and the total cost for these services; the other services which may be outsourced in the future that are currently being run in her Department; the names of the companies, fees paid and nature of service for all contracts awarded from her Department excluding legal, accounting, PR or building refurbishment related services since March 2011. [55835/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): It is not possible to provide the information sought by the Deputy in the time available. The details requested are currently being compiled and a response will be issued directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Respite Care Services

114. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will stop the cut to the respite care grant as it is affecting the marginalised such as families with a member with a disability. [55836/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Government had to make very difficult decisions in the course of Budget 2013. In order to protect core weekly payments which people receive such as pensions, disability and carer's allowance we had to look very carefully at other additional payments such as the respite care grant.

The respite care grant is paid to approximately 70,000 people each year, with some 5,000 people in receipt of more than one grant as they care for more than one person. 52,000 people are in receipt of the carer's allowance and 26,000 in receipt of the domiciliary care allowance (DCA). There are also 1,300 in receipt of carer's benefit. They receive the respite care grant automatically in June. Persons who are in receipt of both DCA and carer's allowance receive one respite payment. 5,000 carers not in receipt of a carer's payment receive the grant.

It is important to note that the revised rate of the respite care grant of €1,375 will still be more than what it was in 2006 when the rate was €1,200. The estimated expenditure on carers in 2012 is over €771 million: €509 million on carer's allowance, €24 million on carer's benefit, €135 million on the respite care grant and €103 million on domiciliary care allowance (DCA). This represents an increase of almost €20 million on expenditure in 2011. Carer's also receive a free travel pass at an annual cost of €6 million and carers who reside with the care recipient are eligible for the household benefits package at an annual cost of approximately €30 million.

Carers receive significant income supports from my Department, among the highest rates of income support in Europe. A person getting certain qualifying payments and also providing full-time care and attention to another person can keep their main social welfare payment and get a half-rate carer's allowance as well. The half-rate carer's allowance was protected in Budget 2013.

The respite care grant is available to all full-time carers regardless of their means while the income disregard and means test for carers allowance is the most generous in the social welfare system. A couple under 66 with two children, earning a joint annual income of up to €35,400 can qualify for the maximum rate of carer's allowance while a couple earning €59,300 will still qualify for the minimum rate. Carers are entitled to an extra half-rate carer's allowance if they care for more than one person and a respite care grant for each care recipient.

I am aware the reduction in the respite care grant has implications for carers and their families; however, given the enormous pressures on the expenditure of my Department, I am not in a position to reverse this decision.

National Internship Scheme Numbers

115. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Social Protection the arrangements that apply in relation to persons working on the JobBridge scheme (details supplied) in County Galway in terms of maternity benefit as confusion appears to reign as to whether it is a matter for JobBridge or her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55851/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The legal status of an intern is provided for in legislation.

An intern is a person who is availing of an internship under the National Internship Scheme. They are not an employee of their respective Host Organisation as stated in Section 16 of the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2011.

A person who is engaged by another person to carry out work or perform any duty or service pursuant to a placement under the National Internship Scheme shall, for the purposes of any enactment or rule of law (other than the Tax Acts and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005), be deemed not to be an employee of the other person or to carry out such work or perform such duties pursuant to a contract of service.

As such, an intern does not accrue an entitlement to maternity benefit during the period of their internship as they are not an employee of their respective Host Organisation and no PRSI contributions are made during this period.

If an individual has any queries in respect of their specific entitlements to maternity benefit then they should contact the Maternity Benefits section in respect of same. In respect of this case, I wish to advise the Deputy that I have requested that the Maternity Benefits section to make contact with Ms Brien in respect of her specific entitlements.

Back to Education Allowance Payments

116. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection if the parents of a person who is in receipt of the back to education allowance and who lives at home will be automatically disqualified from the household benefit package. [55856/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The household benefits package (HHB) includes free electricity or gas allowance, telephone allowance and free TV licence.

The package is available to all those aged 70 or over regardless of means and household composition and those in receipt of carer's allowance who are living with the person they are

caring for.

Those between 66 and 70 must be in receipt of a qualifying payment from the Department or satisfy a means test and live alone or only with certain exempted persons. Those aged under 66 must be in receipt of a qualifying payment and live alone or with exempted persons.

An exempted person includes dependent children under age 18 or under age 22 if in full-time education or a person who would qualify for the allowance in his or her own right.

Being in receipt of a back to education allowance will not automatically disqualify someone's parents from receiving household benefits. Without knowing the full circumstances such as the age of the parents, the age of the person receiving the back to education allowance and any primary payment the person may be receiving, it is not possible to say if this couple would qualify for a household benefits package. If the Deputy has a particular case in mind, I will be happy to have the matter examined.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

117. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an invalidity pension appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55879/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 11th July 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 6th December 2012 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

Question No. 118 withdrawn.

Respite Care Services

119. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of recipients of the respite care grant in County Louth. [55890/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The respite care grant (RCG) is an annual payment made automatically to people in receipt of carer's allowance, carer's benefit, or domiciliary care allowance from my Department. Other people who are not in receipt of one of these payments, but who are providing full time care and attention can also apply for the grant via separate application. The RCG is paid automatically on the 1st Thursday in June of the year in question and is paid by a number of sections in my Department, via various computer platforms. As a result, not all of the information requested by the Deputy is available. Details of the number of carers, broken down by scheme are shown in the table. However, the information requested in relation to customers resident in individual counties is not available on a county basis.

Table 1 - Respite Care Grant Number of Carers (2012)

Year	Carer's Allowance	Carer's Benefit	Domiciliary Care Allowance	Standalone RCG
2012	37,853 (to June 2012)	1,210 (to date)	24,245 (to June 2012)	4,149 (to date)

Community Employment Schemes Places

120. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Social Protection how the additional 2,000 community employment schemes announced in budget 2013 will be allocated. [55891/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The allocation of all these places will be in line with the overall Government strategy set out in Pathways to Work. The objective will be to ensure an equitable of places to where they are most needed taking account of the overall capacity of local sponsors to provide quality places to those on the live register.

The allocation will also take account of the necessity to secure value for money through the implementation of priorities and recommendations set out in the CE Financial Review published by my Department in October 2012.

Mortgage Interest Supplement Appeals

121. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) in County Limerick was refused an oral hearing on their application for mortgage interest supplement; if her Department took all of the family's circumstances into consideration when arriving at a decision; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55900/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer having fully considered all the available evidence disallowed the appeal of the person concerned by way of summary decision. The person concerned was notified of the Appeals Officer's decision on 28th August 2012.

The legislation provides that where an Appeals Officer is of the opinion that a case is of such a nature that it can properly be determined without a hearing, he or she may determine the appeal summarily. This course of action was taken in this case as, in the opinion of the Appeals Officer, an oral hearing was not warranted.

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

Jobseeker's Benefit Applications

122. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Social Protection if, in view of the recently announced reduction in jobseeker's benefit to nine months, she will consider a corresponding reduction in the eligibility period for entry to community employment scheme from 12 months to 9 months to allow all those on the live register equal access to such an important scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55909/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Community Employment (CE) is an active labour market programme designed to provide eligible long-term unemployed peo-

ple and other disadvantaged persons (including those with a disability) with an opportunity to engage in useful work within their communities on a temporary, fixed term basis. CE helps long-term unemployed people to re-enter the active workforce by breaking their experience of unemployment through a return to a work routine and to assist them to enhance/develop both their technical and personal skills.

My Department is currently reviewing the impact of this change on the eligibility of those on Jobs Benefit (JB) to access Community Employment. However, in the meantime, it should be noted that persons with 9 months Jobseekers Benefit and 3 months on another qualifying payment (i.e. JA, OPFA, etc.) are still eligible to participate on Community Employment.

In addition to Community Employment, there are a number of training and work experience opportunities available to clients in receipt of JB. JB clients should contact their local DSP Employment Service/Intreo office or the DSP website for further details.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

123. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an invalidity pension appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55922/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 2nd October 2012. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred in to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

Respite Care Services

124. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons in County Tipperary in receipt of the respite care grant for the years 2010, 2011 and 2012 respectively. [55926/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The respite care grant (RCG) is an annual payment made automatically to people in receipt of carer's allowance, carer's benefit, or domiciliary care allowance from my Department. Other people who are not in receipt of one of these payments, but who are providing full time care and attention can also apply for the grant via separate application. The RCG is paid automatically on the 1st Thursday in June of the years in question and is paid by a number of sections in my Department, via various computer platforms. As a result, not all of the information requested by the Deputy is available. Details of the number of carers, broken down by scheme are shown in the table below. However, the information requested in relation to customers resident in individual counties is not available on a county basis.

Table 1 - Respite Care Grant Number of Carers (2010 to date)

Questions - Written Answers

Year	Carer's Allowance	Carer's Benefit	Domiciliary Care Allowance	Standalone RCG
2010	38,260	1,697	23,110	5,184
2011	39,601	1,223	23,710	4,629
2012	37,853 (to June 2012)	1,210 (to date)	24,245 (to June 2012)	4,149 (to date)

Social Welfare Appeals Status

125. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Social Protection the timeframe for the processing of an appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath and the reason for the delay to date. [55933/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer having fully considered all the available evidence allowed the appeal of the person concerned by way of summary decision. The person concerned was notified of the Appeals Officer's decision on 11th December 2012.

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

Invalidity Pension Appeals

126. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an appeal for invalidity pension in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55941/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer on 28th November 2012, who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

Question No. 127 withdrawn

Social Welfare Code Issues

128. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if PRSI was paid out of the early retirement farm scheme, whether this contributes to a social welfare entitlement. [55952/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Under social welfare legislation, certain payments received by way of pension are excluded from income on which PRSI is charged. As payments received under the Early Retirement Scheme are regarded as payments received by way of pension, they are not subject to PRSI and therefore do not contribute to a social welfare entitlement.

Turbary Rights

129. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Social Protection if the money provided to turf cutters under the compensation scheme for those affected by the cessation of turf cutting on raised bog special areas of conservation is assessed as means for the awarding of means tested payments such as farm assist and jobseeker's allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55953/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Payments received by persons under European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 in compensation for loss suffered by the depreciation of an interest in the land to which he or she is entitled (turf cutting compensation scheme) are not assessable as cash income for the purposes of means tested, social assistance payments.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

130. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection if temporary promotions or acting-up allowances have been a feature of the staffing arrangements for this EU Presidency, if she will confirm that her Department has been given sanction to make such arrangements, detailing the number by grade involved, the date sanction was sought and the date it was given. [56304/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department of Social Protection has not sought sanction for any promotions or acting-up allowances in respect of staffing arrangements associated with the upcoming EU presidency.

Departmental Contracts

131. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide details of each service in his Department that is currently outsourced; the company that provides such services and the total cost for these services; the other services which may be outsourced in the future that are currently being run in his Department; the names of the companies, fees paid and nature of service for all contracts awarded from his Department excluding legal, accounting, PR or building refurbishment related services since March 2011 [55826/12]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): While certain work is contracted out from time to time in cases where particular expertise is required, in particular technical advice, engineering services and some architectural services, there has been no case of outsourcing responsibility for core public service provision to the private sector since my Department was established on 2 June 2011. The Department is committed to examining further options and alternative delivery mechanisms where appropriate in order to achieve cost savings and enhance accessibility of specific technical skills.

Turbary Rights

132. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will estimate for 2012 the number of turf cutters that qualified for the compensation scheme for those affected by the cessation of turf cutting on raised bog special areas of conservation; the number who did not accept the payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55997/12]

133. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount spent in 2012 on payments under the compensation scheme for those affected by the cessation of turf cutting on raised bog special areas of conservation; if he will provide a breakdown of the total sums paid by county and for each county list the average, highest and lowest payment of total payments and if payments were for 2011 and 2012 or just for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55998/12]

134. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of turf cutters in 2012 that qualified for the additional once off payment of €500 under the compensation scheme for those affected by the cessation of turf cutting on raised bog special areas of conservation; the total awarded to date in 2012; if he will provide a breakdown of the number awarded and total amount by county; the amount budgeted in total for this once off payment and the number of turf cutters refused the payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55999/12]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 132, 133 and 134 together.

Details are set out in the following table, on a bog by bog basis, of the number of applications under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme received by my Department, the number of applicants opting for financial compensation, the number of applicants expressing an interest in relocation to non-designated bogs, and the number of payments made. Out of the 2,544 applications received in my Department under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme, 1,784 applicants have opted for financial compensation and 760 applicants have expressed an interest in relocation.

To date, a total of 2,105 payments and 180 turf deliveries have been made to applicants at a total cost of €3,409,000. A cost of €51,000 was incurred in 2011 with the remaining cost of €3,358,000 being incurred in 2012.

The scheme is comprised of a payment of €1,500 per year, index linked, for 15 years or, where feasible, relocation of turf cutters to non-designated bogs where they can continue to cut turf.

Payments and turf deliveries have been made on the basis that applicants have indicated in their application forms that they fulfil all the qualifying criteria of the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme. My Department has been checking, and will be continuing to check, that all of the qualifying criteria of the scheme have been met in each case.

I am advised that at this stage one applicant has been informed that he does not fulfil the qualifying criteria. He has requested a Departmental review of the decision. Arrangements are also being considered by the Peatlands Council to put in place an appeals system where applicants wish to appeal the outcome of a review by the Department. While it may be anticipated that there will be further instances where applicants do not qualify, priority has been given to processing payments to those who clearly appear to meet the qualifying criteria on the basis of the information provided in their application forms.

3 applicants have been rejected because the areas on which they have been cutting turf are not within a raised bog special area of conservation.

An additional once-off payment of €500 for qualifying turf cutters will be provided where legal agreements are signed with me, as Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. To date, no such payments have been made as my Department has been giving priority to processing the €1,500 per annum payments and requests for the delivery of turf. Based on the number of ap-

plicants who have received compensation under the scheme to date, it is estimated that the total cost of the once-off payment will be of the order of €900,000.

