

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 18, inclusive, answered orally.

EU Presidency Issues

19. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Defence his plans for enhancing EU-UN relations during Ireland's EU Presidency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13257/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): Since the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, now conducts the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy assisted by the European External Action Service. The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy forms an integral part of the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy. In the area of Common Security and Defence Policy, the role of the Presidency is now limited to supporting the High Representative and the European External Action Service in this regard. However, that said, this arrangement provides Ireland with an opportunity to influence the Common Security and Defence Policy agenda. As part of Ireland's Presidency of the European Council 2013, I prioritised a number of areas including enhancing EU/UN Relations, in particular, through EU engagement and participation in UN Peacekeeping. I hosted a very successful and well attended seminar in Dublin Castle on this subject. Speakers from the EU, NATO, the UN and, for the first time, the African Union as well academia gave informative presentations to over 120 delegates who attended from all over Europe.

This seminar informed the follow up discussion at the Informal meeting of EU Defence Ministers who recognised the primacy of the UN in the maintenance of international peace and security and the requirement for the EU to work hand in hand with the UN. The attendance at the Informal meeting of EU Ministers for Defence including, for the first time the UN represented by the Under Secretary General at the Department of Peacekeeping Operations also has cemented this priority into the thinking of the EU. At the Informal meeting a number of follow-up work strands were identified and these will be progressed with the European External Action Service.

In summary, this priority has and will continue to provide impetus to the Union as a whole to the enhancement of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy, a critical component of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, and to the United Nations which is central to the achievement of Ireland's foreign policy objectives.

Defence Forces Personnel

20. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Defence the number of medical staff within the Defence Forces; the number who have a psychiatric qualification; the number in each category serving in a medical role here and overseas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13150/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Military Authorities have advised me that the number of medical staff within the Defence Forces is 217, comprising 17 Medical Officers, 5 Line Officers, 4 Dentists, 3 Pharmacists and 1 Clinical Psychologist and the remaining 187 being of other ranks. Of the 217 medical staff, 186 medical staff are in the Central Medical Unit, 6 in the Directorate of the Medical Corps, 8 in the Air Corps and 17 in the Naval Service. A total of 7 (1 Medical Officer and 6 Medics) are currently serving overseas as part of the UNIFIL mission to Lebanon.

The Defence Forces do not currently have a psychiatrist within their medical staff, however a civilian psychiatrist with extensive experience of military psychiatry is engaged in an occupational psychiatry role in St Bricin's Hospital on a one day per week basis. The Defence Forces have a Clinical Psychologist who operates from St Bricin's Hospital and takes referrals from medical officers, a civilian psychiatrist and the Personnel Support Services (PSS). In turn she liaises with the civilian psychiatrist.

Following publication of the Defence Forces Medical Service Review by PA Consulting Group in 2009 a number of Working Groups were set up and tasked with identifying the practical steps to be taken to achieve implementation of the PA Report. Following the completion of the work of the Working Groups a time bound implementation plan was drawn up to implement their recommendations.

The Central Medical Unit was formally established in 2012 to enable the detailed structures, processes and personnel to be put in place to provide for the support, management and delivery of modern medical services for the Defence Forces. This new Central Medical Unit brings all medical personnel under one central command. It has responsibility for the management and delivery of medical services, including the allocation of medical resources across the system based on operational requirements and demands.

Question No. 21 answered with Question No. 6.

Question No. 22 answered with Question No. 17.

Defence Forces Expenditure

23. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Defence the way Ireland's defence expenditure as a share of GDP compares with other EU nations; his optimum target for such expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13266/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): Each country pursues a Defence policy that reflects its particular requirements and there can be significant differences in the proportion of funding that differing States allocate to Defence. I am committed to ensuring that the Defence Forces can continue to meet this State's defence policy requirements. The latest comparable figures obtained from the European Defence Agency (EDA) show that Ireland's 2010 Defence expenditure, including Army Pensions, at 0.59% of GDP, was the second lowest across the participating EU member states. Luxembourg at 0.48% had the lowest percentage with the United Kingdom at 2.56% having the highest. The average figure for Defence spending in 2010 across

participating EU member states was 1.61% of GDP. Ireland has the lowest percentage of Defence expenditure as a share of GDP among the six EU countries not in NATO.

The current economic conditions have necessitated reductions in public sector expenditure in Ireland, including Defence expenditure. Having regard to these resource constraints, I initiated a broad range of measures aimed at maintaining the operational capacity of the Defence Forces.

Arising from the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure, I secured the agreement of Government agreed to stabilise the strength of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) at 9,500 personnel. Within this strength ceiling, a major re-organisation of the Defence Forces was initiated. This has prioritised operational capability and re-deployed PDF personnel from administrative and support tasks to operational Units. A major re-organisation of the Reserve Defence Force is also currently underway. In addition, equipment procurement continues to prioritise Defence Forces operational requirements.

Together, these measures are ensuring that the Defence Forces remain fit for purpose. The Chief of Staff has confirmed that the Defence Forces can continue to meet all operational requirements, at home and overseas.

Defence Forces Deployment

24. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Defence if he will report on the Defence Forces mission in Afghanistan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13270/13]

29. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Defence when Irish Defence Forces personnel will be withdrawn from Afghanistan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13275/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 24 and 29 together.

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. On 9 October 2012, the UN Security Council extended ISAF's mandate for a further year until October 2013. Ireland has participated in the NATO-led UN mandated mission in Afghanistan 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 me.

The seven Defence Forces personnel currently participating in the ISAF are all located in ISAF HQ, Kabul and work in staff appointments in planning and administrative roles. The work being carried out by Defence Forces personnel, particularly by those in the Counter Improvised Explosive Device (C-IED) cell, represents an important contribution to this UN mandated mission.

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.

Defence Forces Remuneration

25. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Defence the reason soldiers and other military professionals are not consulted on pay and service negotiations until after a prospective deal has been concluded; if he has expressed any suggestions to the Department for Public Expenditure and Reform to include them in the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13151/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): Talks on an extension to the 'Public Service Agreement 2010 – 2014' concluded last month. Arising out of those discussions, the Labour Relations Commission proposals regarding the 'Public Service Agreement 2013-2016' are currently being considered by the public sector staff representatives, prior to a ballot of their members.

It is not the case that the Representative Associations of members of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF), the Representative Association for Commissioned Officers, RACO, and the Permanent Defence Force Other Ranks Representative Association, PDOFRRA, were not consulted until after a prospective deal had been concluded. It is true to say that they are not trade unions and are not, therefore, represented by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. While this means that there must be parallel negotiations with the associations, it does not make any such negotiations less real.

Discussions on a Defence Sector agreement were held between Defence sector civil and military management and the Representative Associations of members of the PDF in parallel to the discussions which were held with the public sector trade unions affiliated to ICTU. The PDF Representative Associations were also informed, in tandem with all other unions and associations who stayed in the talks, of the proposals that emanated directly from Government. It is important to state that the Defence staff representatives had an opportunity to influence and shape the outcome in the best interests of their members by negotiation and discussion with their management counterparts.