Sites nominated for designation between 1997 and 1999

Site Code	Name	County	No. of Applications Received	No. Opting for Financial Compensation	No. Expressing an interest in Relocation	Payments made in respect of Year 1 of 15 -2011	Payments made in respect of Year 2 of 15 - 2012
000006	Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally)	Cavan	45	37	8	3	3
000231	Barroughter Bog	Galway	58	36	22	43	32
000248	Cloonmoylan Bog	Galway	74	66	8	53	49
000285	Kilsallagh Bog	Galway	32	23	9	22	28
000296	Lisnageeragh Bog and Ballinstack Turlough	Galway	20	11	9	7	10
000297	Lough Corrib	Galway	83	75	8	58	69
000301	Lough Lurgeen Bog/ Glenamaddy Turlough	Galway	29	20	9	13	15
000326	Shankill West Bog	Galway	9	5	4	5	7
000382	Sheheree (Ardagh) Bog	Kerry	1	1	0	0	0
000391	Ballynafagh Bog	Kildare	56	27	29	23	24
000497	Flughany Bog	Mayo/Sligo	17	14	3	11	7
000566	All Saints Bog and Esker	Offaly	6	4	2	0	0
000572	Clara Bog	Offaly	107	50	57	63	35
000575	Ferbane Bog	Offaly	4	1	3	0	0
000580	Mongan Bog	Offaly	5	4	1	1	1
000581	Moyclare Bog	Offaly	25	4	21	22	13
000582	Raheenmore Bog	Offaly	0	0	0	0	0
000585	Sharavogue Bog	Offaly	2	2	0	0	0
000592	Bellanagare Bog	Roscommon	174	130	44	112	98
000597	Carrowbehy/Caher Bog	Roscommon	3	3	0	1	1
000600	Cloonchambers Bog	Roscommon	26	21	5	10	5
000604	Derrinea Bog	Roscommon	1	1	0	0	0
000614	Cloonshanville Bog	Roscommon	7	7	0	2	2
000641	Ballyduff/Clonfinane Bog	Tipperary	2	2	0	2	2
000647	Kilcarren-Firville Bog	Tipperary	25	22	3	15	15
000679	Garriskil Bog	Westmeath	0	0	0	0	0
001242	Carrownagappul Bog	Galway	129	59	70	66	66
001818	Lough Forbes Complex	Roscommon	13	8	5	2	0
002110	Corliskea/Trien/ Cloonfelliv Bog	Galway/ Roscommon	76	63	13	40	56
	Totals		1029	696	333	574	538

Sites nominated for designation in 2002

Site Code	Name	County	No. of Applications Received	No. Opting for Financial Compensation	No. Expressing an interest in Relocation	Payments made in respect of Year 1 of 15 - 2012
000440	Lough Ree	Roscommon/Longford/Westmeath	285	194	91	195
000595	Callow Bog	Roscommon	91	73	18	70
002298	River Moy	Mayo/Roscommon/Sligo	68	59	9	26
002331	Mouds Bog	Kildare	94	55	39	47
002332	Coolrain Bog	Laois	54	45	9	40
002333	Knockacoller Bog	Laois	26	21	5	6
002336	Carn Park Bog	Westmeath	59	26	33	44
002337	Crosswood Bog	Westmeath	69	37	32	44
002338	Drumalough Bog	Roscommon	19	18	1	12
002339	Ballynamona Bog and Corkip Lough	Roscommon	60	30	30	38
002340	Moneybeg and Clareisland Bogs	Meath/Westmeath	84	72	12	70
002341	Ardagillion Bog	Longford	40	29	11	21
002342	Mount Hevey Bog	Meath/Westmeath	66	28	38	22
002343	Tullaher Lough and Bog	Clare	191	164	27	151
002346	Brown Bog	Longford	6	6	0	1
002347	Camderry Bog	Galway	14	6	8	9
002348	Clooneen Bog	Longford	11	9	2	7
002349	Corbo Bog	Roscommon	67	39	28	38
002350	Curraghlahanagh Bog	Galway	46	27	19	26
002351	Moanveanlagh Bog	Kerry	27	24	3	22
002352	Monivea Bog	Galway	42	38	4	25
002353	Redwood Bog	Tipperary	76	70	6	63
002354	Tullaghanrock Bog	Roscommon	1	1	0	0
002356	Ardgraique Bog	Galway	19	17	2	16
	Totals		1515	1088	427	993

Departmental Staff Remuneration

135. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if temporary promotions or acting-up allowances have been a feature of the staffing arrangements for this EU Presidency, if he will confirm that his Department has been given sanction to make such arrangements detailing the number by grade involved, the date sanction was sought and the date it was given. [56293/12]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I can confirm to the Deputy that temporary promotions or acting-up allowances are not a feature of the staffing arrangements within my Department for the forthcoming EU Presidency.

Departmental Contracts

136. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide details of each service in his Department that is currently outsourced; the company that provides such services and the total cost for these services; the other services which may be outsourced in the future that are currently being run in his Department; the names of the companies, fees paid and nature of service for all contracts awarded from his Department excluding legal, accounting, PR or building refurbishment related services since March 2011 [55827/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): It has not been possible to compile the information sought by the Deputy in the time available. I will write to him with the information he has sought as a matter of urgency.

Postal Services

137. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if An Post's decision to tender for a national post code system presents potential conflict of interest issues in view of its stated opposition to the system as a result of the benefits which could be accrued to private commercial marketing companies to the detriment of An Post; if he is concerned that the necessary incentives for a speedy rollout of the national post code system which has been promised for seven years may not be present if An Post were to get the contract, in view of the competitive damage that will inevitably be caused to An Post from a roll out of this system; if he will confirm whether as part of the tendering process for the roll out of the new national post code system it includes assessments of whether any potential conflict of interests could arise similar to National Assets Management Agency tenders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55844/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The procurement process for a national postcode system is currently under way. This process is being managed by my Department on a ring fenced basis. The pre-qualification questionnaire issued on the e-tenders website www.etenders.gov.ie on 17 January 2011 for the appointment of a postcode management licence holder. This offered the opportunity for all potential suppliers at that time to apply for the contract and asked for a declaration of any relevant conflicts which might impinge on the process.

I have no indication that the issues referred to by the Deputy are relevant in any way to the conduct of the current procurement process.

Hydraulic Fracturing Policy

138. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will consider a public consultation in conjunction with the more detailed research study to be commissioned by the Environmental Protection Agency on the environmental implications of hydraulic fracturing later this year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55881/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd): The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has confirmed that the terms of reference for the second and more detailed EPA research on the environmental implications of hydraulic fracturing as a means of extracting natural gas from underground reservoirs are currently being drawn up by a steering group, which includes representatives from amongst others, the EPA and my Department. In line with the EPA's policy on openness and

transparency and in order to receive comments from stakeholders, the EPA has confirmed that it will launch a public consultation on this draft document and interested parties will be invited to submit written comments in this regard.

It is anticipated that following the engagement of the relevant experts, the study will take in excess of twelve months to complete, leading to a potential publication date in 2014.

Cyber Security Policy

139. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the measures he is taking to review the use of social networking sites here, particularly for young persons most at risk from cyberbullying; the action that can be taken to restrict and reduce their impact, especially on young persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55939/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The Office of Internet Safety has been established by the Government to take lead responsibility for Internet safety in Ireland particularly as it relates to children. This Office operates under the aegis of the Minister for Justice and Equality. The Office also aims at building linkages and cohesion between all Departments and Agencies to ensure that the State provides the best possible protection for the community and promotes Internet safety.

I also understand the Department of Education and Skills have recently set up an anti-bullying working group to address this issue and to make recommendations on how to tackle the challenges associated with cyber bullying.

My Department has developed a website called www.makeITsecure.ie to promote best practice in relation to many issues arising from the use of the Internet. This campaign, which was developed with industry, does provide some information in relation to use of ICT by children.

While my Department does not lead on the specific issue of cyber bullying, it is available to assist in any initiative taken forward by the other Departments and continues to engage across all Departments in issues relating to the use of the Internet and ICT generally.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

140. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if temporary promotions or acting-up allowances have been a feature of the staffing arrangements for this EU Presidency, if he will confirm that his Department has been given sanction to make such arrangements detailing the number by grade involved, and the date sanction was sought and the date it was given. [56295/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): My Department has two Clerical Officers and two Executive Officers on temporary higher duties allowances, covering vacancies that exist at Executive Officer and Higher Executive Officer level respectively, for the duration of the EU Presidency. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform issued a sanction letter on 4 May 2012 following a request from my Department on 12 April 2012.

Foreshore Licences Applications

141. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 444 of 17 July 2012, the position regarding a foreshore licence application by Waterford County Council to enable repairs to be carried out to a pier (details supplied) in County Waterford; if he will ensure that there are no further delays; and when he expects this licence will issue. [55716/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): A draft Foreshore lease in respect of this application has recently issued from the Chief State Solicitor's Office to the applicant's legal advisor. A response is awaited.

Road Improvement Schemes

142. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position regarding a special road improvement grant (details supplied) in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55725/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Taghmon Sewerage Scheme is included in my Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2010 – 2013 as a scheme to start construction during the life of the programme. The Scheme is being carried out under the Serviced Land Initiative (SLI) Programme with 40% of the cost of the scheme being funded by my Department. Road reinstatement for the Taghmon Scheme will be funded as part of the SLI Scheme. Road resurfacing from Taghmon to Larkins Cross is not related to the Taghmon SLI Scheme. The provision of funding under the Road Restoration Grants Programme is a matter for the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

Regeneration Funding

143. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to make cuts to the funding for the Ballymun regeneration project, Dublin and any other cuts he plans for other regeneration projects. [55779/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Earlier this year I announced capital funding of € 51 million over the 3-year period 2012-2014 for the substantial completion of Ballymun regeneration project. I have no proposals to reduce the allocation for Ballymun.

In the case of the other projects being advanced under the National Regeneration Programme, capital allocations for 2013 will be determined on the basis of the funding proposals and regeneration work programmes to be submitted to my Department in early 2013.

Local Authority Charges Application

144. **Deputy Paudie Coffey** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the fact that councils across the country are charging legacy rate arrears to new tenants who are trying to establish businesses (details supplied); his views on whether this practice is anti-business and anti-startup; if he has spoken to the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation regarding this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55802/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Local authorities are under a statutory obligation to levy rates on any property used for commercial purposes in accordance with the details entered in the valuation lists prepared by the independent Commissioner of Valuation under the Valuation Act 2001. The levying and collection of rates are matters for each individual local authority.

Under the legislation the person liable for payment of rates is the person in occupation of a rateable property on the date of the making of the rate by the relevant local authority. The owner, rather than the occupier, may be liable for commercial rates if the property in question is unoccupied on the date of the making of the rate. Should a person's occupancy commence after the date of the making of the rate, then that person is not primarily liable for rates for that year. However, as a subsequent occupier, that person can be held liable for up to two years arrears of rates if they cannot be recovered from the person with whom the primary liability lies.

Commercial rates income makes a significant contribution to the current funding requirements of local authorities. Rates provide the means by which local authorities can support the services essential to communities, and therefore business, across the full range of local activities including roads, water and waste services, fire and emergency, libraries and a range of community, amenity and social activities.

I recognise that these are difficult economic times for many businesses and I am continuing to keep all matters relating to commercial rates under regular review.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

145. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide details of each service in his Department that is currently outsourced; the company that provides such services and the total cost for these services; the other services which may be outsourced in the future that are currently being run in his Department; the names of the companies, fees paid and nature of service for all contracts awarded from his Department excluding legal, accounting, PR or building refurbishment related services since March 2011 [55829/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The information requested is set out in the following table:

Public service outsourced	Current service provider	Cost
Implementation of the National Countryside Recreation Strategy & The Walks Scheme	Various Local Development Companies	€632,600 p.a.
ICT Helpdesk facilities	OKI Resources	€498,417 (Mar. 2011- Dec. 2012)
Telephone switch operation	Eircom	€96,629 (Jan.- Nov. 2012)
National Litter Pollution Monitoring System	Tobin Consulting Engineers	€60,621 (June 2011-Apr. 2012 incl.)
National Litter Pollution Monitoring System	Tobin Consulting Engineers	€58,271 (May 2012-Apr. 2013 incl.)
Marine Strategy Framework Directive – assessment of marine waters	Marine Institute, Galway	€996,162 (Feb.-Dec. 2012)
Examination of final accounts on Water Capital Projects	MJ O'Connell & Co., Consulting Engineers	€39,055 (Mar. 2011 to date)

Public service outsourced	Current service provider	Cost
Examination of final accounts on Water Capital Projects	Mr John Murphy	€30,820 (Mar. 2011 to date)
Process Auditor for a Water Services Capital Project	Mr Owen Boyle	€15,149 (Mar. 2011 to date)
Foreshore Property Valuation	Lisney	€30,647 (1 Jan. to 11 Dec. 2012)
Met Éireann: Use of ICHEC super-computer to run NWP suite	NUIG	€219,600
Oracle E-Business Suite & Associated Technologies Support Services	Fujitsu Ireland	€154,323

My Department is committed to implementation of the action in the Public Service Reform Plan, agreed by Government in November 2011, to evaluate the opportunity for the external delivery of some non-core public services into the future. Examples of public service areas for potential outsourcing are:

- (i) Development of Valentia Island Air monitoring facility; and
- (ii) Aviation observations modernisation and automation development.

Local Authority Housing Provision

146. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the case of a person (details supplied) who lost their council house to fire on the 30 November 2012, the council has failed to offer accommodation which is suitable to the person's age and health and is refusing to find them alternative accommodation, making the the person homeless. [55843/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Local Authorities are directly responsible for addressing housing need within their administrative areas and do so using a range of supply options including permanent social housing, long-term leased units, units leased under the Rental Accommodation Scheme and voluntary and co-operative housing units. It is a matter for each authority, in this case Dublin City Council, to take decisions on individual cases in accordance with their scheme of letting priorities. As Minister, I am precluded from becoming directly involved in individual cases.

Non-Principal Private Residence Charge Collection

147. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position regarding non-principal private residence charges (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55861/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Local Government (Charges) Act 2009 broadened the revenue base of local authori-

ties by introducing the Non-Principal Private Residence Charge. The Charge is set at €200 and liability for it falls, in the main, on owners of rental, holiday and vacant properties. It is a matter for an owner to determine if he or she has a liability and, if so, to declare that liability and pay the Charge.

Under the Act, it is a function of a local authority to collect the Non-Principal Private Residence Charge and late payment fees due to it, and all Charges and late payment fees imposed and payable to a local authority are under the care and management of the local authority concerned. In this regard, application of the legislation in particular circumstances is a matter for the relevant local authority. Guidelines have also been issued to local authorities in relation to the provisions of the Local Government (Charges) Act 2009, which address matters including the collection, care and management of the Charge. These make provision in established hardship cases for an agreed payment plan to be put in place.

I urge all liable persons who have not paid the Charge to contact their local authority as a matter of urgency.

Local and Community Development Programme Project Funding

148. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide in tabular form the amount of grant assisted from Pobail to community groups in Killala, County Mayo, in 2011; the number of persons that were or are employed as result of the payment of those grants; the duration of their employment in the respective groups; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55902/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): My Department is responsible for a range of programmes and initiatives to support communities. These include the Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP), the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 (RDP), the Seniors Alert Scheme, RAPID (Revitalising Areas through Planning, Investment and Development) Programme, the Scheme to Support National Organisations in the Community and Voluntary Sector and the Forum on Philanthropy and Fundraising. However, the LCDP is the only scheme administered through Pobal on behalf of my Department. Pobal has confirmed that Mayo North East Leader Partnership Company, which has responsibility for the delivery of the Programme in the Killala Area, did not allocate funding/grant aid from the Programme to any Community Groups, in that particular area, during 2011. The allocation of funding, through Pobal, by other Departments, for example the Departments of Children and Youth Affairs, Social Protection, and Transport, Tourism and Sport, is a matter for the Departments concerned.

Appointments to State Boards

149. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in the view of his appointing board members to Irish Water Safety, if he will consider appointing a representative to the board of Swim Ireland. [55921/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Irish Water Safety is a body under the aegis of my Department and established under statutory instrument (The Irish Water Safety (Establishment) Order 2006). I have responsibility for the appointment of members to the Council of Irish Water Safety.

In contrast, Swim Ireland is a non-governmental organisation and I do not have a role in the

appointment of its Board.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

150. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if temporary promotions or acting-up allowances have been a feature of the staffing arrangements for this EU Presidency, if he will confirm that his Department has been given sanction to make such arrangements detailing the number by grade involved, the date sanction was sought and the date it was given. [56298/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): My Department has undertaken internal redeployment and streamlining of business areas in preparation for Ireland's Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2013, in which environment, climate change, sustainable development and civil protection are significant themes at EU and international level. Internal redeployment and streamlining have been used to ensure optimum staffing in priority business areas.

In January 2012, my Department also sought sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for additional staffing, and related payroll costs, for the EU Presidency and sanction was given in February 2012. To date, 1 acting up allowance to Assistant Principal Officer has been awarded.

Missing Persons

151. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a decision has been taken to carry out the tests required to possibly provide a definitive identification of humans bones found off the south east coast and possibly connected to recent losses of fishing vessels. [55737/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that pathological, anthropological, carbon dating, geographic and investigative enquiries have been conducted in respect of the remains found off the south-east coast. Despite numerous attempts by the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) to extract DNA from the remains in an effort to generate DNA profiles, all attempts to date have proved unsuccessful.

I am advised that the extraction of DNA profiles from bones that have been in water for a long period of time is extremely difficult as the sea has been found to cause extensive degrading of Nuclear DNA over time. In this regard, I am advised that Garda enquiries with the FSL indicate that further tests outside the jurisdiction may not necessarily be any more successful than testing that has taken place to date in the FSL. I am also informed that new profiling technology will be introduced at the FSL, in early 2013, and it is expected that further tests will be carried out on the remains which have been recovered using this technology.

I am very much aware of the concerns which have been expressed in relation to these remains and my Department has conveyed these concerns to the Garda authorities. I am confident that in cases of missing persons, whether at sea or on land, An Garda Síochána does all in its power to assist families of those who have been lost and, in particular, would contact families when they have any information of substance to impart.

Garda Transport Provision

152. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a permanent Garda vehicle will be restored to a Garda station (details supplied) in County Cavan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55756/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Decisions in relation to the provision and deployment of Garda vehicles are a matter, in the first instance, for the Garda Commissioner in the light of his identified operational requirements. At Garda Divisional level, it is for the Chief Superintendent to make appropriate arrangements for the distribution of vehicles throughout the Division in response to policing demands. The Deputy will appreciate that a degree of flexibility in allocating and re-allocating vehicles among stations, so as to best match the allocation of resources with policing priorities, is crucial to the efficient management of the Garda fleet.

I am advised by the Garda authorities that the detailed allocation of vehicles is determined through a process of ongoing analysis of operational requirements. In addition, they have informed me that the current policing arrangements for the area served by the relevant station, and indeed for the Cavan/Monaghan Division, are making the best use of available resources. Moreover the Garda authorities have indicated that the needs of the area will continue to be examined as additional resources become available.

In that context, the Deputy will be aware that 170 new Garda vehicles have recently been ordered on foot of an investment of €3 million. These vehicles are due to begin coming on stream in the coming weeks. In addition, a further €5 million is being made available for the purchase and fit-out of new Garda vehicles in 2013. This level of expenditure, at a time of severe budgetary constraint, represents a very significant investment in Garda transport and I have no doubt that the additional funding will considerably strengthen the overall effectiveness of the Force in delivering a policing service to communities throughout the country.

Tribunals of Inquiry Reports

153. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 502 of 1 May 2012, the progress made on the recommendations of the Moriarty Tribunal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55769/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Insofar as the report of the Moriarty Tribunal made recommendations concerning the future operation of tribunals of inquiry, many of these recommendations are anticipated by the Tribunals of Inquiry Bill 2005 which awaits Report Stage debate in the Dáil. Other recommendations are the subject of consultation with the Attorney General and other relevant Departments.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that, following their examination of the report of the Moriarty Tribunal, the advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions has been sought on the findings of that examination, with a view to determining whether or not a full Garda investigation should now be commenced.

Prisoner Transfers

154. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has received an application from a person (details supplied) who is at present a prisoner in HMP Magherry, in Northern Ireland, for transfer to prison here; if a release date under the Good Friday Agreement of a maximum of two years incarceration will apply in the event of such a transfer;

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55782/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can confirm to the Deputy that an application has been received from the individual referred to, for a transfer to a prison here under the Council of Europe Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons.

The Deputy should be aware that any application for transfer under the Convention must be considered by both jurisdictions and only after the detailed exchange of information as required by the legislation.

Garda Training

155. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Gardaí who took the method of entry course in 2011 and to date in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55793/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that in 2011, 91 Gardaí undertook the method of entry training course and in 2012, 32 Gardaí have undergone the method of entry training course to date (7 December 2012).

Naturalisation Applications

156. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if persons (details supplied) in County Limerick have been naturalised here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55814/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that certificates of naturalisation were issued to the persons concerned on 26 August, 2011.

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

Courts Service Issues

157. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the total value of monetary fines handed down by the courts in 2011 and of this, the percentage directed to be paid to charities and specifically the Garda Benevolent Trust Fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55816/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy will be aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998 management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service and I have no role in the matter. Section 4(3) of the 1998 Act provides that the Courts Service is independent in the performance of its functions, which includes the provision of statistics.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that the total value of fines imposed by the District Court in 2011 was €38,031,000.00. However, it should be noted that in the same period, a total of €12,833,000.00 worth of fines imposed were reversed as a result of a further application to court. Fines imposed by courts are criminal sanctions generally payable to the Exchequer or, failing this, to the appropriate agency or authority nominated within the specific legislation that was breached and gave rise to a fine. Fines are not paid to charities and no fines monies were paid to the Garda Benevolent Fund in 2011.

As the Deputy will be aware, funds are also paid from time to time to charities from the court's poor box. The court poor box is a non-statutory system used mostly by the District Courts to impose a financial charge on a defendant to be used for a charitable purpose, usually instead of imposing a criminal conviction. Payments made to the court poor box are accounted for by the court office concerned and the accounting procedures are subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General. Generally, charities are the recipients of poor box contributions but the decision is solely at the discretion of the Judge who is independent in the matter of sentencing, as in other matters concerning the exercise of judicial functions, subject only to the Constitution and the law. I am informed by the Courts Service that in 2011, €1,733,641.85 was paid into court as a result of poor box orders and of this amount, €28,138.00 was paid to the Garda Benevolent Fund.

In 2005, the Law Reform Commission examined the matter in its report entitled *The Court Poor Box: Probation of Offenders* (LRC 75-2005). The Commission recognised both the negative and positive aspects of the court use of the poor box and accordingly recommended that the court poor box be replaced by a statutory reparation fund. A key element of the LRC recommendation was that the reparation fund should be ringfenced and used to assist programmes aimed at preventing offending behaviour and for the purpose of assisting victims of crime. The Commission was of the view that the reparation fund should remain linked to the criminal justice process and thus broadly adhere to the principles of restorative justice. I intend to bring forward legislation in the near future to replace the Probation of Offenders Act 1907 with modern provisions dealing with community sanctions and the role of the Probation Service in the criminal justice system. In the context of that legislation, the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission in relation to the court poor box are being examined by my Department with a view to bringing forward proposals for a transparent statutory retribution scheme.

Departmental Contracts

158. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide details of each service in his Department that is currently outsourced; the company that provides such services and the total cost for these services; the other services which may be outsourced in the future that are currently being run in his Department; the names of the companies, fees paid and nature of service for all contracts awarded from his Department excluding legal, accounting, PR or building refurbishment related services since March 2011. [55833/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): My Department has entered into no new contracts for new externally delivered services since March 2011. For more information on external service delivery policy in the Justice and Equality sector, I refer the Deputy to the response (given below) to Parliamentary Question No. 334 on 11 December 2012.

My Department is committed to achieving a focused and integrated approach to external service delivery of non-core processes with the objective of reducing cost and focusing staff on priority areas as agreed by the Government last July. The Department of Justice & Equality is

responsible for a broad range of public administration concerns, many of which go to the heart of what is vital in a democratic society, and, as such, are not always suitable for external service delivery. However, within this constraint, the Justice Sector delivers the following services by means of external service delivery:

- 1. An Garda Síochána speed camera system and associated administrative processes;*
- 2. The collection of fines and payments for the Fixed Charge Processing System and Firearms Certificates for An Garda Síochána.*
- 3. The printing of Fixed Charge Processing System notices and firearms certificates for An Garda Síochána.*
- 4. The collection, towing and storage of seized motor vehicles in certain Garda divisions (to be extended to other divisions over time).*
- 5. The Justice IT Shared Service to the Department and a large number of offices and agencies in the Sector is provided through external service delivery.*
- 6. Maintenance of small vehicles for An Garda Síochána and the Irish Prison Service.*
- 7. The collection of court imposed fines for the Courts Service (it is intended this contract will coincide with the full implementation of the Fines Act 2010 which includes the payment of fines by instalment.)*

I also recently approved an initiative to put in place a panel with legal expertise who will assist the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service in processing a cohort of repatriation cases thus speeding up the overall process and reducing the time spent by persons in the Direct Provision system. I would expect to see significant dividends from this initiative in the coming months.

All new services will be tested for suitability for external service delivery as they arise and in line with Government policy.

Child Abduction

159. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the measures and systems in place to restrict children travelling from Ireland, who are restricted from doing so by family court orders without the permission of the second parent or guardian, in particular to the UK where a passport is not a requirement for entry. [55847/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can inform the Deputy that a system of immigration exit controls does not exist in this jurisdiction and the Deputy will appreciate that there would be special difficulties with operating such a system in the context of the border with Northern Ireland.

If a person removes a child from the State in breach of another person's custody rights, that other person can make an application under the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction to have the child returned to them. The Convention is designed to ensure the prompt return of children who have been wrongfully removed from one contracting state to another, or wrongfully retained in another contracting state. It is based on the principle that the custody of the child should be decided by the courts in the state in which the child habitually resides. The Convention is in force in over 80 countries world-wide. Where a child is removed to or wrongfully retained in another EU state, the Brussels II *bis* regulation

applies, and regulates the application of the Convention between EU member states. There is a network of Central Authorities established under the Convention for the purpose of assisting applicants. My Department operates as the Central Authority for Ireland and can be contacted for assistance at 01/4790200 or by e-mail internationalchildabduction@justice.ie.

Departmental Staff Redeployment

160. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 500 of 13 November 2012, if he will detail the nature of the potential concerns raised about these appointments; if they have been investigated and if so were they found justified; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55887/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy will appreciate that the management of the staff of my Department is a matter for the Secretary General of the Department. I would ask the Deputy, given that this question seems to be one in a series of similar questions over recent months, that if he is aware of any particular issues concerning a particular individual he asks that individual to highlight those concerns directly to my Department's Personnel Officer. I do not believe that the use of Parliamentary Questions is the most appropriate manner to address any potentially valid concerns a staff member might have, particularly if the HR Department has not had an opportunity to address legitimate concerns around the selection of persons for specific posts.

I understand that an individual referred to in reply to PQ No. 500 of 13 November 2012, and who has since left the Department, had sought access to the records pertaining to his application for a posting to the Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels for the period leading up to and during the forthcoming EU Presidency. In pursuing such access the individual concerned stated that his request was motivated by seeking to ensure the processes involved had been applied in a fair or transparent fashion. No formal complaint has been received from the officer concerned, on foot of that query.

Departmental Staff Redeployment

161. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 171 of 4 October 2012, the way staff were selected for Dublin Airport posts; if Irish language abilities were weighed into the selection decision; if any complaints or concerns were made regarding these appointments and if so the outcome of any subsequent investigation; the reason these officials have been subjected to daily security checks while other airport employees are not; if he has concerns regarding the payment of extra pay or allowances to these officials such as paid to other civil servants working in the airport; and if so, will he outline details of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55888/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): In February of this year, I introduced on a pilot basis, a project of civilianisation of certain port of entry functions at Dublin Airport. Until the start of the pilot, immigration controls at ports of entry were carried out solely by members of An Garda Síochána appointed as immigration officers. The purpose of the pilot is to test the feasibility of a new model for delivery of immigration services at ports of entry to the State by using a combination of civilian staff and members of An Garda Síochána. As I stated in my reply to Dáil Question No. 171 of 4th October, 2012, the pilot has been a success in demonstrating the feasibility of the new model and the experience and learning from the pilot will form the basis for proposals to extend the model on a full scale basis to Dublin Airport, and

possibly in due course to other ports of entry to the State.

For the pilot, invitations for expression of interest were invited from serving Clerical Officers (CO) and Executive Officers (EO) from across the Department of Justice and Equality. A short-listing of interested candidates followed by an interview with those short-listed was carried out and a panel of suitable candidates at EO and CO level was established. I am informed that one individual made a complaint regarding their failure to be short-listed. Department of Finance Circulars 43/75 and 30/1990 set out the provisions as regards credit for proficiency in both Irish and English in confined promotion competitions. Since promotions were not involved in the assignments to the airport, the terms of these circulars did not apply. It should be noted that staff on the pilot who are currently deployed at Pier B in Terminal One operate a standard day between the hours of 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday. Accordingly, questions of additional core pay, allowances, shift patterns, etc. do not arise. These are, of course, matters under consideration as part of the rollout of the overall project including discussions with the relevant representative bodies in due course.

The Deputy will appreciate that matters of airport security are a matter, in the first instance, for the Airport authorities under the policy direction of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

Garda Districts

162. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will clarify the geographical area which will be covered by the newly enlarged Garda districts of Ballina and Claremorris County Mayo under the proposed district amalgamations and boundary realignments set out in the 2013 policing plan of an Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55903/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): In accordance with the provisions of the Garda Síochána Acts, proposals to change Garda District geographical boundaries are a matter in the first instance for the Garda Commissioner, in the context of the Annual Policing Plan.

Proposals to amalgamate a number of Garda District have been included by the Garda Commissioner in his Policing Plan for 2013. This has been done following a comprehensive review of current District structures carried out by the Garda authorities. In particular, the review was designed to identify strategic reforms which would lead to increased efficiencies, improved operational capacity and enhanced Garda service delivery.

It is in this context that the Commissioner has proposed the amalgamation of the Swinford Garda District with the Claremorris District. Following the amalgamation, both stations will continue to provide a 24 hour policing service. The new enlarged Claremorris District will cover the subdistricts of Swinford, Claremorris, Ballinrobe, Knock, Kilmaine, Shrule, Cong, Ballyhaunis, Ballindine, Charlestown, Kiltimagh and Kilkelly. In addition, the subdistrict of Foxford will be transferred to the Ballina Garda District.

Garda Stations Closures

163. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the maximum distance to a 24-hour Garda station he considers acceptable to service a local community when the Garda station in its locality is proposed to be closed down under the programme of consoli-

dition of the Garda network which is being implemented; and the considerations being given to persons living in remote rural areas with poor road infrastructure. [55905/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy will be aware that 100 of the 664 Garda Stations throughout the State are due to close in the coming year. The stations selected for closure are those which are in areas that, in the professional opinion of the Garda Commissioner, could be better served by having Gardaí patrolling the areas rather than being confined to a specific premises. In coming to this view, the Commissioner would have taken all relevant factors into consideration, including the distance to other stations.

Details of the closures are set out in the Policing Plan have for 2013 which is lodged in the Oireachtas library. The Plan also provides details of the alternative policing arrangements for the areas in question. In this regard, the Deputy will also be aware that the Garda National Model of Community Policing plays a key part in responding to crime by taking into account and responding to local conditions and needs, including in remote areas. In this regard the Gardaí continue to work closely with all communities to enhance community safety through a wide range of local fora such as Community Alert and Neighbourhood Watch, as well as more formal structures such as Joint Policing Committees.

The implementation of the reduction in the number of Garda stations and Districts will take place in full consultation with the local communities and staffing interests. Local Garda management will shortly commence the process of engaging with these communities through the Joint Policing Committees and other fora to advise them of the revised policing arrangements for the localities in question. The objective will be to ensure that the best possible policing service will be provided at all times.

I am conscious of the need to maintain, to the greatest extent possible, the operational effectiveness of An Garda Síochána. It is for that reason that a further €5 million is being made available for the purchase and fit-out of new Garda vehicles in 2013. This level of expenditure, at a time of severe budgetary constraint, represents a very significant investment in Garda transport and I have no doubt that the additional funding will considerably strengthen the overall effectiveness of the Force in delivering a policing service to communities throughout the country. I am also confident that, when the relevant budgetary figures are being determined for 2014, the importance of investment in Garda transport will continue to be recognised.

Deportation Orders Data

164. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding deportation in respect of a person (details supplied). [55927/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Given that the person concerned had no valid basis to remain in the State, he was notified, by letter dated 17th July, 2010, that the then Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him, in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). 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 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 Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. All representations submitted, including the information included with the Deputy's Question, will be considered before a

final decision is made. Once a decision has been made, this decision, and the consequences of the decision, will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned.

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

Cyber Security Policy

165. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if in view of recent tragedies his attention has been drawn to the concerns of many regarding the dangers for young person's of several social networking sites; the measures he has considered within legislation to protect those young Irish persons subject to and most vulnerable to cyberbullying; his plans regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55935/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I assure the Deputy that I share the widespread concern about bullying by means of communications technology. It is very regrettable that this highly beneficial resource is abused in that way, causing great distress to many people.

There are two approaches to tackling cyberbullying, that is to say, bullying over the internet, by mobile phone or by other technological devices. In the first instance, we must educate and alert people to the problem, how to detect it and how to overcome it. Everyone has a role to play, whether they are parents, teachers, classmates, work or team colleagues or mere 'bystanders'.

I draw attention to the services available from the organisations participating in the Safer Internet Ireland Project, coordinated by my Department's Office for Internet Safety. The www.webwise.ie site provides valuable information and advice as well as links to other relevant sites.