I am satisfied with the present parallel process arrangements in place and have no plans to raise the matter with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

NATO Membership

26. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Defence if he has plans for the State to join NATO. [13161/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can confirm that this Government does NOT intend to join NATO. Our cooperation with NATO will continue to be conducted through the Partnership for Peace. There has been no change in policy in relation to Ireland's engagement in NATO or indeed in our Policy for deploying our troops to NATO-led Missions, which requires that the Mission be UN Mandated, and Government and Dáil approved. Ireland's relations with NATO are set within the framework of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) and Partnership for Peace (PfP), including its Planning and Review Process (PARP).

Ireland joined EAPC and Partnership for Peace (PfP) on 1 December 1999. The EAPC is a multi-lateral body, made up of the 28 members of NATO and the members of PfP, for political and security-related dialogue and consultation between its members.

The primary aim of our PfP participation is to enhance the Defence Forces' interoperability

with other professional military forces for the purpose of engaging in UN authorised peace-keeping and peace support operations led by the UN, EU or NATO. Participation in PfP is fundamental to Ireland being able to meet its obligations in providing professional peacekeepers for international crisis management and peacekeeping operations mandated by the UN.

Allow me to reiterate that our participation in PfP is not prejudicial to our traditional policy of military neutrality.

Defence Forces Reserve Abolition

27. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Defence if he will provide details of his plans to abolish the Reserve Defence Forces; if he will provide the details of any circulars issued by his Department within the past 24 months on this issue. [13155/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): There are no plans to abolish the Reserve Defence Force and no circulars were issued by my Department in the last 24 months in this regard. The recently published Value for Money Review of the Reserve Defence Force recommended the retention of a Reserve of approximately 4,000 personnel with a range of reforms aimed at ensuring a viable and cost effective Reserve into the future. These recommendations are currently being implemented and when completed will enhance the overall capacity of the Defence Forces to deal with a broad range of contingencies.

A major re-organisation of the Reserve is underway and a new organisational structure will come into effect at the end of March. This will dovetail with the recent re-organisation of the Permanent Defence Force.

There will continue to be a Permanent Defence Force and a Reserve Defence Force, however, the way Units are organised will change. Under the new structures, Army Units within the Defence Forces will have both Permanent Defence Force and Reserve Defence Force components, as opposed to the separate parallel structures that exist at present. This new model will offer significant advantages in terms of training and improved interoperability.

A High Level Implementation Group (HLIG), consisting of civil and military personnel, is overseeing the implementation process. The changes currently being implemented are a direct response to the identified need for reform and will assist in ensuring a sustainable and fit for purpose Reserve into the future.

EU Battlegroups

28. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Defence the position regarding the numbers of Defence Forces personnel that have participated in EU battlegroups; the cost to the Exchequer and future plans for participation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13278/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): Ireland has previously participated in the Nordic Battlegroup in 2008 and 2011 and in the EU Battlegroup 2012. The other members of the Nordic Battlegroup were Sweden, acting as Framework Nation, Finland, Norway and Estonia and Croatia (2011 only). The members of the EU Battlegroup were Germany, acting as Framework Nation, Austria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Macedonia. For each of these battlegroups Ireland's participation was minimal and amounted to staff posts at the Operational and/or Force Headquarters. Should any of these Battlegroups have been deployed, Ireland's contribution would have amounted to approximately 175 personnel making up a Reconnaissance Company.

The participation by the Defence Forces in EU Battlegroups increases its interoperability with forces from other Member States. The costs of equipment and additional training are marginal. The capabilities and the requisite high-end equipment in respect of Ireland's contributions to the Battlegroups already reside within the Defence Forces. No military equipment has been purchased specifically for EU Battlegroups. Training of the manoeuvre elements of the Austro-German Battlegroup took place in the contributing Member States - Irish troops were trained in Ireland. Unlike the Nordic Battlegroup, there were no joint field exercises or manoeuvre training with other elements in the Austro-German Battlegroup. Battlegroup training in Ireland is part and parcel of the overall programme of training for rapid deployment elements of the Defence Forces for overseas operations and, in the case of the current Battlegroup, comprises mainly the standard training of reconnaissance formations.

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 Force Generation Conference was held in Sweden in early December 2012. The proposed contribution to this Battlegroup will be a Reconnaissance Company with associated HQ staff appointments and supporting elements. The model envisaged for the Battlegroup gives command of a multinational Reconnaissance Group HQ to Ireland, resulting in a raised profile.

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 the participants on Ireland's potential contribution to this Battlegroup. Any participation by Ireland in the Nordic 2015 and the EU Battlegroup 2016 will be subject to formal Government approval at the appropriate time.

Question No. 29 answered with Question No. 24.

Defence Forces Operations

30. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Defence if the EU has indicated any willingness or intention to assume responsibilities for any defence and or society issues including emergencies within member states such as shoreline, sea or air surveillance where there might be a benefit to Europe as an entity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13281/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The EU has not indicated any intention to assume responsibilities for defence as a whole. The Common Security and Defence Policy is an integral part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and, as such, decisions of the European Council in relation to defence are reached unanimously by all Member States. This is safeguarded within the provisions of the legal guarantees, secured by Ireland and attached to the Lisbon Treaty, which clearly state that the Lisbon Treaty "does not affect the right of Ireland or any other Member State to determine the nature and volume of its defence and security expenditure and the nature of its defence capabilities". The EU also has a very limited role with regard to society issues in relation to emergencies within Member States. Civil protection remains a national competence/responsibility for each EU Member State and, following consultations with other Government Departments with lead responsibilities in these areas, I am not aware of indications that the EU could assume responsibilities from national authorities.

In the event that a Member State's response capacity to a natural or man-made disaster is overwhelmed, an EU Civil Protection Mechanism is in place to co-ordinate the provision by other Member States of mutual aid and support to that State. The European Commission's only

role in such an event is to co-ordinate the transport and deployment of the assistance being provided.

Question No. 31 answered with Question No. 11.

Common Foreign and Security Policy

32. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Defence his plans for the continued development of the common security and defence policy and the comprehensive approach to crisis management that he is prioritising during Ireland's EU presidency. [13252/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): As part of Ireland's Presidency of the European Council 2013, I have prioritised a number of areas that he would like to progress during our Presidency. These include the continued development of the Common Security and Defence Policy and the comprehensive approach to crisis management. Regarding the Comprehensive approach to crisis management the priority is to ensure that all tools, e.g., Diplomatic, military political, economic etc., at the disposal of the European Union are utilised to ensure that any crises occurring are managed in a co-ordinated and comprehensive way. An example of this is the work currently being undertaken in the Horn of Africa whereby there are a number of military operations and a number of civilian missions operating side by side. These include, the military operation EUNAVFOR, which deters, prevents and represses acts of piracy and armed robbery and protects vessels of the World Food Programme (WFP), humanitarian aid and African Union Mission on Somalia (AMISOM) shipping and EUCAP Nestor, which is supporting regional maritime capacity building in the Horn of Africa and Western Indian Ocean states.

I am of the view that developing a comprehensive approach to tackling security issues, self-evidently serves a common good. Establishing closer co-ordination between the EU and international institutions and actors primarily dealing with all aspects of internal and external security is essential.