The Deputy refers in particular to social networking sites. They have become very popular especially among younger people. Users need to be aware that those sites have their own rules. They usually have various options such as privacy settings and complaints procedures which may be availed of to prevent any unwanted access. Most of the major social networking sites have signed up to the EU's Safer Social Networking Principles. The Principles promote good practice with an emphasis on enhancing the safety of younger users.

The second approach entails pursuing perpetrators under the criminal law. The current law has a number of relevant provisions. Two sections of the Non-fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997 are especially relevant. Section 5 deals with the offence of threatening to kill or cause serious harm. It has a maximum penalty of imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years. Section 10 provides for the offence of harassment. The section includes harassment 'by any means including by use of the telephone'. This offence attracts a maximum penalty of imprisonment of up to 7 years.

At my request, the Law Reform Commission is examining an aspect of the requirements in section 10, namely the need to demonstrate persistence in the harassment. I await its conclusions.

The Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989 may be relied upon in cases where the cyberbullying entails incitement to hatred on account of race, religion, nationality or sexual

orientation.

The Communications (Retention of Data) Act 2011 is relevant to the investigation and prosecution of the offences under the 1997 Act. It permits the retention of and access to data for those purposes where the offence is a serious one. In that regard, the Act identifies some specific offences but adds that the term also applies to any offence having a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment or more. The offences in sections 5 and 10 of the 1997 Act meet that criterion.

While I can understand their reluctance to do so in many instances, victims, their families and friends must realise that their active participation is required if attempts to defeat the cyberbullies are to succeed. They can follow the simple but effective advice on how to deal with unwanted messages and they must assist the Gardaí by reporting cases to them. The criminal law can be employed only when victims come forward and assist the Gardaí in building a case against their tormentors.

I have no immediate plans for new, more targeted, legislation but I will be keeping the matter under review.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

166. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if temporary promotions or acting up allowances have not been a feature of the staffing arrangements for this EU Presidency, if he will confirm that his Department has been given sanction to make such arrangements detailing the number by grade involved, and the date sanction was sought and the date it was given. [56303/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have been advised that 11 temporary in nature promotions have been made in my Department as part of the preparation for the EU Presidency in the following grades; 1 Principal Officer; 4 Assistant Principal Officers; 4 Higher Executive Officers and 2 Executive Officers. I can confirm for the Deputy that the relevant sanction for such promotions was sought from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on 23 April 2012 and sanction was received on 15 June 2012.

Question No. 167 answered with Question No. 14.

Defence Forces Strength

168. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence the number of positions in the Defence Forces or ranks approved, waiting to be filled or vacant at present; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55036/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The following table outlines the strength of the Permanent Defence Force as at 31 October 2012 the latest date for which figures are available, and the total vacancies, by rank, based on the rank establishment of 9,500.

Promotions and Recruitment are ongoing within the Permanent Defence Force in order to fill these rank vacancies. They will be carried out within the resource envelope allocated to Defence.

PDF Strength by rank as at 31 October 2012 versus PDF Rank Establishment of 9,500

12 December 2012

Rank	9,500 Rank Establishment	Strength at 31 October 2012	Vacancies by Rank
Lieutenant General	1	1	0
Major General	2	2	0
Brigadier General	8	8	0
Colonel	41	34	7
Lieutenant Colonel	137	131	6
Commandant	336	337	-1
Captain	452	436	16
Lieutenant	256	319	-63
Sergeant Major	43	35	9
Battalion Quartermaster Sergeant	44	42	1
Company Sergeant	245	166	79
Company Quartermaster Sergeant	199	171	28
Sergeant	1,330	1,057	273
Corporal	1,800	1,757	43
Private (including Cadet)	4,606	4,656	-50
Total	9,500	9,153	347

Note:

Equivalent Naval Service Ranks

Brigadier General/Commodore

Colonel/Captain

Lieutenant Colonel/Commander

Commandant/Lieutenant Commander

Captain/Lieutenant(NS)

Lieutenant/Sub Lieutenant

Sergeant Mayor/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

Private/Able Seaman

Defence Forces Equipment

169. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence the extent to which the resources accruing from the closure of various military installations over the years has trans-

ferred directly to updating and upgrading the quality and standard of equipment available to the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55027/12]

175. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence the number of military installations closed or decommissioned since 1988; the extent to which funds accruing therefrom have been retained for the development of facilities for the Defence Forces; the extent of any such plans for the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55033/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 169 and 175 together.

Since 1998 a total of fourteen barracks have been closed under various barrack consolidation programmes. To-date nine of these barracks - Clancy (Dublin), Castleblaney, Ballincollig, Fermoy, Naas, Monaghan, Cavan, Castlebar and a large portion of Longford - have been sold.

In relation to the remaining barracks agreement has been reached for the sale of Lifford and Rockhill to Donegal County Council. Discussions are ongoing in relation to the possible sale of a portion of Clonmel Barracks to other State Agencies and the remaining part of Longford has been reserved for the OPW for the local Garda Síochána.

Magee Barracks in Kildare and Columb Barracks in Mullingar remain the property of the Department.

The total realised to-date in terms of sales of surplus property is €84m approx. This, together with income of €18m approx. from the sale of other smaller military properties and married quarters has been re-invested in providing equipment and infrastructure for the Defence Forces.

All remaining vacated barracks as well as any properties identified as surplus to military requirements will be disposed of by my Department, taking account of the market conditions, so as to maximise the return to the Defence Forces.

The monies received from the sales of surplus properties have returned to the Defence Vote as Appropriations in Aid. The increased levels of appropriations in aid have allowed the retention of funding levels for re-equipment. Some of the major more recent programmes include the acquisition of Light Tactical Armoured Vehicles, Mowag Armoured Personnel Carriers, two EC and six AW 139 helicopters and two new Offshore Patrol vessels, scheduled for delivery in 2014/2015. This approach is in line with the 2000 White Paper on Defence and the Government decision of February 2000 which, inter alia, approved “ the allocation of 100% of the revenue arising from the sale of property surplus to military requirements, for investment in equipment and infrastructure for the Defence Forces”

Air Corps Training

170. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence the extent to which the standard and levels of training normally required continue to be made available to the Air Corps; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55028/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Air Corps keeps abreast of all developments in modern aviation. It conducts its training in accordance with industry best practices and to the highest standards, referencing European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requirements and using the most modern methods and equipment available.

Naval Service Vessels

171. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence if he is satisfied regarding the degree to which funding remains available to the navy with particular reference to the upgrading of equipment, training and the use of modern technology; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55029/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): A strategy for the replacement of Naval Service Offshore Patrol Vessels is currently in train. A contract was signed in October, 2010 with Babcock Marine in the United Kingdom for the provision of two new offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs). The acquisition of these modern new vessels, combined with a continuous process of refurbishment and repair on the other vessels in the fleet, will ensure that the operational capability of the Naval Service is maintained at a satisfactory level and that the most up to date equipment, including modern technology and IT equipment, is available to Naval Service personnel.

Preparations for the construction of the ships have commenced in Appledore, UK and the build of the first ship is well advanced. The first ship is scheduled for delivery in early 2014. The second ship will follow one year later.

On the issue of Naval Service training and associated technologies, I am satisfied that Naval Services training techniques and the technologies involved are up to date in all respects. The Naval Service training plan is structured to provide the capabilities needed to execute the roles assigned to the Naval Service by Government.

I am satisfied that the equipment issued to the Naval Service is in keeping with the most modern requirements and the highest international standards. The ongoing investment in the Naval Service will ensure that this remains to be the case.

Army Training Programme

172. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence if he is satisfied, notwithstanding the economic exigencies within which he must operate, that sufficient resources remain available for training, updating and upgrading of equipment and technology of the regular Army; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55030/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am satisfied that the level of resources available to the Defence Forces, including equipment and training resources, enables the Defence Forces to carry out their roles both at home and overseas.

The acquisition of new equipment for the Defence Forces remains a focus for me as Minister for Defence. However, it is imperative that the Department and the Defence Forces, similar to all other Government Departments, must take into account the current difficult economic environment we are now operating in. The budgetary situation will continue to dictate the level of funding available for new equipment and upgrades. Decisions will be made accordingly on a strictly prioritised basis with a view to maintaining the capability of all roles assigned by Government to the Defence Forces.

I am advised that military training techniques are up to date in all respects. Defence Forces training plans are specifically structured to provide the capabilities needed to execute the roles assigned to them by Government. The challenges of preparing military units for participation in international peace support operations constitute the major dimension of Defence Forces col-

lective training. The primary focus of this training is the attainment of a capability for military interoperability in order to conduct peace support operations to international standards. Training standards in the Defence Forces are constantly benchmarked against best international practice and Defence Forces personnel have full access to the best international training standards available.

A particular focus is maintained in ensuring that modern and effective equipment is available for overseas peace support operations. In this regard, the personal equipment, which the individual soldier has at his/her disposal in Lebanon and on other overseas missions is second to none and compares very favourably with the equipment in use by other countries.

Army Training Programme

173. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence if sufficient resources remain available to ensure training and upgrading of the Army Reserve; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55031/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The central recommendation from the Value for Money Review of the Reserve Defence Force was for the retention of the Reserve with 4,000 personnel spread countrywide to be based in barracks and in 16 other locations. This requires the consolidation of existing Reserve Units throughout the country into a smaller number of full-strength Units.

A new “Single Force” concept will see Permanent Defence Force (PDF) Units having Reserve components, rather than a parallel Reserve as at present. Reserve Units within barracks will be supported by their parent PDF Unit and the 16 Units outside of PDF installations will be supported by dedicated full time PDF personnel. This concept offers significant potential advantages in terms of training and development of the Reserve. The initiative of locating Reserve Officers within the Defence Forces management structure will likewise underpin the future Reserve.

These steps create a viable structure while addressing the inefficiency caused by having too many widely dispersed and under-strength Reserve Units.

The changes to the current Reserve organisation are in response to a compelling case for reform and will dovetail with the significant changes that are occurring in the PDF organisational structures.

I am satisfied that the changes when implemented will ensure a better Reserve and enhance overarching Defence capabilities.

Defence Forces Strength

174. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence the total strength of the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps by gender and rank at present; the extent to which the numbers have fluctuated in each of the past five years to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55032/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The strength of the Permanent Defence Force at the end of October 2012, the latest date for which figures are available stood at 9,152, of which 573 (6.26%) are women. Comparative figures at the end of 2007 show a strength of 10,434 of which 560 (5.37%) were female.

12 December 2012

The following table contains the strength, broken down into Army, Naval Service and Air Corps by gender and rank groupings for each of the years 2007 to 2011.

The Deputy may note a difference in the figures given here for end-December 2008 and 2009 and those given in my response to PQ 151 of Wednesday, 8th February 2012. In the previous figures, there was a discrepancy of 1 in the totals for 2008 due to a typographical error and the figures given for end-December 2009 were actually the end-January 2010 figures. The figures now provided in the following tables are the corrected figures.

TABULAR STATEMENT STRENGTH OF THE DEFENCE FORCES 31-Dec-07

-	LT	MAJ	BRIG	COL	LT	COM-DT	CAPT	LT	TO-TAL	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	SGTS	CPLS	TOTAL	PTES	CA-DETS	TO-TAL
-	GEN	GEN	GEN		COL				OF-FRS							NCOS			
ARMY	1	3	8	40	133	319	248	297	1049	31	34	129	252	1052	1449	2947	4446	70	8,512
AIR CORPS			1	2	14	30	59	31	137	7	4	50	14	136	172	383	301	24	845
NAVAL SERVICE			1	2	12	42	51	51	159	6	7	75	15	212	172	487	415	16	1,077
TOTAL	1	3	10	44	159	391	358	379	1345	44	45	254	281	1400	1793	3817	5162	110	10434

TABULAR STATEMENT STRENGTH OF FEMALES IN THE DEFENCE FORCES 31-Dec-07

-	LT	MAJ	BRIG	COL	LT	COM-DT	CAPT	LT	TOTAL	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	SGTS	CPLS	TOTAL	PTES	CA-DETS	TOTAL
-	GEN	GEN	GEN		COL				OFFRS							NCOS			
ARMY					1	18	44	40	103			3	1	23	102	129	216	8	456
AIR CORPS							3	2	5			1		1	10	12	15	1	33
NAVAL SERVICE							10	8	18						7	7	40	6	71
TOTAL					1	18	57	50	126			4	1	24	119	148	271	15	560

TABULAR STATEMENT STRENGTH OF MALES IN THE DEFENCE FORCES 31-Dec-07

-	LT	MAJ	BRIG	COL	LT	COM-DT	CAPT	LT	TOTAL	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	SGTS	CPLS	TOTAL	PTES	CA-DETS	TOTAL
-	GEN	GEN	GEN		COL				OFFRS							NCOS			
ARMY	1	3	8	40	132	301	204	257	946	31	34	126	251	1029	1347	2818	4230	62	8,056
AIR CORPS			1	2	14	30	56	29	132	7	4	49	14	135	162	371	286	23	812
NAVAL SERVICE			1	2	12	42	41	43	141	6	7	75	15	212	165	480	375	10	1,006
TOTAL	1	3	10	44	158	373	301	329	1219	44	45	250	280	1376	1674	3669	4891	95	9874

TABULAR STATEMENT STRENGTH OF THE DEFENCE FORCES 31-Dec-08

Questions - Written Answers

-	LT	MAJ	BRIG	COL	LT	COM-DT	CAPT	LT	TOTAL	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	SGTS	CPLS	TOTAL	PTES	CA-DETS	TOTAL
-	GEN	GEN	GEN		COL				OFFRS							NCOS			
ARMY	1	3	7	41	131	305	237	346	1071	32	39	133	251	1048	1467	2970	4394	71	8,506
AIR CORPS			1	2	12	32	56	44	147	7	4	48	15	135	171	380	291	14	832
NAVAL SERVICE			1	2	12	43	42	60	160	6	7	76	15	216	175	495	402	13	1,070
TOTAL	1	3	9	45	155	380	335	450	1378	45	50	257	281	1399	1813	3845	5087	98	10,408

TABULAR STATEMENT STRENGTH OF FEMALES IN THE DEFENCE FORCES
31-Dec-08

-	LT	MAJ	BRIG	COL	LT	COM-DT	CAPT	LT	TOTAL	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	SGTS	CPLS	TOTAL	PTES	CA-DETS	TOTAL
-	GEN	GEN	GEN		COL				OFFRS							NCOS			
ARMY					1	21	48	41	111			3	1	32	108	144	200	13	468
AIR CORPS							2	2	4			1		3	10	14	13	1	32
NAVAL SERVICE						2	10	11	23						9	9	35	3	70
TOTAL					1	23	60	54	138			4	1	35	127	167	248	17	570

TABULAR STATEMENT STRENGTH OF MALES IN THE DEFENCE FORCES
31-Dec-08

-	LT	MAJ	BRIG	COL	LT	COM-DT	CAPT	LT	TOTAL	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	SGTS	CPLS	TOTAL	PTES	CA-DETS	TOTAL
-	GEN	GEN	GEN		COL				OFFRS							NCOS			
ARMY	1	3	7	41	130	284	189	305	960	32	39	130	250	1016	1359	2826	4194	58	8,038
AIR CORPS			1	2	12	32	54	42	143	7	4	47	15	132	161	366	278	13	800
NAVAL SERVICE			1	2	12	41	32	49	137	6	7	76	15	216	166	486	367	10	1,000
TOTAL	1	3	9	45	154	357	275	396	1240	45	50	253	280	1364	1686	3678	4839	81	9838

TABULAR STATEMENT STRENGTH OF THE DEFENCE FORCES
31-Dec-09

-	LT	MAJ	BRIG	COL	LT	COM-DT	CAPT	LT	TOTAL	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	SGTS	CPLS	TOTAL	PTES	CA-DETS	TOTAL
-	GEN	GEN	GEN		COL				OFFRS							NCOS			
ARMY	1	2	6	31	115	290	283	313	1041	26	30	127	233	991	1429	2836	4152	66	8,095
AIR CORPS			1	1	13	29	66	32	142	7	4	50	13	130	167	371	282	6	801
NAVAL SERVICE			1		13	39	49	62	164	4	6	74	16	210	165	475	379	19	1,037
TOTAL	1	2	8	32	141	358	398	407	1347	37	40	251	262	1331	1761	3682	4813	91	9,933

TABULAR STATEMENT STRENGTH OF FEMALES IN THE DEFENCE FORCES
31-Dec-09

12 December 2012

-	LT	MAJ	BRIG	COL	LT	COM-DT	CAPT	LT	TOTAL	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	SGTS	CPLS	TOTAL	PTES	CA-DETS	TOTAL
-	GEN	GEN	GEN		COL				OFFRS							NCOS			
ARMY					2	19	43	47	111			3	1	32	109	145	194	12	462
AIR CORPS							4	1	5			1		4	10	15	12	1	33
NAVAL SERVICE						2	10	11	23						9	9	34	6	72
TOTAL					2	21	57	59	139			4	1	36	128	169	240	19	567

TABULAR STATEMENT STRENGTH OF MALES IN THE DEFENCE FORCES

31-Dec-09

-	LT	MAJ	BRIG	COL	LT	COM-DT	CAPT	LT	TOTAL	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	SGTS	CPLS	TOTAL	PTES	CA-DETS	TOTAL
-	GEN	GEN	GEN		COL				OFFRS							NCOS			
ARMY	1	2	6	31	113	271	240	266	930	26	30	124	232	959	1320	2691	3958	54	7,633
AIR CORPS			1	1	13	29	62	31	137	7	4	49	13	126	157	356	270	5	768
NAVAL SERVICE			1		13	37	39	51	141	4	6	74	16	210	156	466	345	13	965
TOTAL	1	2	8	32	139	337	341	348	1208	37	40	247	261	1295	1633	3513	4573	72	9366

TABULAR STATEMENT STRENGTH OF THE DEFENCE FORCES

31-Dec-10

-	LT	MAJ	BRIG	COL	LT	COM-DT	CAPT	LT	TOTAL	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	SGTS	CPLS	TOTAL	PTES	CA-DETS	TOTAL
-	GEN	GEN	GEN		COL				OFFRS							NCOS			
ARMY	1	1	6	31	101	275	317	295	1027	24	24	112	218	941	1336	2655	4018	52	7,752
AIR CORPS		1		2	12	28	69	37	149	5	3	42	12	129	158	349	263	5	766
NAVAL SERVICE				2	11	37	52	59	161	4	5	65	15	205	156	450	403	18	1,032
TOTAL	1	2	6	35	124	340	438	391	1337	33	32	219	245	1275	1650	3454	4684	75	9550

TABULAR STATEMENT STRENGTH OF FEMALES IN THE DEFENCE FORCES

31-Dec-10

-	LT	MAJ	BRIG	COL	LT	COM-DT	CAPT	LT	TOTAL	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	SGTS	CPLS	TOTAL	PTES	CA-DETS	TOTAL
-	GEN	GEN	GEN		COL				OFFRS							NCOS			
ARMY					1	18	41	51	111			2	1	33	109	145	200	11	467
AIR CORPS							4	2	6			1		4	9	14	12		32
NAVAL SERVICE						2	10	14	26						8	8	34	2	70
TOTAL					1	20	55	67	143			3	1	37	126	167	246	13	569

TABULAR STATEMENT STRENGTH OF MALES IN THE DEFENCE FORCES

30-Nov-10

-	LT	MAJ	BRIG	COL	LT	COM-DT	CAPT	LT	TOTAL	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	SGTS	CPLS	TOTAL	PTES	CA-DETS	TOTAL
-	GEN	GEN	GEN		COL				OFFRS							NCOS			
ARMY	1	1	6	31	100	257	276	244	916	24	24	110	217	908	1227	2510	3818	41	7285
AIR CORPS		1		2	12	28	65	35	143	5	3	41	12	125	149	335	251	5	734

Questions - Written Answers

-	LT	MAJ	BRIG	COL	LT	COM-DT	CAPT	LT	TOTAL	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	SGTS	CPLS	TOTAL	PTES	CA-DETS	TOTAL
NAVAL SERVICE			0	2	11	35	42	45	135	4	5	65	15	205	148	442	369	16	962
TOTAL	1	2	6	35	123	320	383	324	1194	33	32	216	244	1238	1524	3287	4438	62	8981

TABULAR STATEMENT STRENGTH OF THE DEFENCE FORCES

31-Dec-11

	LT	MAJ	BRIG	COL	LT	COM-DT	CAPT	LT	TOTAL	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	SGTS	CPLS	TOTAL	PTES	CA-DETS	TOTAL
	GEN	GEN	GEN		COL				OFFRS							NCOS			
ARMY	1		5	31	109	245	335	279	1005	29	26	95	189	889	1390	2618	3985	42	7,650
AIR CORPS		1	1	2	14	25	62	35	140	6	3	35	9	121	174	348	297	6	791
NAVAL SERVICE			1	2	13	32	63	47	158	4	4	53	11	186	180	438	386	15	997
TOTAL	1	1	7	35	136	302	460	361	1303	39	33	183	209	1196	1744	3404	4668	63	9438

TABULAR STATEMENT STRENGTH OF FEMALES IN THE DEFENCE FORCES

31-Dec-11

-	LT	MAJ	BRIG	COL	LT	COM-DT	CAPT	LT	TOTAL	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	SGTS	CPLS	TOTAL	PTES	CA-DETS	TOTAL
-	GEN	GEN	GEN		COL				OFFRS							NCOS			
ARMY					2	19	46	45	112			2	1	35	119	157	194	4	467
AIR CORPS							2	3	5			1		4	13	18	7		30
NAVAL SERVICE						3	13	12	28						11	11	28	1	68
TOTAL					2	22	61	60	145			3	1	39	143	186	229	5	565

TABULAR STATEMENT STRENGTH OF MALES IN THE DEFENCE FORCES

31-Dec-11

	LT	MAJ	BRIG	COL	LT	COM-DT	CAPT	LT	TOTAL	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	SGTS	CPLS	TOTAL	PTES	CA-DETS	TOTAL
	GEN	GEN	GEN		COL				OFFRS							NCOS			
ARMY	1		5	31	107	226	289	234	893	29	26	93	188	854	1271	2461	3791	38	7183
AIR CORPS		1	1	2	14	25	60	32	135	6	3	34	9	117	161	330	290	6	761
NAVAL SERVICE			1	2	13	29	50	35	130	4	4	53	11	186	169	427	358	14	929
TOTAL	1	1	7	35	134	280	399	301	1158	39	33	180	208	1157	1601	3218	4439	58	8873

TABULAR STATEMENT STRENGTH OF THE DEFENCE FORCES

31-Oct-12

-	LT	MAJ	BRIG	COL	LT	COM-DT	CAPT	LT	TOTAL	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	SGTS	CPLS	TOTAL	PTES	CA-DETS	TOTAL
-	GEN	GEN	GEN		COL				OFFRS							NCOS			
ARMY	1	1	6	31	106	260	323	242	970	23	32	74	150	808	1396	2483	3884	43	7,380
AIR CORPS		1	1	1	13	33	57	29	135	6	3	30	8	108	181	336	272	11	754
NAVAL SERVICE			1	2	12	44	56	48	163	6	7	62	13	141	180	409	429	17	1,018
TOTAL	1	2	8	34	131	337	436	319	1268	35	42	166	171	1057	1757	3228	4585	71	9,152

12 December 2012

TABULAR STATEMENT STRENGTH OF FEMALES IN THE DEFENCE FORCES

31-Oct-12

-	LT	MAJ	BRIG	COL	LT	COM-DT	CAPT	LT	TOTAL	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	SGTS	CPLS	TOTAL	PFES	CA-DETS	TOTAL
-	GEN	GEN	GEN		COL				OFFRS							NCOS			
ARMY					2	26	42	43	113			2		32	121	155	202	3	473
AIR CORPS							3	2	5			1		4	13	18	8		31
NAVAL SERVICE						6	12	10	28						12	12	27	2	69
TOTAL					2	32	57	55	146			3		36	146	185	237	5	573

TABULAR STATEMENT STRENGTH OF MALES IN THE DEFENCE FORCES

31-Oct-12

-	LT	MAJ	BRIG	COL	LT	COM-DT	CAPT	LT	TOTAL	SM	BQMS	CS	CQMS	SGTS	CPLS	TOTAL	PFES	CA-DETS	TOTAL
-	GEN	GEN	GEN		COL				OFFRS							NCOS			
ARMY	1	1	6	31	104	234	281	199	857	23	32	72	150	776	1275	2328	3682	40	6,907
AIR CORPS		1	1	1	13	33	54	27	130	6	3	29	8	104	168	318	264	11	723
NAVAL SERVICE			1	2	12	38	44	38	135	6	7	62	13	141	168	397	402	15	949
TOTAL	1	2	8	34	129	305	379	264	1122	35	42	163	171	1021	1611	3043	4348	66	8,579

Question No. 175 answered with Question No. 169.

Question No. 176 answered with Question No. 9.

Overseas Missions

177. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence the extent to which the Exchequer has been reimbursed by the United Nations or other bodies for overseas peacekeeping missions authorised by the EU or UN to date; if any outstanding payments remain; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55035/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The UN reimburses some personnel and Contingent Owned 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 (MoU) between Ireland and the UN for each mission. The only mission for which Ireland is currently entitled to reimbursement of some troop and equipment costs, is the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

The total amount currently owing to the Department of Defence by the United Nations in respect of contributions towards troop and other costs associated with the participation of Defence Forces personnel in UN missions is calculated at €11.5million approximately. This amount, includes €5.1 million in respect of the current UNIFIL mission and €6.4 million in respect of repatriation costs of equipment from the MINURCAT mission in Chad. The amount owing in relation to the MINURCAT mission is the subject of ongoing negotiations with the UN. The recovery from the UN of the monies owed is pursued with the UN on an ongoing basis by the Department of Defence and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in conjunction

with the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the UN in New York.

Ireland is not entitled to any reimbursement in respect of Defence Forces participation in EU-led missions as all troop contributors to such missions are responsible for their own costs.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

178. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Defence if temporary promotions or acting up allowances have not been a feature of the staffing arrangements for this EU Presidency, if he will confirm that his Department has been given sanction to make such arrangements detailing the number by grade involved, and the date sanction was sought and the date it was given. [56296/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): My Department is not using temporary promotions or acting ups to manage staffing arrangements for the EU Presidency. Hence, my Department did not seek sanction in this regard from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Single Payment Scheme Applications

179. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding single farm payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55714/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Processing of this application has recently been finalised and payment will issue to the nominated bank account shortly.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Appeals

180. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding an appeal on stocking density in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55721/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named is one of a number, their derogation application having been unsuccessful, who were offered the option to appeal to the independently chaired DAS Appeals Committee. To date, this option has not been availed of. Should the applicant choose to appeal, it will be referred to the DAS Appeals Committee.

Single Payment Scheme Appeals

181. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision has been made on an appeal for single farm payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55723/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2012 Single Payment/Disadvantaged Areas Schemes was received from the person named on 24th April 2012.

In order to comply with EU requirements, the applicant was one of a number selected for inspection. This inspection resulted in findings of an over-declaration in area of between 3% and 20% under the Single Payment Scheme and an over-declaration in More Severe Lowland area of 5.01% under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, which, under the terms and conditions of the Schemes, resulted in reduced payments under both.

The applicant was notified of this outcome and the reason for it. A request for a review has been received and is currently being examined. The applicant will be notified as soon as possible of the outcome of this review, which can be appealed to the independent Agriculture Appeals Office within 3 months of the date of the review.

Agriculture Schemes Appeals

182. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision has been made on an appeal for an area payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55724/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): While the person named submitted an application for derogation, supporting documentation to further process the application was requested by my Department. Immediately the documentation in question is received, the application in question will be reviewed and the person named notified of the decision, in writing.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Appeals

183. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding an appeal under the disadvantaged area scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55726/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named is one of a number, their derogation application having been unsuccessful, who were offered the option to appeal to the independently chaired DAS Appeals Committee. To date, this option has not been availed of. Should the applicant choose to appeal, it will be referred to the DAS Appeals Committee.

National Milk Agency

184. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the remit of the National Milk Agency could be extended in order that it would be able to control the price paid for liquid milk, not only to farmers by the processors, but also by the retailers to the milk processors; if he will ensure that all stages in the chain have a price input from the National Milk Agency and to ensure a fair price for everybody; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55767/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The National Milk Agency, which operates under the aegis of my Department, does not have a role in setting the retail price of milk. The Agency was set up in 1994 to ensure an indigenous year round supply of milk for liquid consumption. All farmers supplying milk for liquid consumption in the winter months do so under contracts with processors which must be registered with the Agency. Farmers supplying milk in the winter months are paid a premium over the price paid to farmers

who only produce milk in the spring-autumn period. This premium reflects the additional costs of producing milk in the winter months.

There is a general prohibition of price fixing under EU and Irish competition law. While prices paid for products in the marketplace are a function of a number of market forces and the negotiation of commercial contracts is essentially a matter for the contracting parties, the Programme for Government contains a specific commitment to enact fair trade legislation in the retail sector so as to ensure balance between various players in the grocery goods sector. This comes under the remit of the Minister for Enterprise, Jobs and Innovation. I understand that legislation is currently being prepared to allow for the introduction of a statutory Code of Practice to regulate particular practices in the grocery trade.

At EU level I understand that the high level group on better functioning of the Food Supply Chain has asked the Expert Business to Business Platform to make recommendations on a Community wide approach. The Platform has drafted guidelines of good practice but has not yet reached agreement on implementation. Discussions are continuing.

Departmental Correspondence

185. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to ask farmers who ring his Department, for some sort of identification, such as their PPSN, to ensure that those ringing are the person's they claim to be and to ensure security of information in relation to clients of his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55778/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department ensures that personal data held for the administration of its schemes and services is protected in accordance with Data Protection legislation. Customers who contact my Department by phone to seek information relating to their personal data must first of all satisfy officials as to their identity. Farmer customers, for example, will be asked for a unique identifier provided by the Department, such as a Herd Number or a REPS Number. Further information known only to the customer may also be requested.

Budget 2013

186. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has evaluated the combined impact of the budget cuts on farm holdings in the west of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55780/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Budget 2013 recognises the key role that agriculture and the agrifood industry has to play in Ireland's economic recovery. The measures introduced build on those introduced in Budget 2012 and will enable the sector to continue its success in realising the objectives of Food Harvest 2020.

100% Stamp Duty Relief and 100% stock relief for Young Trained Farmers are both being extended, as is the ordinary 25% stock relief for other farmers.

I am also happy that new Capital Gains Tax provisions have been introduced to facilitate restructuring of farm land parcels. When taken together with the large reduction in Stamp Duty last year this measure should encourage farmers to restructure their holdings to improve efficiency.

These taxation measures will directly benefit farmers in the West of Ireland and elsewhere.

The tax changes in Budget 2013 incentivise inter-generational land transfer and facilitate farm re-structuring to improve efficiency. This is a clear message of support to the many dynamic younger farmers who plan to expand production over the coming years that I want to help them achieve their ambitions. These changes will also help the sector realise the Food Harvest 2020 targets and increase agrifood exports.

Budget 2013 was a difficult one for the Government, involving many tough decisions. Although constrained by tight budgetary disciplines imposed right across the economy, I was determined to minimise the impact of the scale of the reduction so that the most important schemes and programmes which the sector relies upon most were protected to the greatest extent possible.

I am pleased to say that, through re-orientating and re-scheduling payments, I have managed to fund new schemes and programmes while also reducing the scale of savings to a lower amount of €89 million compared to 2012, while protecting farm incomes. The 2013 budget reflects a significant Exchequer commitment of support for the agrifood sector and is recognition of the contribution which the sector can make to economic recovery and future growth. Of particular interest to farmers in the West of Ireland is the increased allocation of €195 million in support of disadvantaged area payments. This was done to underline my commitment to the protection of income for smaller farmers and protect farmers in disadvantages areas. I have decided to focus on the protection of the smaller and most disadvantaged, including mountain sheep holdings whose payments will remain unchanged next year. In order to make the necessary adjustment, I intend to reduce the maximum area payable from 34 to 30 hectares. This will not be applied to farmers in mountain areas. These measures will mean that 72% of farmers will have no change in their income resulting from this change.