Within the EU there is a broad consensus that the approach to any crisis must be all-encompassing to ensure that countries and/or regions that are unstable, subject to conflict or are fragile receive the required assistance.

To achieve this, I am seeking to ensure that any approach being adopted, like that in Mali, emphasises the full cycle of engagement from prevention to mediation, to crisis management and post-conflict assistance.

As such co-operation with international organisations must always be prioritised and there is a need for the EU to allow such organisations operate within their mandate. This also facilitates one of my other priorities of enhancing co-operation with the UN.

Question No. 33 answered with Question No. 9.

Air Ambulance Service

34. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Defence the plans, if any, he has to expand the role of the Air Corps air ambulance service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13149/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): In 2005, the Department of Defence and the Department of Health completed a Service Level Agreement (SLA) which formalised the arrangements for the provision of an inter hospital air ambulance service by the Air Corps. The Agreement outlines the support provided by the Air Corps, specifically in respect of emergency inter-hospital transfers for spinal and serious injuries and illnesses, air transport of neonates requiring immediate medical intervention within Ireland, air transport of patients requiring organ transplants in the UK, air transport of Organ Retrieval Teams within Ireland and air transport of patients from offshore islands to mainland hospitals when the Irish Coast Guard service is unavailable.

In addition to the inter-hospital SLA, a twelve-month pilot Emergency Aeromedical Support (EAS) service was established last year by agreement between the Department of Defence and the Department of Health, in support of the Health Service Executive's National Ambulance Service. The purpose of the pilot is to assess the level and type, if any, of dedicated emergency aeromedical support needed to assist the National Ambulance Service in the west of Ireland for certain types of patient, particularly in light of the requirements of the HSE Clinical Care Programmes, such as Acute Coronary Syndrome and Stroke.

The service commenced on 4 June 2012 and it is operated by the Air Corps out of Custume Barracks, Athlone. The SLA provides that a full evaluation of the EAS service is to be undertaken by the stakeholders three months prior to the end of the pilot and this process is now underway.

There are no plans to expand the role of the Air Corps in the provision of these Air Ambulance services.

Defence Forces Expenditure

35. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Defence if he will provide a breakdown of the cost of security at each of the closed army bases per month since their closure; the total amount of moneys paid to each private security company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13154/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Department of Defence has at present security arrangements in place at two former military installations – Columb Barracks Mullingar and Rockhill House Letterkenny. The amount paid in security costs at these installations varies from month to month depending on security requirements. In relation to Mullingar the average cost per month since its closure in 2012 is €5,187 and the average cost per month in relation to Rockhill House, Donegal since its closure in 2009 is €5,353. The total amount paid to date in respect of Mullingar is €57,065 and €267,651 in respect of Rockhill. The effectiveness of the security measures currently in place are being continuously monitored and I am satisfied that the arrangements are warranted.

Defence Forces Operations

36. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Defence the way he is fostering EU cooperation in the area of maritime security and surveillance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13258/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): One of Ireland's priorities during our Presidency of the European Council, is EU cooperation in the area of Maritime Security and Sur-

veillance with a particular focus on improving cooperation between EU Navies and other EU security actors and leveraging innovation through security sector research and development. To this end, I will host a Seminar titled “Challenges and Opportunities in Maritime Security and Surveillance for Effective Governance and Innovation in the EU’s Maritime Domain” in April. This seminar will act as a forum to highlight the importance of building EU wide consensus and cooperation in relation to security and surveillance in the maritime domain in support of EU Sea Basins Strategies (including the new EU Atlantic Strategy), the Integrated Maritime Policy, the Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE) and Common Security and Defence Policy in the maritime domain. In meeting the challenges of the 21st century, the unique aspects of the Union’s maritime and surveillance domain will be highlighted. The seminar will seek to draw lessons from existing EU Sea Basin strategies and the technologies and operational procedures which support collaboration among member States, with a particular focus on EU Navies. The seminar will also raise awareness of the role maritime surveillance and security can play as an economic enabler thus contributing to the EU Jobs, Growth and Innovation strategy. A wide range of high level speakers will attend and present their perspectives on this important topic.

An important regional element of the implementation of the EU’s Integrated Maritime Policy (2007) is the development of sea-basin strategies, taking into account the regional specificities of maritime policy for the various Member States. In this context, the European Commission approved the adoption of an Atlantic Strategy. The Atlantic Strategy, will take stock of existing initiatives that can support growth and job creation. The strategy will cover the coasts, territorial and jurisdictional waters of the five EU Member States with an Atlantic coastline – France, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom. Preliminary meetings between these five Member States have taken place and work is ongoing regarding the development of this strategy, in which Ireland is playing a key role.

In furtherance of developments in this area, the European Defence Agency is coordinating a project involving 13 Member States, including Ireland. This project “MARSUR” will allow for the sharing of maritime information among participating member States Naval Forces. The Irish Naval Service participates in this project. In concert, the Commission’s initiative – the Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE) - will allow for the exchange of information across all EU maritime sectors, through the integration of existing maritime systems with the use of modern technologies, in a cost efficient and effective manner. “MARSUR” will ultimately feed into this system.

Ireland’s involvement in this project will enhance information sharing and knowledge transfer between Member States and build working relationships based on “mutual trust” with other European agencies at the operational level. As we have seen, by our involvement in drug seizures, success depends on the cooperation of our national and international partners.

Defence Forces Reserve

37. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for Defence if he has tasked anyone within his Department to examine the policy on reserve Defence Forces in Nordic states who contribute skilled soldiers on their peacekeeping missions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13156/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am aware that other countries, including Nordic countries, deploy members of their Reserve Forces on overseas peace support operations. As part of the Value for Money (VFM) Review of the Reserve Defence Force (RDF), which was published last November, the approach to Reserve Forces in certain other countries was considered. For comparative purposes, the UK, Canada, New Zealand and Australia were

chosen as, like this State, they do not have conscription and they have all undertaken reviews and/or reform of their Reserve Forces over recent years.

This comparative exercise identified many common themes including a high turnover of Reservists and difficulties in training Reservists to the required standard. It also identified that the countries examined had deployed Reservists on overseas missions. Having regard to the experiences of these countries, the Review noted that increased operational demand was a key factor driving the deployment of Reservists on such missions over recent years.

In examining possible future roles for the RDF, the VFM Review noted that the Permanent Defence Force (PDF) has the capacity to continue to fulfil all on-going demands for overseas peace support operations. The Review concluded that as the PDF can meet all requirements for overseas missions for this State, there is no operational requirement to deploy members of the RDF overseas.

I accepted the findings and recommendations of the VFM Review. Accordingly, there are no plans to send members of the Reserve overseas and I have not directed any further studies with regard to overseas service by members of the Reserve.

Overseas Development Aid

38. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the foreign aid that is being given to Tanzania; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13523/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Joe Costello): Ireland's aid programme prioritises the fight against global poverty and hunger. Ireland has long term, strategic development partnership programmes with a number of developing countries, called Programme Countries. These are Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia in sub-Saharan Africa, and Vietnam in Asia. In these countries we aim to build government and institutional capacities to deliver the essential services that their populations need – mainly in the areas of health, education and food security.

In 2012, Ireland provided €29.7m to support our bilateral programme in Tanzania. The programme has a particular focus on reducing poverty through improved livelihoods for small-holder farmers, more equitable and better quality public health services and improved nutritional status for women and children. We also work in areas such as governance, gender equality and building systems of accountability that will ensure lasting development results.

Comprehensive details of how Ireland's total Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), including funding allocated directly to Programme Countries, was spent in 2012 are currently being compiled and will be published in the Irish Aid Annual Report which will be available on the Irish Aid website www.irishaid.ie. Comprehensive details of all countries that benefited from Ireland's aid programme in 2011 can be found in the 2011 Irish Aid Annual Report which is currently available on the Irish Aid website.

Fiscal Forecasts

39. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Finance if the economy here is currently working off of a primary deficit or a primary surplus; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13445/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Table 9, page C.18 of Budget 2013 sets out the fiscal forecasts for the period 2012-2015.

This table includes the figures for the underlying General Government primary balance in nominal terms and as a % of GDP. These figures are presented as follows.

-	2012	2013	2014	2015
Underlying GG primary balance	-7,010	-3,390	745	4,680
Underlying GG primary balance as a % of GDP	-4.3	-2.0	0.4	2.6

I would like to stress that the achievement of a General Government primary surplus – that is an excess of revenues over expenditure excluding debt interest expenditure – will play a key role in ensuring Ireland’s debt sustainability. An update of the fiscal forecasts will be contained in April’s Stability Programme Update.

Tax Code

40. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the reason for his change in policy regarding claiming travel expenses for self-employed persons who travel to their place of work in the Cork region; and the reason this policy change has been backdated to 2008. [13466/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that there is no change in policy regarding claiming travel expenses for self-employed persons. The position is that self-employed persons may not claim travel expenses in respect of travel from home to work; and that travel and subsistence expenses must be incurred for business purposes as provided for in sections 81 and 114 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997. Further clarification is provided in Information Leaflet IT54, and in Statement of Practice SP-IT/2/07, both available at the website www.revenue.ie. As there has been no change in policy, the question of backdating to 2008 does not arise. For completeness, I am further informed that these provisions are featuring in the Revenue Commissioners compliance programme for 2013.

Tax Code

41. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Finance the consequences for an employer refusing to provide a P45; the measures of recourse for a person in seeking to obtain a P45 when an employer is refusing to provide it; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13467/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that Regulation 20 of the Income Tax (Employments) (Consolidated) Regulations, 2001 (more commonly known as the PAYE Regulations) obliges an employer, on cessation of an employment, to send a Form P45 to the Revenue Commissioners and give copies of that Form P45 to the employee. An employer who fails to comply with Regulation 20 may, by virtue of Section 1052 Taxes Consolidation Act 1997, be liable to a penalty of €3,000.

As to the measures of recourse for a person in seeking to obtain a Form P45, such person should report the matter to his or her local Revenue office which will take whatever steps that

are necessary to obtain the Form P45 from the relevant employer.

If the Deputy wishes to pass the details of the particular case giving rise to his Question to my officials, they will pass them on to the Revenue Commissioners for examination and necessary action.

IBRC Staff

42. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons currently employed by the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation; the cost to the taxpayer of the proposed post-liquidation statutory redundancy in respect of those employees; and the cost of the redundancy package previously offered to staff. [13470/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised that at the date of the appointment of the Special Liquidators there were 978 people employed by IBRC. As the Deputy is aware, following the appointment of the Special Liquidators 809 employment contracts in the Republic of Ireland were terminated and 802 of these employees were re-hired by the Special Liquidators to assist with the liquidation of IBRC.

As a result of the termination of the employment contracts, employees are entitled to apply for a statutory redundancy payment and a statutory notice payment, subject to the limits prescribed by statute. Any action taken by the Minister which might divert assets from IBRC creditors to employees could be challenged in the Courts. I have been advised by the special liquidators that any voluntary severance scheme that was in place prior to liquidation is no longer operational.

As the Deputy can appreciate it will take some time to process the forms associated with the above payments and therefore it will be some time before the Special Liquidators will be in a position to provide the information requested.

Betting Regulations

43. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance in respect of the application for a bookmakers licence under the Betting Act 1931, the reason the certificate of personal fitness from the applicant's local superintendent of an Garda Síochána must be dated not earlier than 21 days before the date of application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13475/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Revenue Commissioners, who are responsible for processing applications for bookmakers' licences, inform me that a current certificate of personal fitness is required to allow them to issue a licence. Section 7(1) of the Betting Act 1931 requires a person applying for a bookmaker's licence and to whom a certificate of personal fitness has been given, to apply to Revenue and submit the certificate within 21 days of the issue of the certificate.

The certificate of personal fitness certifies that a person is a fit and proper person to hold a bookmakers licence. A bookmaker's licence is renewed on a yearly basis and the bookmaker must apply to the Minister for Justice and Equality for a certificate of personal fitness at each renewal. The applicant must publish advance notice in a daily newspaper circulating in Dublin of their intent to apply for a certificate of personal fitness not less than a fortnight or more than a month before applying and the Minister has absolute discretion in granting or refusing the

application. Section 6 of the Betting Act 1931 lays out specific grounds under which a certificate can be refused by a superintendent of an Garda Síochána, including failure to pay out on winning bets.

The requirement to submit the licence application and certificate to Revenue within 21 days of the certificate's issue is intended to maintain the currency of the applicant's fitness to hold a bookmakers licence.

Non-disclosure Agreements

44. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on banks requiring customers in financial difficulties to sign non disclosure agreements prior to entering discussions with financial institutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13505/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): While details of any mortgage restructuring agreements is a matter for each individual bank and borrower, the Central Bank has advised that such agreements should not impede consumer's protections under the Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears (CCMA), for example:

- at the borrower's request and with the borrower's written consent, the lender must liaise with a third party nominated by the borrower to act on his/her behalf in relation to his/her arrears situation (Provision 6 of the CCMA); or

- Where an alternative arrangement is offered by a lender, the lender must provide the borrower with a clear explanation, in writing, of the alternative repayment arrangement, including the borrower must be advised to take appropriate independent legal and/or financial advice (Provision 37 (g) of the CCMA); or

- the borrowers right to refer appeals to the Financial Services Ombudsman (Provision 44 (e) of the CCMA).

Mortgage Arrears Proposals

45. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will confirm the criteria that applies in respect of the split mortgage arrangements; if he will confirm, for each of the regulated banks whether or not the shelved portion of the mortgage accrues interest; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13506/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been informed by the Central Bank that the majority of lenders have introduced, or are in the process of introducing a split mortgage arrangement. The split mortgage was one of a number of arrangements suggested by the Inter-Departmental Mortgage Arrears Working Group (Keane Group) Report which was published in September 2011.