Suckler Welfare Scheme Extension

187. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has evaluated the long term economic impact of the closure of the suckler cow welfare scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55781/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme was a five-year Scheme which is ending on 31 December 2012. I have, however, made funding of €10 million available for this Scheme in 2013. These funds will be used to continue to pay calves born the herds of Scheme participants when they become eligible for payment. Payments in respect of 2012 born calves, which are now eligible for payment, will commence next week. Taking into account payments of €22 million, which will be issued in respect of 2012 born calves, the Exchequer will have paid €158 million in total under this Scheme. This is a very substantial contribution to the very important beef sector.

I am, therefore, pleased that a Value for Money Audit, which was undertaken in accordance with the Department of Finance Value for Money and Policy Review Initiative, established that the Scheme has largely achieved these objectives. The 34,000 participants, who continued in the Scheme over its five-year duration, are fully aware that following best practice in the breeding, animal health/welfare aspects and rearing of suckler calves leads to better prices and demand at weanling sale time.

It was important to build on progress made under the lifetime of the Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme. Therefore, I have allocated €10 million in 2013, financed from unspent Single Farm

Payment Funds for a new support programme for suckler farmers to participate in a new Beef Data Programme. When taken together with residual payments of €10 million under the Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme, this will amount to €20 million in direct payments to suckler farmers in 2013. This programme will assist farmers in improving the genetic quality of Irish cattle and will maintain the data flow into ICBF in order to build further knowledge and more rapid progress in breeding and ultimately in profitability for farmers. In addition, the sum of €5 million has been set aside to support the continuation for another year of the Beef Technology Adaptation Programme, a scheme that provides beef farmers with better information and improved skills to increase profitability on farms.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

188. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Galway may expect to receive their headage payment. [55804/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As processing of the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme application has recently been finalised, payment will shortly issue to the nominated bank account.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

189. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) in County Galway has not received their disadvantaged area scheme payment for 2012 in view of the fact that their stocking was curtailed as a result of their participation in the REP scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55806/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As processing of the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme application has recently been finalised, with due regard having been taken of the stocking restriction, payment will shortly issue to the nominated bank account.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

190. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary will receive payment in respect of the rural environment protection scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55820/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced REPS 4 in April 2008 and has received payments for the first four years of their contract.

REPS 4 is a measure under the 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before any payments can issue. This process has been completed for the 2012 REPS 4 application of the person named and the 75% Year 5 payment issued on 10th December 2012 for the amount of €5115.30. The remaining 25% balancing payment will issue shortly.

Departmental Contracts

191. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide details of each service in his Department that is currently outsourced; the company that provides such services and the total cost for these services; the other services which may be outsourced in the future that are currently being run in his Department; the names of the companies, fees paid and nature of service for all contracts awarded from his Department excluding legal, accounting, PR or building refurbishment related services since March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55825/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): It is not possible to provide this information in the required time. I will forward it to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Agriculture Schemes Payments

192. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a REP scheme and disadvantaged area scheme payment will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55837/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Payment under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme has not yet issued as, at this stage, the holding concerned has not yet satisfied the Scheme minimum stocking density requirements for 2012. Immediately the holding concerned is confirmed as having met these requirements, the case will be further processed with a view to payment at the earliest possible date thereafter.

The person named commenced REPS 4 in May 2008 and received payments for the first four years of their contract.

REPS 4 is a measure under the current 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before any payments can issue. This process has been completed in this case and the 75% Year 5 payment amounting to €7286.22 has been issued for payment on 10th December 2012. The remaining 25% balancing payment will issue shortly.

Agriculture Schemes Payments

193. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Galway will be paid their disadvantage area payment and their single farm payment for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55853/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In order to comply with EU requirements, the application of the person named was one of a number selected for inspection. The inspection and related processes have been finalised and payments under both schemes will shortly issue to the nominated bank account.

Agriculture Schemes Appeals

194. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 547 of 27 November 2012, the criteria used by the agricultural appeals office to deem the two appeals successful; the grounds on which the appeals were submitted under; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55899/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As the grounds for the decisions by the Agriculture Appeals Office in the two cases concerned are quite detailed, I will forward copies of the Appeals Office decisions to the Deputy with the personal details of the applicants concerned removed.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

195. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when single farm payment will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55924/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As the person named does not hold any Single Payment entitlements, no payment is due to the person named under the 2012 Single Payment Scheme.

In relation to the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, as there are outstanding issues in relation to the stocking density of the holding of the person named, my Department is making direct contact with the applicant in order to clarify matters.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

196. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a REP scheme 4 payment will issue in respect of a person in (details provided) County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55930/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced REPS 4 in June 2008 and has received payments for the first four years of their contract.

REPS 4 is a measure under the 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before any payments can issue. This process has been completed and payments have commenced. I expect payment to issue shortly to the person named.

Scéim na Limistéar faoi Mhíbhuntáiste

197. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara Chun a fhiafraí den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cén fáth nár íocadh airgead faoi Scéim na Limistéar faoi Mhíbhuntáiste do 2012 le feirmeoir (sonraí tugtha); agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [55947/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Fuarthas iar-ratas faoi Scéim na Limistéar faoi Mhíbhuntáiste 2012 ón duine ainmnithe an 11 Bealtaine 2012. Níl aon íocaíocht eisithe fós, áfach, mar nach gcomhlíonann gabháltas an té ainmnithe íos-cheanglais dlús-stoic na Scéime. A luaithe is a dheimhneofar go bhfuil an gabháltas ag comhlíonadh na gceanglas seo cuirfear an cás chun cinn le súil is íocaíocht a dhéanamh chomh luath agus is féidir ina dhiaidh sin.

Scéim na Limistéar faoi Mhíbhuntáiste

198. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cén fáth nár íocadh airgead faoi Scéim na Limistéar faoi Mhíbhuntáiste do 2012 le feirmeoir (sonraí tugtha); agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [55948/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Fuarthas iar-ratas faoi Scéim na Limistéar faoi Mhíbhuntáiste 2012 ón duine ainmnithe an 11 Bealtaine 2012. Níl aon íocaíocht eisithe fós, áfach, mar nach gcomhlíonann gabháltas an té ainmnithe íos-cheanglais dlús-stoic na Scéime. A luaithe is a dheimhneofar go bhfuil an gabháltas ag comhlíonadh na gceanglas seo cuirfear an cás chun cinn le súil is íocaíocht a dhéanamh chomh luath agus is féidir ina dhiaidh sin.

Scéim na Limistéar faoi Mhíbhuntáiste

199. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara cén fáth nár íocadh airgead faoi Scéim na Limistéar faoi Mhíbhuntáiste do 2012 le feirmeoir (sonraí tugtha); agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [55951/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Cuireadh achomharc an duine ainmnithe ar aghaidh chuig Coiste Achomhairc an DAS le breithniú a dhéanamh air; a luaithe is a dhéanann an Coiste breithniú ar an achomharc seo, cuirfear in iúl don duine i gceist maidir lena gcinneadh, i scríbhinn.

Forestry Grants

200. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a forestry payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55995/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Tax Clearance Certificate has been received by the Forest Service. Payment of the second instalment of the establishment grant cannot take place until after the fourth anniversary of planting on 20th December 2012. Therefore payment of this grant and the 2013 annual premium is expected to take place in early January 2013.

Installation Aid Scheme Applications

201. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the installation grant aid in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55996/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department has no record of having received an application for grant-aid under the Young Farmers' Installation Scheme from either of the two persons named. As the Scheme concerned has been suspended for new applications since October 2008, my Department is unable to accept any applications under the Scheme at this stage.

Ministerial Meetings

202. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has met representatives from the drinks industry recently; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [50877/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I meet, on an ongoing basis, with representatives of the various sub-sectors of the agri-food industry including the Drinks Sector. In particular the regular meetings of the Food Harvest 2020 Committee, which I chair, provide a forum for updates on implementation of the Strategy and ongoing consultation with representatives of the agri-food industry. The drinks industry made a presentation to the Committee on various matters affecting it on 28 March 2012. The Food Harvest 2020 Milestones for Success, which I published in September, includes an investment target of over €150 million in 2013 in new facilities, which was set by the industry.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

203. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if temporary promotions or acting-up allowances have not been a feature of the staffing arrangements for this EU Presidency, if he will confirm that his Department has been given sanction to make such arrangements detailing the number by grade involved, and the date sanction was sought and the date it was given. [56292/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In answer to the Deputy's question, I can confirm that the following staff were assigned a temporary acting-up allowance for a period of one year to work on matters relating to the Irish Presidency of the EU: 1 Executive Officer to Higher Executive Officer; 1 Administrative Officer to Assistant Principal Officer. The assignments were made based on Paragraph 9 (v) of Government Decision Number S180/20/10/1456 which issued on 20/12/2011.

School Completion Programme

204. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if there have been any cuts or changes to the school completion programme in Budget 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55869/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The School Completion Programme (SCP) is one of three service strands, which also includes the Home School Community Liaison and the Education Welfare Service, being integrated under the remit of the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB). The SCP aims to retain young people in the formal education system to completion of senior cycle and to generally improve the school attendance, participation and retention of its target cohort. The SCP is a key programme under the Department of Education and Skills' DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) action plan.

I wish to inform the Deputy that €26.456m is being allocated to the programme in 2013. The allocation is in line with the proposals in the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure for savings of 6.5% per annum in the SCP for the years 2012-2014. In September 2012, the Local Management Committee responsible for each individual project was notified that a reduction on last year's allocation would apply for the coming academic cycle. The full year budget for the SCP was confirmed earlier than in previous years to assist local committees to effectively refine programmes and deliver targeted interventions within budget.

Each Committee was requested to review its Retention Plan to support young people who are at risk of educational disadvantage in their school, home and community life, to remain in education and to finalise a programme of supports to effectively target available resources to meet local needs. Projects were advised to scrutinise all elements of expenditure and to seek to reduce costs and achieve efficiencies while prioritising evidence based services to support children's educational outcomes.

The NEWB, which is responsible for the operational management and direction of the SCP, has made assistance available to each local project to review its planned programme. The NEWB continues to work closely with management committees, schools and local SCP coordinators to ensure student supports are tailored to meet local needs. The adjustment identified in CRE for 2013 and 2014 will be further considered in the context of a review of the programme to be undertaken in 2013. This review will address the potential to achieve greater consistency in programme delivery, administration and other costs amongst the 124 local projects and related initiatives. A core objective of the review will be to ensure that available funds are appropriately targeted to support those most at risk of educational disadvantage and early school leaving.

Early Child Care Education Issues

205. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the required fields in which a potential pre-school leader must have achieved a level seven major award or equivalent in order to successfully receive the higher rate of capitation under the early childhood education programme; if there is a list of approved qualifications offered by Irish institutions in respect of this; if she will provide this list; if specifically any undergraduate degrees in psychology with significant modules on early childhood learning do qualify; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55934/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme was introduced in January 2010 with the objective of providing one free pre-school year for all eligible children prior to commencing primary school. Child care services participating in the ECCE programme are paid a standard capitation fee of €62.50 per week for each eligible child enrolled for the free pre-school year. Under the terms of the ECCE programme, the pre-school leaders delivering the programme must hold a certification for a major award in childcare/early education at a minimum of level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or an equivalent nationally-recognised qualification or a higher award in the childcare/early education field. In keeping with the Government's commitment to increasing standards in the pre-school sector, a higher capitation payment of €73 per week is available to childcare services in which all childcare workers have qualification levels above the minimum requirements for the programme. To qualify for the higher capitation rate, the pre-school leader must hold a qualification in a relevant discipline at a minimum of a full Level 7 award on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and meet other conditions as set out by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

Determination of the relevance of a discipline is established by the examination of the content of the programme of learning which led to the qualification. This must contain the following elements - Child development birth to six years, Early Childhood Learning Theory and Practice, Child Health and Welfare 0-6 years. The programme must also have contained a significant supervised practicum in relevant early childhood care and education settings. A degree in Psychology does not satisfy the criteria and the only relevant discipline which fully complies with required content is Early Childhood Care and Education. My Department has

accepted the recommendations of the advisory group and the outcome has been transmitted to the City and County Childcare Committees and the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations and also brought to the attention of the Further and Higher Education sectors. This information has clarified the position for childcare providers considering applying for the higher capitation payment.

Social Workers Register

206. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of additional social workers posts that have been filled in the years 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55801/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The HSE compiles a monthly census of employment in the public health and social care sector. Figures supplied by the HSE indicate that the number of whole-time-equivalent (WTE) social workers employed in the Children and Families Service area of the HSE was 1,300 at the end of July 2012. The number of social workers recorded under the census as employed in the Children and Families Service area in 2010 and 2011 was 1183 and 1220 respectively.

It is important to emphasise that work is ongoing within the HSE on the disaggregation of the Children and Families resource base from the HSE as part of the process of establishing the new Child and Family Support Agency next year. Consequently the number of social workers assigned to the Children and Families Service area will continue to be subject to change as the mapping/classification of posts into care groups is further refined between now and the establishment of the new agency. In the circumstances it is difficult to draw comparisons between current and past census returns which were not disaggregated to this degree for this service area.

The HSE has made considerable progress over recent years in recruiting additional social workers, with over 260 social workers recruited under the Ryan Implementation Plan at end 2011. The National Director of Children and Family Services, Gordon Jeyes, will continue to apply his discretion to the filling of social work vacancies, taking account of identified need and subject to services being delivered within available resources.

Child Protection Issues

207. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when she will sign a commencement order to bring the remainder of the provisions, that is, all provisions excluding parts one, four and six of the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2011 into force. [55848/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): It is intended to commence the remaining sections of the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2011 i.e. the sections dealing with special care and related matters, as soon as possible. In advance of making the commencement orders Special Care Regulations and Registration Regulations under the Health Act 2007 are required and work is at an advanced stage in this regard.

Children in Care

208. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of applications to place a child in special care that have been brought to the National

Special Care Admissions and Discharge Committee; the number of such applications which resulted in an admission to a special care unit and the number of applications that were turned down; the number of appeals decided by the National Special Care Appeals Panel and the number of appeals which resulted in a child being admitted to a special care unit. [55849/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department receives reports on a quarterly basis from the National Special Care Admissions and Discharge Committee. The HSE has advised me that between January and 30th September of this year, 49 applications to place a young person in special care were made. Of this number, 27 young persons were admitted to special care, 20 applications did not meet the criteria and were withdrawn, and 2 young persons were awaiting placement at 30th September 2012. The HSE also advise that the National Special Care Appeals Panel considered 4 appeals during that period, of which 1 resulted in a special care intervention.

Child Detention Centres

209. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason the capacity of Coovagh House Special Care Unit County Limerick has been capped at two; the exact timeline for when additional special care places will become available in accordance with the Health Service Executive National High Support and Special Care Implementation Plan 2011-2014. [55850/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The HSE has advised me that the current capacity of Coovagh House is three young people. The Unit had been closed for refurbishment, but is now reopened with a new management. It is envisaged that the Unit will increase its capacity to four in 2013, following the assignment of additional social care staff.

Budget 2013

210. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her views on whether Budget 2013 was a tough and unfair budget on young persons and youth services; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55943/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Youth Affairs Unit of my Department supports the delivery of a range of youth work programmes and services for all young people, including those from disadvantaged communities, by the voluntary youth sector. Targeted supports for disadvantaged, marginalised and at risk young people are provided through the Special Projects for Youth Scheme, the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund Rounds 1 and 2 and Local Drugs Task Force Projects. Some 477 projects and youth services throughout the country receive support under the schemes. There are 1,400 paid staff and some 40,000 volunteers in local communities involved in the provision of these services and activities for young people.

Funding of €53.173m has been provided to my Department for the provision of youth services in 2013. Within this total funding, €1.75 has been provided in a new capital funding programme for 2013. This will include €1.5m for youth cafés and youth projects and €250,000 for play and recreation initiatives in 2013. My Department will be announcing further details regarding the application process for the 2013 funding programme early in the New Year.