The concept involves splitting a distressed mortgage into an affordable mortgage and warehousing the balance. While lenders have taken the broad approach set out in the Keane Report, the product details vary from lender to lender. I am informed by the Central Bank that the most notable difference involves the interest rate charged on the warehoused element of the split mortgage varying from 0% up to the full mortgage interest rate. In cases where an interest rate is charged on the warehoused element, some lenders require borrowers to service this payment on a monthly basis while others allow the interest to accrue on the warehoused element.

Mortgage Arrears Rate

46. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether information supplied to banks by customers through the standard financial statement contradicts suggestions that up to one third of mortgage arrears cases are strategic defaults; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13507/13]

47. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the fact that approximately half of restructured mortgages fall back into arrears; the way this information will influence the design of solutions to mortgage arrears difficulties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13508/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 46 and 47 together.

The recently published Central Bank data on mortgage arrears for the end December 2012 shows that at end-December 2012 out of a total stock of 79,852 private dwelling houses, just over 37,000 restructured mortgage accounts were in arrears. The data shows that the accounts in arrears include accounts that were in arrears prior to restructuring where the arrears balance has not yet been eliminated, as well as accounts that are in arrears on the current restructuring arrangement.

The Deputy will be aware that the Central Bank yesterday announced new specific time-bound targets for the six main banks to ensure early and measurable progress by banks in resolving mortgage arrears cases in a durable manner. The Central Bank will also in the months ahead, set demanding quarterly targets for the conclusion of sustainable solutions and for the subsequent performance of those solutions. Progress will be monitored closely and the Central Bank will take any further action which will be deemed necessary.

The suggestion that the rising number of mortgage arrears is in part being driven by increased levels of strategic default, that is individuals deliberately withholding payments when they are in a position to service their debt in hope of gaining concessions from lenders, is wholly anecdotal and not based on any robust, structured, or in-depth analysis of the situation.

In the context of the engagement between banks and borrowers on the provision of long term and durable solutions, the Central Bank has indicated that it expects that banks will have more challenging and in-depth conversations with borrowers on the reasonable priority that should be afforded to mortgage repayments, having regard to other commitments and payments by a household.

Home Repossession Rate

48. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the recently expressed views(details supplied) that home repossession levels here are uncharacteristically low and may need to increase considerably; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13509/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Government is very aware of the significant difficulties some homeowners are facing in meeting their mortgage obligations and has put in place a comprehensive strategy to address the problem. As announced yesterday, the implementation of this strategy has further intensified with the Central Bank now setting time bound and measurable targets for banks on their progress in resolving, on a durable basis, the

position of their mortgage customers who are in arrears on their mortgage. The “Keane Report” has already outlined a number of possible options that can be considered in order to provide a sustainable solution for a mortgage in difficulty on a case by case basis. While the Government accepts that, in a functioning market, it is necessary to have a repossession system with appropriate safeguards for both debtors and creditors, the Government, as indeed also did the Secretary General before the PAC, has clearly indicated that repossession is only an option of last resort. The overall Government strategy for the resolution of mortgage difficulty is designed to ensure that, wherever possible, banks offer sustainable solutions that will enable families remain in their home and that borrowers will meaningfully engage with their lender in the development of such solutions having regard to the circumstances of each individual case.

In his contribution to the Committee of Public Accounts, the Secretary General of my Department clearly indicated that there will need to be a range of options to deal with cases of mortgage arrears and that there is no one solution that will fit every situation. He also provided some data to the Committee but he did not indicate or suggest that there is or should be a target for repossessions. Rather he pointed out that it is a key part of the resolution process that banks find all the solutions they can to allow people in mortgage difficulty to remain in their home.

Thalidomide Victim Compensation

49. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance the role of his Department and agencies under his Department, that is, the State Claims Agency and the National Treasury Management Agency in bringing about a fair and non-adversarial solution to victims of Thalidomide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13510/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The National Treasury Management Agency is designated as the State Claims Agency when performing the claims management and related risk management functions delegated to it. I, as Minister for Finance, formally delegated the management of thalidomide claims to the State Claims Agency through the National Treasury Management Agency (Delegation of Claims Management Function) (Amendment) Order 2012 on the 3rd April 2012.

The State Claims Agency has received notification of 24 thalidomide related claims to date. As legal proceedings have issued in respect of one of the cases it would be inappropriate for me to comment further.

Tax Rebates

50. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if he will acknowledge the lack of inclusion of an amendment to the Tax Consolidation Act 1997, this act imposed a costly change on the previous practice whereby patients had been entitled to claim reimbursement of their physiotherapy expenses, irrespective of the way they were referred to a physiotherapist for treatment; in view of the fact that the 1997 act requires patients for the first time to secure a referral letter from a general practitioner, hospital, accident and emergency department or medical consultant; if he will amend the bill in order that section 469 of the Tax Consolidation Act 1997 (1) under health expenses should be amended to read (f) physiotherapy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13581/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Income tax relief in respect of health expenses is allowable in accordance with section 469 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997. This legislation provides for tax relief for health expenses incurred in the provision of health

care. Health care is defined for the purposes of that legislation as the prevention, diagnosis, alleviation or treatment of an ailment, injury, infirmity, defect or disability and includes care received by a woman in respect of pregnancy. Health care does not include routine ophthalmic or dental treatment.

The section provides that tax relief must be either for the costs of the services of a practitioner, defined as a person registered on the register established under the Medical Practitioners Act 2007, or diagnostic procedures carried out on the advice of a practitioner, which includes “physiotherapy or similar treatment prescribed by a practitioner”. Eligibility for tax relief is limited to expenses relating to treatment considered necessary and appropriate by a qualified practitioner.

Section 469 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 consolidated all previous legislation pertaining to relief for health expenses, in particular section 12 of Finance Act 1967 which introduced the relief in the first instance. This section also required that physiotherapy or similar treatment be prescribed by a practitioner before qualifying for relief. This requirement has, therefore, been part of the qualifying criteria since the introduction of relief for health expenses and I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that guidance and instructions to staff have remained unchanged in this regard.

For 2010 the cost of tax relief for health expenses was €127 million and was availed of by 368,000 individuals who had sufficient income to benefit from a claim. There is no specific breakdown in these figures of the costs related to physiotherapy.

The costs of the relief, if self-referral for physiotherapy was allowed, would be unquantifiable but it would be expected to increase the overall cost to the Exchequer. While the Government supports measures to lower the cost of medical treatment which should in turn lower the costs of health care provision by the State, an amendment as requested by the Deputy, if passed, would inevitably lead to calls for other treatments to similarly qualify for relief, which would greatly increase the overall cost of the scheme. In addition, it would inevitably lead to self-diagnosis of ailments which could have dire consequences for patients where their own diagnosis proves incorrect and they have embarked on the wrong treatment in the absence of the correct medical advice.

Schools Building Projects Status

51. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has considered the way to prioritise school building projects that are not on his Department’s five year capital programme in the event of additional funding being made available or if scheduled projects are delayed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13451/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy may be aware, my priority is to ensure that there is sufficient school accommodation to meet projected pupil enrolment increases into the future. The 5 Year Plan that I announced in March 2012, together with my recent announcement of the 50 school projects which are scheduled for construction in the current year as part of a €2 billion capital investment programme, outlines the major school projects that will commence construction over the duration of the Plan. The primary aim at the core of the Five Year Plan is focussed on meeting demographic demands to ensure that every child will have access to a physical school place and that our school system is in a position to cope with increasing pupil numbers.

In addition, my Department will consider applications by schools for funding for additional

classrooms, which schools may provide on a permanent basis, where an immediate enrolment need is arising. It is not possible to progress all projects within the Department's building programme concurrently due to competing demands on the Department's capital budget imposed by the need to prioritise the limited funding available for the provision of essential additional school accommodation to meet increasing demographic requirements. School building projects which have not been included in the five year construction programme, but which were announced for initial inclusion in the building programme will continue to be progressed to final planning stages in anticipation of the possibility of further funds being available to my Department in future years.

Autism Policy

52. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will implement the recommendation of the Ombudsman for Children and publish his Department's policy on autism as a matter of urgency. [13452/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be aware that policy can be expressed and manifested through a variety of forms. Explicitly, it is communicated via legislation, regulations, rulings, orders, plans, strategies, policy statements, and other forms – or through a combination of these. Therefore the Deputy will appreciate that specific policies and objectives are not always articulated in just one document.

However my Department is mindful that greater clarity would be useful for schools and parents and accordingly my Department is currently in the process of preparing a comprehensive statement of existing policy within the boundaries of one document. Naturally the new policy statement will not be exclusive. Policies are subject of necessity to change from time to time. Also, the new statement will neither alter nor add to existing policy. It will reflect the current policy in a coherent and articulate manner for the benefit of schools and parents.

My Department strives to ensure that a continuum of special education provision is available as required for children with special educational needs. In line with this approach the policy is to promote a child-centred approach to education of all children with special educational needs including those with autism. As each child with autism is unique they should have access to a range of different approaches to meet their individual needs.

Children with autism present with a wide range of needs. Some children are capable of being fully integrated into mainstream schools without additional teaching or care supports. Others are able to attend mainstream schools but need additional teaching and/or care assistance. Many are best enrolled in autism-specific classes where more intensive and supportive interventions are required. Some may move from one setting to another as they get older and differing needs/strengths/abilities emerge.

The preferred policy of my Department is that children with autism are educated in school settings where children may have access to individualised education programmes (IEPs), fully-qualified professional teachers, special needs assistants, the appropriate school curriculum with the option, where possible and appropriate, of full or partial integration and interaction with other pupils.

Autism classes are established with a staffing ratio of 1 teacher and a minimum of 2 Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) for every 6 children. Other SNAs may be allocated if required to meet the care needs of the children. Start-up grants are provided to the schools to enable special

equipment to be purchased. Enhanced capitation is paid in respect of each child and assistive technology is funded where this is recommended.

This approach promotes the maximum level of inclusion which accords with the intent of the EPSEN Act. While some children may be able to attend a mainstream class, for others the most appropriate provision may be in a special class or unit in the school or in a special school.

My Department supports provision in mainstream schools, some 540 special classes for autism attached to mainstream and special schools and 18 special schools for children with autism throughout the State which cater for the educational needs of some 5,000 children with autism, all of which operate within the policy parameters.

This policy is based on advice received from international experts on autism, NEPS, the Inspectorate and the report of the Irish Task Force on Autism. My Department has satisfied itself that research does not support the exclusive usage of any one approach as a basis for national educational provision for children with autism. It is for this reason that my Department's preferred policy is for a child centred approach where the approach to be taken is based on the individual child's needs.

My Department continues to develop policy and programmes for children with special educational needs, including those with autism, and will continue to take relevant professional advice into account in this regard.

Aistear Curriculum Framework

53. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the range of supports including the number of Aistear tutors and the number of in-service training hours facilitated through the teacher training centres that have been provided to date to primary school teachers to upskill in relation to the implementation of the Aistear curriculum for infant classes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13479/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Aistear is Ireland's curriculum framework for children from birth to six years. The framework can be used in a range of early childhood settings including children's own homes. It reflects recent developments in understanding how children learn and grow in their early years. These developments include the importance of play as well as a balance between adult-led and child-led activities. Aistear can help teachers to prioritise play and active learning in implementing the curriculum for infant classes in primary schools.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is currently revising the infant curriculum. This work focuses initially on the language area (English and Irish) and will be ready for schools in September 2014. The Council is also currently undertaking a review of how the curriculum in the initial stage of primary education is structured and organised in other jurisdictions. This together with Aistear's principles and teaching approaches, will inform the revision of the infant level of the curriculum.

Since the 2010/2011 school year and through a collaboration between the NCCA and the Association of Teachers' Education Centres in Ireland (ATECI), work has been underway to support primary school teachers and principals in becoming familiar with the key ideas in Aistear. This support is provided primarily through a suite of Aistear workshops developed and facilitated by Aistear Tutors (primary school teachers) within the 21 full-time Education Centres throughout the country. Up to the end of 2012 a total of 322 two hour workshops provided support to 5,977 teachers and principals. In addition, a total of 827 teachers were supported

through 38 Aistear summer courses in 2011 and 2012.

The online Aistear Toolkit developed by the NCCA, is a key support to the Aistear Tutors and Education Centres in this work. The Toolkit contains video clips, photos, podcasts and audio presentations that show what Aistear looks like in practice across a range of settings including infant classes in primary schools. A number of Education Centres have established, or are in the process of establishing, Aistear Teacher Professional Communities (TPCs). These TPCs enable teachers to meet to share their classroom experiences in using Aistear's principles and methodologies, and to learn from each other.

Croke Park Agreement Issues

54. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide details of any representative bodies who took part in the Croke Park II negotiations representing school managements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13482/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Under the Education Acts, the terms and conditions of employment of teachers and other staff of recognised schools who are remunerated out of monies provided by the Oireachtas are determined by the Minister for Education and Skills, with the concurrence of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

The negotiations on an extension to the Croke Park Agreement were central discussions concerning changes to the terms and conditions of employment of all public servants. The Departments of Education and Skills and Public Expenditure and Reform took part in the talks as the bodies which determine terms and conditions of employment for staff in the education sector as a whole, including staff in schools.

Apprenticeship Programmes

55. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to retain the FÁS four year apprenticeship training schemes in their current format in view of the FÁS/vocational education committee convergence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13490/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): As part of the Action Plan for Jobs my Department is committed to reviewing the Irish Apprenticeship training model, with a view to providing an updated model of training that delivers the necessary skilled workforce to service the needs of a rapidly changing economy and ensures an appropriate balance between supply and demand. This review is currently underway in the Department of Education and Skills and has been undertaken in two phases.

The first stage was the preparation of a background issues paper which includes a factual description of the current system, including the governance arrangements, trends and forecasts in relation to recruitment, identified strengths and weaknesses of the current model and identifies the range of possible options for change, as well as information on models of apprenticeship in other countries. In 2013 it is proposed that the second phase of the review will involve consultation with all key stakeholders on the options for change. The arrangements for this phase of the review are currently being considered.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

56. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide an overview of services that are available to a cohort of students (details supplied); his vision for the provision of such education to students of this profile into the future; the supports that are available to the families of such students; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13528/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be aware that the establishment of a network of autism-specific special classes in schools across the country to cater for children with autism has been a key educational priority in recent years.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), through its network of local special educational needs organisers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from primary and post primary schools for special educational needs supports, including the establishment of special classes in various geographical areas as required. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support.