My Department is working on the funding allocation for youth services in 2013. Having

regard to the savings requirements identified in the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure my Department is seeking to ensure that, in the determination process for the allocations, the front line youth services, particularly those for the most vulnerable young people are protected as far as is possible from the impact of any necessary reductions in funding. Youth organisations and projects will be advised of their 2013 allocations as soon as possible.

Going forward to 2013, my Department is developing proposals to streamline the existing five separate funding lines so that projects will receive one funding stream allowing more flexibility in setting priorities, managing savings and reconfiguring service provision. In addition, my Department will be commencing a formal Value for Money review which is expected to report by mid 2013. There will be no cut to funding for local voluntary youth clubs.

Health Services Staff Issues

211. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the way more social workers will be appointed in 2013 in view of the reduction in the allocation for the Health Service Executive Vote for 2013 in respect of children and family services; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55944/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The HSE has made considerable progress since the publication of the Ryan Report Implementation Plan in 2009 in the recruitment of additional social workers. Over 260 social workers have been recruited arising from implementation of the Report's Recommendations.

The Government has given approval to the drafting of a Bill to establish the Child and Family Support Agency. Work on the preparation of the legislation is proceeding as a priority and the intention is that the Agency will be established in early 2013. This will involve the transfer of over 4,000 staff.

I welcome the allocation of €546 million in the HSE vote for 2013 in respect of children and family services. This consists of €545 million in current expenditure and €1 million in capital. This level of budgetary provision for child welfare and protection services reflects the priority attached to the Government to this important area. The overall level of resources being provided will be increased further by the inclusion within the remit of the new agency of the budget of both the Family Support Agency and the National Educational Welfare Board. Some final adjustments to the budget provision may be required on completion of a due diligence and disaggregation exercise which is currently underway within the HSE and which is due to be completed prior to the establishment of the new agency.

Once the Agency is established, the Chief Executive designate, Gordon Jeyes, will be responsible for the management of the overall combined resource. In this context he will have the discretion to fill vacant posts across all grades, including social workers, taking account of identified need and subject to services being delivered within available resources.

Child Benefit Payments

212. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the way her aspirations for childcare will be impacted by the reduction in child benefit [55945/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The issue of Child Benefit payments is a matter for the Minister for Social Protection.

My Department currently provides targeted support to parents to assist them with the cost of childcare. This support is provided through the provision of three childcare support programmes - the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) programme, the Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) programme, and the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme.

The CCS programme provides funding to community-based childcare services to enable them to provide childcare at reduced rates to parents in receipt of social welfare payments. Middle and low income working parents may also qualify for support. Parents who qualify for the top rate of subvention under the programme receive €95 per week towards full-day childcare costs. The CETS programme provides €145 towards the weekly cost of full time childcare places to participating childcare services for trainees and students who are deemed qualified by FÁS or the VEC. Students on part-time courses are funded on a pro rata basis.

The ECCE programme provides one free pre-school year to all eligible children in the year before commencing primary school. Children aged between 3 years 2 months and 4 years 6 months at 1 September in the relevant year qualify for a maximum of 15 hours per week free pre-school provision over a 38 week period. This is a universal programme to which all children have access.

In 2012, the total expenditure by my Department on these three programmes is expected to be in the region of €240 million. These programmes have been maintained despite the ongoing need to reduce Government expenditure and they represent a significant investment in supporting parents with the cost of childcare.

As part of Budget 2013, I announced with my colleague the Minister for Social Protection a joint school age childcare initiative which will provide further additional support to both the community and private childcare sector. This initiative, which represents an annual investment of €14 million, will provide important support to parents in low income families wishing to take up employment, along with ensuring that quality after-school care is in place to support children's development.

Future developments relating to early years care and education will be considered during preparation of the new National Early Years Strategy which is currently being developed by my Department and is expected to be completed in the first half of 2013. This Strategy will cover a range of issues affecting children in their first years of life such as health, family support, learning and development and care and education and will identify the structures and policies needed to improve early year's experience in Ireland.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

213. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if temporary promotions or acting-up allowances have not been a feature of the staffing arrangements for this EU Presidency, if she will confirm that her Department has been given sanction to make such arrangements detailing the number by grade involved, and the date sanction was sought and the date it was given. [56294/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The information requested by the Deputy is set out as follows:

Grade	Acting up Position	Sanction Sought from DPER	Sanction Received from DPER
Higher Executive Officer	Assistant Principal Officer	28th May 2012	30th May, 2012

Croke Park Agreement Implementation

214. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the details of his proposed pay related savings of €308 million in 2013; the way this saving will be achieved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55698/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Government is committed to maximising the savings under the Public Service Agreement (PSA). To date, there have already been very significant efficiencies and savings achieved under PSA in the Health Sector. A total of €308 million in pay-related savings has been targeted for the health services in 2013. These savings will be achieved under three separate headings, firstly by intensifying the implementation of the Public Service Agreement within the health services, secondly through the negotiation of an agreement on further workplace change and savings with public sector unions, as has been proposed by Government, and thirdly through further reductions in staffing numbers in 2013.

Required measures under the PSA include new rosters in hospitals, changes in skill mix in nursing homes, the implementation of the recent agreement reached with Hospital Consultants, a significant reduction in overtime and agency spending and a reduction in management grades. Pay savings are also targeted from the reconfiguration of service models in hospitals, disability, mental health and children and family services.

The Government has initiated discussions with the Trade Unions on a new agenda for improvements in the productivity of public servants and reductions in the cost of delivery of public services. Detailed engagement is expected to commence early in 2013, under the leadership of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

HSE Expenditure

215. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if the proposed saving of €160 million in the cost of drugs and other prescribed items is a gross or a net figure; the estimate for the cost of new drugs being prescribed in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55699/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Following intensive negotiations involving the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association (IPHA), the HSE and the Department of Health, a major new deal on the cost of drugs in the State was concluded in October last. It will deliver a number of important benefits, including

- significant reductions for patients in the cost of drugs;
- a lowering of the drugs bill to the State;
- timely access for patients to new cutting-edge drugs for certain conditions; and
- reducing the cost base of the health system into the future.

The gross savings arising from this deal will be in excess of €400 million over three years. €210 million from the gross savings will make available new drugs to patients over three years. Thus, the deal will result in a net reduction in the HSE expenditure on drugs of about €190 million. The cost of new drugs in 2013 is estimated at €70 million.

Departmental Expenditure

216. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide details of the €60 million savings on the Department Vote announced in the Expenditure Report 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55700/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The adjustments to the Department of Health Vote, Vote 38, are set out in the Budget book published last week and available on the website of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Department of Health Vote is being reduced by €90 million. This arises from a range of measures. Even allowing for additional expenditure related to the EU Presidency, there will be a reduction in the Department's Administrative Budget. There will be savings on the National Treatment Purchase Fund and €25m of its budget will be transferred to the HSE for use in an Intervention Fund. There will also be a range of further reductions, including a reduction in funding to health agencies.

Public Procurement Contracts Expenditure

217. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the way he will make €20 million savings in procurement in 2013; the procurement savings that have been made to date in 2012; the anticipated outturn for procurement savings in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55701/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Delivery of procurement savings is a service matter. Therefore your question has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to you.

Medical Card Application Numbers

218. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional medical cards he anticipates being granted in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55707/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The information requested by the Deputy will form part of the Health Service Executive 2013 National Service Plan, which is required to be published on foot of the Executive's allocation under the Estimates 2013 process.

Medical Card Application Numbers

219. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of additional general practitioner cards he anticipates being granted in 2013, not including those over 70 years who are losing the automatic entitlement to a medical card; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55708/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The information requested by the Deputy will form part of the Health Service Executive 2013 National Service Plan, which is required to be published on foot of the Executive's allocation under the Estimates 2013 process.

Medical Card Eligibility

220. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons aged over 70 years that will lose their entitlement to a medical card in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55709/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): At present, people over 70 are entitled to a medical card if their income is less than €700 per week for a single person or €1,400 for a couple. In line with measures announced in Budget 2013, the income limits are being reduced to €600 a week for an individual and €1,200 a week for a couple. This will mean that a single person with an income under €600 per week or a couple with an income under €1,200 per week, will still qualify for a medical card. If a single person has an income of between €600 and €700 per week, or a couple has an income of between €1,200 and €1,400 per week, they will qualify for a GP visit card instead of a medical card.

It is estimated that these changes will affect about 20,000 persons out of 360,000 over-70's medical card holders. This is about 5% of the entire over 70's population. Under the new arrangements, it is envisaged that 92% of the over 70's will retain their medical cards.

Health Insurance Prices

221. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the way the Programme for Government pledge to reduce the costs of delivering private healthcare will be fulfilled through the health budget for 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55710/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Government is committed to keeping down the cost of health insurance so that it is affordable for as many people as possible and remains committed to protecting community rating, whereby everyone pays the same price for the same health insurance product, irrespective of age or health status. The Programme for Government contains a commitment to put a permanent scheme of risk equalisation in place. This is a key requirement for the existing private health insurance market and is designed to keep health insurance affordable for older persons and to maintain the stability of the market.

I was pleased, therefore, to recently publish the Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2012 on 18 October, to give effect to a new Risk Equalisation Scheme (RES) to be applied from 1 January 2013. An effective and robust RES is required in the Irish private health insurance market in order to protect affordability for those who need it most. The Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2012 is now currently before the Houses of the Oireachtas and the Scheme will take effect from 1 January 2013. The legislation provides for a range of credits to be payable to insurers on behalf of insured persons. I recently announced the rates of risk equalisation credits to apply in 2013 at the Committee Stage debate on this Bill.

The rates are funded by a stamp duty payable by all insurers in respect of each insured person. The credit is provided at source – that is, the cost of the policy is reduced by the amount of the risk equalisation credit. The measures are designed to result in no overall increase of premiums paid in the market and to spread the risk more evenly between the healthy and the less healthy, as well as the old and the young. This action is in line with plans to move to Universal Health Insurance, under which everyone will be insured for health care. A strong system of risk equalisation must be in place in order for this to be achieved. A more efficient, cost effective market will lead to greater competition and will encourage people to take out health insurance. The introduction of the Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2012 fulfils the commitment made in the Programme for Government to introduce a system of risk equalisation for the private

health insurance market, as we move to develop a new system of universal health insurance.

As part of Budget 2013, I announced further detail on legislation to provide for the charging of all private patients in public hospitals. Primary legislation will be introduced during 2013 to provide for charging of private in-patients in public hospitals where they are not in a designated private bed. On that basis, Budget 2013 has provided for additional patient income of €60 million in 2013. The implementation date will be announced during 2013 when the new legislation is in place. In the meantime, the maintenance charges for private in-patients in public hospitals remain unchanged. An additional €5 million in patient revenue during 2013 arises from increasing the daily in-patient charge by €5 from €75 to €80. The date of implementation will also be announced later in 2013. These measures are designed to recoup some of the cost of treating private patients in public hospitals and to generate much needed income for the public hospital system.

The Government remains committed to keeping down both the cost of health insurance, so that it is affordable for as many people as possible, and the general cost of healthcare delivery, as part of measures to ensure the sustainability of the private health insurance market in the transition to a UHI system.

Care of the Elderly

222. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the additional funding that will be provided for the care of older persons in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55711/12]

223. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the additional home care packages that will be provided in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55712/12]

224. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the additional home help hours that will be provided in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55713/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 222 to 224, inclusive, together.

Protecting the vulnerable, including supporting older people to remain at home and in their communities for as long as possible, is a priority for this Government. The issues raised by the Deputy in relation to services for older people are being considered at present in the context of finalising the HSE Service Plan 2013. The position on each of the questions raised will be reflected in the forthcoming Service Plan, which will be published in the near future.

Medical Waste Disposal

225. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the total tonnage of medicines collected under the medicines DUMP scheme since its inception to date; the estimated monetary value of all the medicines collected under the scheme; the monetary amount spent by the Health Service Executive on administering and promoting the DUMP scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55732/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Dispose of Unused Medicines Properly (DUMP) service is organised by the Health Service Executive. The HSE has therefore been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Eligibility

226. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health his plans to recognise Fibromyalgia as a long term illness; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55747/12]

228. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health his plans to recognise chronic fatigue syndrome as a long term illness; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55749/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 226 and 228 together.

There are no plans to extend the list of conditions covered by the Long Term Illness Scheme.

Under the Drug Payment Scheme, no individual or family pays more than €132 per calendar month towards the cost of approved prescribed medicines. The scheme significantly reduces the cost burden for families and individuals incurring ongoing expenditure on medicines. In addition, people who cannot, without undue hardship, arrange for the provision of medical services for themselves and their dependants may be entitled to a medical card. In the assessment process, the Health Service Executive can take into account medical costs incurred by an individual or a family. Those who are not eligible for a medical card may still be able to avail of a GP visit card, which covers the cost of general practice consultation.

Health Services Staff Issues

227. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health his plans to educate persons particularly medical professionals on best practice on treatment of and diagnosis of Fibromyalgia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55748/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Fibromyalgia is a distinct condition under the international classification of diseases which is the international standard by which diseases are classified and is accepted by Ireland and is endorsed by the World Health Organisation. The diagnosis and treatment of fibromyalgia is a matter for clinicians in the Primary Care and hospital settings. The HSE is responsible for clinical services and my Department has requested that the clinical programme revert to you directly on this issue.

Question No. 228 answered with Question No. 226.

Health Services Staff Training

229. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health his plans to educate persons particularly medical professionals on best practice on treatment of and diagnosis of chronic fatigue syndrome; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55750/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I have no direct role in the issue raised by the Deputy. The content of educational programmes for medical practitioners is a matter for the medical schools subject to approval by the Medical Council. I have asked the Health Service Executive to provide the Deputy with information regarding current service provisions for this condition.

Health Services Provision

230. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health if, as requested by Spina Bifida suffers and advocates, a consultant paediatric urologist will be made available to children with Spina Bifida; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55751/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to this particular issue, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy.

Pharmacy Services

231. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Health his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding pharmacy charges [55757/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive is responsible for the administration of the General Medical Services Scheme and community drug schemes. The HSE has therefore been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

232. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Health the policy that operates in regard to the cochlear implantation programme based in Beaumont Hospital, Dublin, which is funded by his Department; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the professionals working on this programme are actively encouraging parents not to learn Irish sign language and believe that learning Irish sign language would hinder the ability of the children to learn speech or lip reading, research proves that this belief is unfounded; his views on the ethical issues surrounding the cochlear programme and on the kind of support that underpins the implantation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55766/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the specific matter which is the subject of the Deputy's query, as this is a service issue it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Vaccination Programme

233. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Health if he will consider the introduction of the MenB vaccine into the immunisation schedule when licensed early in the new year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55789/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Meningococcal B vaccine has received a positive opinion from the Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP) of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) but it is not yet licensed for use. The CHMP's opinion will now be sent to the European Commission for the granting of a marketing authorisation.

The immunisation programme in Ireland is based on the advice of the National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC). NIAC is a committee of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland comprising of experts in a number of specialties including infectious diseases, paediatrics and public health. The committee's recommendations are informed by public health advice, international best practice and by the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE).

There is no doubt about the role that vaccines have played in improving the health of children. The development of new vaccines is very welcome. A Health Technology Assessment which includes a cost benefit analysis is carried out prior to any new vaccine being considered. This has a vital role in ensuring that care technologies, including vaccines, are used in a manner appropriate to their ability to maximise health gain and achieve value for money.

Should NIAC advice recommend the inclusion of a new vaccine into the primary childhood immunisation programme in Ireland, my Department, in association with the National Immunisation Office will examine the issue. If it is subsequently decided that a vaccine should be included in the vaccination programme, the Health Service Executive, through the National Immunisation Office, initiates the procurement process.