SENOs are a valuable source of support to parents who are actively sourcing a placement for their children or on deciding the most appropriate placement for their child. The parents of the children to whom the Deputy refers should contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs, using the contact details available on www.ncse.ie. My Department strives to ensure that a continuum of special education provision is available as required for children with special educational needs. In line with this approach the policy is to promote a child-centred approach to education of all children with special educational needs including those with autism. As each child with autism is unique they should have access to a range of different approaches to meet their individual needs.

Children with autism present with a wide range of needs. Some children are capable of being fully integrated into mainstream schools without additional teaching or care supports. Others are able to attend mainstream schools but need additional teaching and/or care assistance. Many are best enrolled in autism-specific classes where more intensive and supportive interventions are required. Some may move from one setting to another as they get older and differing needs/strengths/abilities emerge.

Universities Legislation

57. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide, in tabular form broken down by years and for each institute of technology and university, the cost of compliance with S35 of the University Act 1997 (Quality Assurance); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13529/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The information sought is not readily available in my Department. Officials of my Department have asked the Higher Education Authority to contact the institutions seeking details and I will forward the available information to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Institutes of Technology

58. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide, in tabular form, the amount of money spent on external legal fees divided between human resources and other issues since 2000, broken down by Institute of Technology and by year. [13538/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The information sought is not readily available in my Department. Officials of my Department have asked the Higher Education Authority to contact the Institutes of Technology seeking details and I will forward the available information to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Institutes of Technology

59. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that IT Tallaght has spent €3.5 million from non Exchequer resources as part of the preparatory phase of a major capital work which his Department included in its commitments under the public capital programme but which has subsequently not been funded; his views on whether it fair that the institute has to carry such a deficit and if he is proposing to take any remedial action to assist the Institute. [13539/13]

60. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on the equity of IT Tallaght losing €3.5 million from student, non Exchequer resources due to the failure of the State to provide promised capital funding; and if his attention has been drawn to the fact that this has significant implications for an institute. [13540/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 59 and 60 together.

My Department provided funding of over €1.3m to IT Tallaght to contribute towards the costs that it incurred towards necessary enabling external infrastructure works required at the Institute as a prerequisite to the delivery of 3 Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects that were in planning for the Institute. As a result of a requirement to prioritise capital resources in the current difficult fiscal environment, a decision was taken in November 2011 that higher education projects that had not been contractually committed at that stage, including these PPP projects, would not be progressed. However, the nature of the site enabling works undertaken enhances the overall quality of the external environment and will benefit the Institute in the long term.

Freedom of Information Remit

61. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to extend the Freedom of Information legislation to cover vocational education committees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13447/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As the Deputy will be aware, the Programme for Government contains a commitment to extend Freedom of Information to all public bodies.

In this context in approving the general Scheme of the Bill, the Government has agreed to extend Freedom of Information to the Vocational Education Committees with the exception of any records which would enable the compilation of information (that is not otherwise available to the general public) in relation to the comparative performance of schools in respect of the academic achievement of students.

Pension Provisions

62. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position regarding the pension levy (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13491/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The pension-related deduction (“pension levy”) was introduced by way of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2009 and section 13 of that Act provides that I must review the Act each year and cause a written report of my findings to be laid before each House of the Oireachtas, which I have done and will continue to do.

Family Support Services

63. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform with reference to the Fiscal Case for Working with Troubled Families and also Listening to Troubled Families that were published by the British Government last month, if his Department will publish comparative statistical profiles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13541/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Deputy refers to the report “*Fiscal Case for Working with Troubled Families*” published in February by the British Government’s Department for Communities and Local Government. There are five areas addressed by the report:

- Early Year Education
- Preventative work with young people (e.g. youth work, positive activities, Information, Advice and Guidance)
- Protecting children via family intervention and targeted child protection and families with complex needs
- Health - programmes on mental health, drug and substance misuse, early years food/milk, and teen pregnancy nurses and health visitors
- Parenting Orders and preventing teenage violence.

The report estimated the annual cost to the British Exchequer of reacting to needs emerging from the above expenditure areas and compared this to amounts placed into targeted interventions intended to improve outcomes in these areas. The methodologies used in estimating the costs arrived at would be of interest to research units in the CSO and Departments of Children & Youth Affairs, Social Protection, Health, Justice & Equality and I will bring the contents of this report to their attention. I would also inform Deputy McHugh that relevant information on targeted expenditure in the above-mentioned areas is available in the Annual Revised Estimates Volume each year:

Topic	Relevant Department	Subhead
Early Years Education	Children & Youth Affairs Vote 40	B3
Preventative work with young people	Children & Youth Affairs Vote 40 Assisting Youth Organisations	B5

Topic	Relevant Department	Subhead
Protecting children via family intervention	Children & Youth Affairs (Family Support Agency) Vote 40	A3
Health - programmes on mental health etc.	Health – child & family services Vote 39	B15 (part)
Parenting Orders and preventing teenage violence	Justice & Equality Vote 24(Irish Youth Justice Service)	I

Child Benefit Eligibility

64. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Social Protection her Department's policy on the payment of child benefit to children and their parents who do not reside in Ireland during the summer months out of school term; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13488/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): In 2013, the child benefit payment will be paid to around 609,000 families in respect of some 1.16 million children and expenditure is estimated to be approximately €1.9 billion.

In general, child benefit is payable in respect of children who are ordinarily resident in the State. There is a comprehensive certification and review programme in place in the Department to ensure that child benefit is only paid to customers who continue to fulfil the qualifying conditions including residence.

There is no specific provision in social welfare legislation covering entitlement or otherwise to child benefit payment during absence abroad on holiday. In effect, where absences are brought to my department's attention or come to light as a result of control exercises, each case is decided on its own merits. However, as a general rule, absence abroad for a period up to two months would be considered as a holiday and therefore would not usually lead to suspension of payment except in exceptional circumstances.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

65. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection when an application for carer's allowance will be granted in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Laois; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13495/13]

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 11th March 2013 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.

Questions Nos. 66 and 67 withdrawn.

One-Parent Family Payment Eligibility

68. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding one parent family payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13560/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned is currently participating in the Back to Education Scheme and means are not assessed during the academic year while she is engaged in this scheme. The person concerned should call to her local office and inform a member of staff of the change in her circumstances, in order that the means applicable to her payment can be reviewed once the academic year has finished.

Disability Allowance Appeals

69. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if, in view of medical evidence submitted, she will review the decision to refuse disability allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13561/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned applied for disability allowance on 24 October 2011.

The application, based on the evidence submitted, was refused on medical grounds and the person was notified in writing of this decision on the 6 March 2012. Further medical evidence was received and the decision to disallow was reviewed by a deciding officer. There was no change to this decision and the person was notified of this on 5 July 2012.