Ambulance Service Provision

234. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of emergency calls that the Health Service Executive ambulance service in Dublin north east region received in the years 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012 between the hours of 9 a.m. and 9 p.m.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55794/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The HSE National Ambulance Service (NAS) provides emergency pre-hospital care and emergency patient transport. When a 999 ambulance call is received, the caller is connected with the ambulance command and control centre for that area. The details of the call are recorded on a Computer Aided Dispatch System (CAD), with Advanced Medical Priority Dispatch (AMPDS).

The AMPDS system is designed to triage a call, so that the most appropriate resource is dispatched to the patient. The system allows an ambulance to be dispatched while the caller is still providing details of the patient's condition. The controller can also provide pre-arrival instructions to the caller, to allow initial medical assistance to be available and administered to the patient without delay.

In all cases, in line with the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council Emergency Priority Dispatch Standard, the nearest available ambulance is tasked to the highest priority incident. The highest priority incidents are ECHO (life-threatening cardiac emergency) and DELTA (life-threatening non-cardiac emergency). As the Deputy's query relates to service matters, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Services

235. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to roll out the Ulysses Pain Management Programme at Beaumont Hospital, Dublin 9; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55796/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the specific matter raised by the Deputy, as this is a service issue it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Hospital Staff Issues

236. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 1136 of 6 November 2012, if a breakdown for the agency and overtime usage across all

disciplines in the Louth Meath Hospital Group exists; when the breakdown was compiled; and if he will supply such a breakdown. [55808/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): A detailed breakdown of agency and over-time usage in a particular service area is a matter for the Health Service Executive, and as such, the Deputy's enquiry has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Hospital Staff Issues

237. **Deputy Regina Doherty** asked the Minister for Health his views on appointing a paediatric urologist consultant to Temple Street Children's Hospital Dublin; when he expects this role to be filled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55821/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Medicinal Products Expenditure

238. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Health if anti-epilepsy drugs will be exempt from generic substitution in the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55841/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill, the Irish Medicines Board has statutory responsibility for establishing and publishing a List of Interchangeable Medicinal Products.

In deciding whether to add a group of medicinal products to the List of Interchangeable Medicinal Products, the Board must be satisfied that each medicinal product which falls within the group:

(a) has the same qualitative and quantitative composition in each of its active substances as each of the other medicinal products which fall within the group;

(b) is in the same pharmaceutical form as, or in a pharmaceutical form that is appropriate for substitution for, each of the other products in the group; and

(c) has the same route of administration as each of the other medicinal products which fall within the group.

In addition, the Bill provides that the Board is not permitted to add a group of medicinal products to the List of Interchangeable Medicinal Products where, for example, any of the medicinal products cannot be safely substituted for any one or more of the other medicinal products in the group. To further enhance the patient safety aspect of generic substitution, Section 13 of the Bill allows a prescriber to indicate on a prescription that a branded interchangeable medicinal product should, for clinical reasons, not be substituted.

I am satisfied that these provisions address the concerns raised by the Deputy.

It is important to point out that generic medicines must meet exactly the same standards of quality and safety and have the same effect as the originator medicine. All of the generic medicines on the Irish market are required to be properly licensed and meet the requirements of the Irish Medicines Board.

The Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Bill 2012 was published on the 13th of July 2012. The Bill completed its passage through the Seanad on Wednesday, the 19th of September, and is currently continuing its passage through the Dáil. An Implementation Group on Generic Substitution and Reference Pricing has been established and it held its inaugural meeting on the 9th of August 2012. The Group met with the Irish Epilepsy Association, amongst others, on the 20th of November as part of its stakeholder meetings.

Mental Health Services Report

239. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the procedure for hospitals dealing with patients with mental health issues and his views on whether advice and opinions of the patients family are taken into account with regard to the way the patient is treated and their aftercare. [55852/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): *A Vision for Change* recognises the vital role played by family members in the recovery process in the area of mental health and this is accepted and supported by mental health professionals. As well as listening more closely to service users, our mental health services have developed a number of initiatives to enhance the engagement with family members in the treatment process. Involvement of family in a patient's treatment and care is normally with the patient's consent.

The issue of confidentiality is central to the doctor patient relationship and is a vital component in building trust. Respecting the autonomy of the service user and meeting the information needs of family members is a central consideration in mental health treatment plans. Where there is a risk of harm to the patient or others, the Medical Council Code of Ethics allows doctors to breach confidence in the interests of preventing harm. The Mental Health Commission has also issued guidelines encouraging the involvement of family where appropriate in respect of admission to, treatment and discharge from Approved Centres.

It is recognised that where patients involve their families in their care and treatment planning, a better outcome for the patient is likely and I would encourage such involvement where possible.

Medical Card Applications

240. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite an application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55854/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible

Health Promotion Issues

241. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if he has considered implementing a tax on fast food outlets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55860/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Minister set up a Special Action Group on Obesity to examine and progress a number of issues to address the problem of obesity and its

health implications. The Group is concentrating on a range of measures including actions such as: calorie posting in restaurants, nutritional labelling, marketing of food and drink to children, the supply of healthy food products in vending machines, the detection and treatment of obesity, healthy eating guidelines and the promotion of physical activity.

A tax on fast-food outlets is not currently being considered.

Hospital Consultants Remuneration

242. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding doctors pay (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55862/12]

243. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if he will respond to the following query regarding oncology consultants (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55863/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 242 and 243 together.

Ongoing reform and increased efficiency in service delivery is essential. It is imperative that consultants, given their roles within the health system, lead this process. The measures agreed between health service management and the consultant representative bodies at the Labour Relations Commission in September will allow for very significant reforms in how health and specifically consultant services are delivered and will ultimately lead to improved outcomes for users of the services.

In September 2012 I announced that, henceforth, the appointment of new consultants will be made at a new entry level pay rate, significantly reduced from the current starting level. Therefore, doctors who have been successful at interview after 1 October are being appointed at 30% reduced salary rates. Current consultants' pay is protected under the Croke Park Agreement and is not affected by the introduction of the lower rates.

It is essential that salary levels in the public service, and particularly those attaching to the most highly paid positions, are as far as possible brought into line with those in comparable countries. It is not sustainable, in the light of the State's serious financial difficulties, to continue to recruit at the previous rates. If we are to continue to provide consultant-level career opportunities for doctors and, subject to the limitations on available resources, to replace consultants who retire and where possible expand overall capacity, this can only happen on the basis of a lower-cost model.

Health Services Allowances

244. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health the positions regarding allowances in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 3; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55864/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

General Practitioner Services

245. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if there are any plans to change the current arrangement whereby general practitioners in training need to work 120 hours per year in out of hours duty; the reason GPs have been singled out to undergo this measure and work for free; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55865/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Postgraduate Training Committee of the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) has responsibility for the promotion and maintenance of standards of General Practice training in Ireland. The provision that GP Trainees experience a minimum of 120 hours of out-of-hours work under the supervision of a nominated trainer is contained in the ICGP's "Criteria for Postgraduate Training in General Practice 2004". Changes to the criteria document and to the standards of General Practice training in Ireland can be made only by the ICGP, under the guidance of its Assessors' Group. I have been advised by the HSE that it is not aware of any plans by the ICGP to change the duration of the out-of-hours experience required by GP Trainees.

In September 2012, the Government approved the outcome of the review of allowances by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. Following this review, the GP Trainees allowance was approved for continued payment to existing and new beneficiaries but will be subject to review or modification.

The review process had provided that sanction for payment of allowances to new beneficiaries was withdrawn with effect from 31 January 2012. For allowances that have subsequently been sanctioned following the review, arrangements have been made for the restoration of the payment of such allowances with effect from 1 February 2012.

Home Help Service Provision

246. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if he has data which is more recent than September 2012 in relation to the number of home help hours being supplied to persons in County Louth and if so if he will supply those figures. [55893/12]

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

Respite Care Services

247. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health in view of the cut in the respite grant for 2013, his plans to tackle respite providers that are charging huge sums of money for respite; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55906/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The administration of the Respite Care Grant is a matter for the Department of Social Protection. The funding situation for the disability sector is not yet available pending the finalisation of the HSE's National Service Plan for 2013. Savings required globally from the Health Budget will have an impact on all services, including disability services, and these will be outlined later this month when the Minister for Health approves the National Service Plan. The issue raised by the Deputy in relation to the charges by respite providers in the health sector is more appropriate for the Health Service Executive. Accordingly, the Department has asked the HSE to provide the details requested of such services it may be aware of, directly to the Deputy.

General Medical Services Scheme Administration

248. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Health the qualifying criteria for a medical general practitioner to be registered as a doctor who can accept patients that are covered by the GMS scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55936/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Under the Health (Provision of General Practitioner Services) Act 2012, a registered medical practitioner:

(a) whose name is included in the Specialist Division of the register of medical practitioners established under section 43(2)(b) of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007, and

(b) who holds a current certificate of registration within the meaning of section 2 of that Act in respect of the medical specialty “General Practice” recognised under section 89(1) of that Act;

is eligible to apply to the HSE for a contract to provide services to medical card and GP visit card holders under the General Medical Services Scheme.

Medical Card Applications

249. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding an application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55994/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

250. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if temporary promotions or acting-up allowances have not been a feature of the staffing arrangements for this EU Presidency, if he will confirm that his Department has been given sanction to make such arrangements detailing the number by grade involved, and the date sanction was sought and the date it was given. [56301/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): One staff member, a Higher Executive Officer in the Capital EU, International and Research Policy Unit, was awarded Assistant Principal Officer duties allowance. Sanction was sought 17 May 2012 and was approved 24 May 2012 in line with Government Decision S/180/20/10/1456 of 16 December 2011 in relation to Ireland’s Presidency of the EU, after which time the arrangement will cease.

Taxi Regulations

251. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to amend hackney regulations to ensure the owner of an SPSV licence will only be permitted to use that licence on a vehicle registered to the same name; if his attention been drawn to the fact that many hackneys in rural Ireland operate under licences that are rented from previous operators as no new licences are available to purchase; if he will consider allowing hackney operators to purchase the licences they operate under from the owners; and if he will make a statement

on the matter. [55740/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly): Action 15 of the Taxi Regulation Review Report 2011 proposes a requirement for all holders of small public service vehicles (SPSV) vehicles to also be the registered owner of the vehicle to which the licence relates, with certain limited exclusions permitted to deal with vehicles operating under long term leases. The aim of this proposal is to ensure responsibility is taken by the vehicle licence holder for the upkeep of safety and other standards of vehicles being used to carry members of the public. I understand that the National Transport Authority (NTA) is in the process of bringing in legislation to give effect to this proposal, which will apply to all small public service vehicles, including hackneys.

I am informed by the NTA that hackney licences are not currently transferable to another person and that the NTA do not have any proposals to change that position. I am also informed by the NTA that the current regulations do facilitate the issuing of wheelchair accessible hackney licences. As part of the Taxi Review, the Review Group considered the specific SPSV requirements in rural areas and in this regard the Review Group proposed the development of a local area hackney licence under Action 46 of the Review Report. The aim of the proposed local area hackney licence is to facilitate the low cost entry to the hackney market for transport provision in rural areas that, otherwise, would be unlikely to have such services. I understand that the NTA will be considering bringing forward proposals to advance this recommendation during next year.

Taxi Regulations

252. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason SPSV's registered prior to January 2009 or their registered number is under 45,000 are permitted to use a vehicle up to 15 years old while SPSV's registered after that date or are numbered above 45,000 are only permitted to use a vehicle of up to ten years old; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55744/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly): The regulation of the taxi industry, including issues pertaining to vehicle age limit, is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the Taxi Regulation Act, 2003. The NTA is the lead agency with responsibility for implementation of the recommendations of the Taxi Regulation Review Report 2011. I am informed by the NTA that proposals to limit the age of operation of small public service vehicles (excluding limousines) to nine years of age were first mooted some years ago and those entrants to the taxi industry since January 2009 have entered that industry on the basis of the intended introduction of such age limits.

This position was then reflected in Action 10 of the Taxi Regulation Review Report published in January of this year, which recognised the January 2009 date. While the intention of that recommendation is that, over time, vehicles older than nine years will be removed from the taxi and hackney fleet, the report recommended a transitional arrangement to accommodate licence holders who had entered the industry prior to 2009. Those arrangements would permit the relevant vehicles to operate up to and including fourteen years, subject to passing a roadworthiness (NCT) test and an NTA Licence Renewal Assessment at six monthly intervals where the vehicle is over 9 years. I understand that the NTA is in the process of introducing regulations to give effect to these age related provisions.

Public Transport Provision

253. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the last performance review of Bus Éireann was undertaken; when the last review of mileage charge differentiation was undertaken to determine fairness and equality among bus users; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55752/12]

254. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the last performance review of Dublin Bus was undertaken; when the last review of mileage charge differentiation was undertaken to determine fairness and equality among bus users; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55753/12]

255. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when the last performance review of Iarnród Éireann was undertaken; when the last review of mileage charge differentiation was undertaken to determine fairness and equality among bus users; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55754/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 253 to 255, inclusive, together.

The issues raised are matters for the National Transport Authority (NTA) and I have forwarded the Deputy's questions to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Public Transport Provision

256. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if EU funding was allocated to purchase the additional buses for Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann; if so, the amount; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55797/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As I indicated to the Deputy in my reply to PQ 54943/12 on 06 December 2012, the only funding approved for Public Transport projects under the BMW Regional Authority Operational Programme (2007-2013) was in respect of the Elimination of Speed Restrictions at Portarlinton. Similarly, the only funding approved for Public Transport projects under the Trans European Network-Transport (TEN-T) multi annual programme was for the DART Underground project. No EU funding has been approved for the purchase of new buses for either Bus Éireann or Dublin Bus.

Road Network

257. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if construction works on the N28 Ringaskiddy to Cork, N60 Castlebar to Claremorris and the N6 Galway city outer bypass is likely to commence in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55798/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its allocated budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects, including road maintenance, is a matter in the first instance for the NRA in accordance with Sections 17 & 19 of the Roads Act.

In line with the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Framework 2012-2016 and the out-

come of the comprehensive current spending review last year, the NRA's capital budget in 2013 will be €278m while the road maintenance budget next year will be €41.6m. The scale of the reductions in the allocations to the NRA obviously will present challenges over the course of 2013. I do not expect any major new projects directly funded by the Exchequer to commence construction in the coming year, however two PPP projects may proceed to construction. As regards the Galway Outer Bypass this project is on hold pending the outcome of legal proceedings.

Public Transport Provision

258. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of passengers Iarnród Éireann, Bus Éireann, Dublin Bus and Luas carried in the years 2009, 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; if his Department measures similar transport usage by private sector companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55799/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): My Department does not have passenger data for private sector companies. Passenger data for Iarnród Éireann, Bus Éireann, Dublin Bus and Luas for the years 2009 to 2011 are contained in the published Annual Reports for the companies concerned. I have forwarded the Deputy's question to the companies for direct reply in relation to passenger data for 2012 to date. Please advise my private office if you do not receive replies within ten working days.

Road Tolls

259. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare could be considered for an exemption from M50 tolls due to medical reasons without adaptations to their car or an exemption from motor tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55815/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The implementation of individual national road schemes, including toll roads, is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA). In particular, the statutory power to levy tolls on national roads, to make toll bye-laws and to enter into toll agreements with private investors in respect of national roads is vested in the NRA under Part V of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended by the Planning and Development Act 2000 and the Roads Act 2007). Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Public Transport Provision

260. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the details and arrangements applying to all Bus Éireann wheelchair accessible routes within and serving County Cavan and County Monaghan; the details of any other wheelchair accessible public or private transport service operating in or to and from these counties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55904/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issue raised is a matter for Bus Éireann and any other public or private transport service licensed by the

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National Transport Authority (NTA) to operate in the areas referred to by the Deputy. I have forwarded the Deputy's question to both Bus Eireann and the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive replies within ten working days.

Departmental Staff Remuneration

261. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if temporary promotions or acting-up allowances have not been a feature of the staffing arrangements for this EU Presidency, if he will confirm that his Department has been given sanction to make such arrangements detailing the number by grade involved, and the date sanction was sought and the date it was given. [56305/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): There are no temporary promotions or acting up allowances as part of the staffing arrangements for the 2013 EU Presidency in my Department.