The person concerned subsequently appealed this decision to the Social Welfare Appeals Office. Following an oral hearing, the appeals officer decided the person was not medically suitable for disability allowance and the appeal was disallowed. The person was notified in writing by the Social Welfare Appeals Office of this decision on 15 February 2013. An appeals officer's decision is final and conclusive in the absence of any fresh facts or evidence.

State Pension (Contributory)

70. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if and when entitlement to old age contributory pension will arise in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare in view of the totality of his eligible contributions to date; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13562/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department is unable to provide forecasts to people in relation to their possible future State pension (transition/contributory) entitlements, or to comment on individual pension planning enquiries. The person concerned will not reach pension age until December 2017. He is being forwarded a copy of his PRSI record, which is a full representation of his social insurance contribution record as currently held by the Department, together with a Guide which explains how entitlement to a State pension (transition/contributory) is currently assessed, and which should assist him in calculating his possible future State pension entitlements. The Department's website www.welfare.ie also provides a comprehensive suite of information in relation to State pension entitlements, including a range of frequently asked questions and answers. In addition, information officers are available in the Department's local offices who can assist him as required. If the person concerned feels there are any gaps or omissions in his PRSI record, he should contact Client Eligibility Services, Department of Social Protection, Inner Relief Road, Buncrana, Co. Donegal.

Jobseeker's Allowance Applications

71. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an entitlement to jobseekers allowance exists in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13563/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): According to the records of this Department, the person concerned has not submitted an application for a jobseeker's allowance payment.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Applications

72. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when basic social welfare payment will issue in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [13565/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned made an application for basic supplementary allowance on the 22nd February 2013. She was found to be not habitually resident in the State and she was notified of this decision in writing. She has been advised of her right to appeal the decision to the Chief Appeals Officer.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Eligibility

73. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding the determination of eligibility for domiciliary care allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare [13567/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary care allowance was received on the 1st October 2012. This application was referred to one of the Department's Medical Assessors who considered that the child was not medically eligible for the allowance. A letter issued on the 25th October 2012 advising of the decision. The person concerned requested a review of the decision and the case has been forwarded to another of the Department's Medical Assessors for further consideration. The person concerned will be notified of the outcome of this review as soon as it is completed.

Údarás na Gaeltachta

74. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht with reference to an industrial estate in County Donegal, if his Department and Údarás na Gaeltachta will consider a proposal (details supplied); and if he will communicate directly with a person regarding this matter. [13499/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Údarás na Gaeltachta is a statutorily independent body and, accordingly, I have no function in relation to its day-to-day operations. As the proposal referred to involves property in the ownership of Údarás na Gaeltachta, the Deputy will understand that any decision in this regard would be entirely a matter for Údarás. I can say, however, that I understand that the matter in question is under consideration by Údarás na Gaeltachta and that officials from Údarás are available to meet with interested local development committees to discuss and consider any

reasonable proposals.

Ferry Operations

75. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the arrangements made by his Department for the transport of animals to and from the mainland to Dursey Island in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13501/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): My Department allocated a grant for the provision of a ferry cargo service for three days between the mainland and Dursey Island during the period from 1 July 2012 to 31 August 2013. This allowed for the transport of vital provisions to the island and also facilitated the occasional transfer of animals from the island during the period in question.

My Department will give consideration to funding a similar freight service at the end of the above period. However, it should be noted that the regular transfer of animals to and from the island is not the responsibility of my Department.

Irish Music Industry

76. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources in view of the cultural importance of the Irish music industry and its potential to create employment, the policies to promote the broadcasting of Irish music that he has implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13458/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The policy approach in regard to the imposition of programming obligations on broadcasters is set out in the Broadcasting Act 2009, which also sets out the objects of our national public service broadcasters. In pursuit of these objects RTÉ and TG4 are charged, inter-alia, with ensuring that programmes reflect the varied elements, which make up the culture of the people of Ireland and “have special regard for the elements which distinguish that culture and in particular the Irish language”. RTÉ and TG4 publish detailed commitments on an annual basis setting out how they intend to meet their public service obligations and objects as set out in the Act. The extent to which the commitments entered into by our two public service broadcasters have been met is reviewed annually by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI).

Radio and television services, additional to those provided by the national public service broadcasters are matters for the BAI, which is an independent statutory body. Matters in relation to Irish music content on commercial radio are the subject of contractual negotiations between the BAI and commercial radio operators. In submitting their initial licensing applications to the BAI, such broadcasters put forward commitments in regard to how they will deal with a range of broadcast issues including public service commitments and, where appropriate, more specific commitments, for instance, in regard to the playing of Irish music. If they are successful, these commitments form part of the terms and conditions of their actual licence.

This policy approach is seen as appropriate in that it deals with the differing requirements of commercial and public service broadcasting. In relation to commercial broadcasters, it is seen as an effective means of leveraging public service type commitments that takes full account of the specific broadcaster’s business proposal. As for public service broadcasters, it provides an iterative approach that is sufficiently flexible to ensure that the changing needs of Irish society continue to be addressed.

Electricity Generation

77. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if energy suppliers are required to offer a feed-in tariff for micro generators; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13487/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Electricity suppliers are not required to offer a feed-in-tariff for microgenerators. Currently Electric Ireland, on a commercial basis, is the only electricity supplier to offer a feed-in-tariff to microgenerators. They offer a tariff of 9 cent per kilowatt hour for electricity exported to the grid to domestic customers under specified conditions.

The Commission for Energy Regulation, in the past, wrote to all electricity suppliers inviting them, on a voluntary and commercial basis, to introduce schemes for microgenerators, however none, apart from Electric Ireland, has chosen to do so, to date.

In 2009, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) initiated a pilot microgeneration programme. This involved 42 installations of various microgeneration technologies. A final monitoring report on the performance of the installations and learning from the programme is awaited from the SEAI. This will inform future policy development.

SEAI has been asked to provide my Department with analysis of other means through which the microgeneration sector could be supported, apart from through a feed-in-tariff funded from the Public Service Obligation. In view of falling technology costs, the Department has also asked SEAI to update analysis on the costs of varying levels of support for microgeneration technologies, with a view to considering how the sector could be supported going forward.

Planning Issues

78. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if the review of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 has been completed; if changes are contemplated to the claw-back provision in regard to affordable housing in view of the changed market conditions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13450/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The review of Part V of the Planning and Development Acts announced in the context of the standing down of affordable housing schemes as part of the Government's housing policy statement will include an examination of the operational aspects of the shared ownership scheme. That review is currently advanced and I expect the consultants' report that informs the review will be published shortly. I have also asked the Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency to provide me with a standalone analysis of the shared ownership scheme, including identification of the main difficulties and recommendations for mitigating measures.

The claw-back provision is intended to prevent short-term profit taking on the resale of the house to the detriment of the objectives of the schemes. However, where a person is selling and the clawback amount payable would reduce the proceeds of resale below the initial price actually paid, the legislation provides for the amount of the clawback payable to be reduced to the extent necessary to avoid that result. Legal and auctioneering fees are costs which vendors bear separately, as do all other owner-occupiers who choose to sell their home.

Any future changes to legislation governing affordable housing schemes, including the shared ownership scheme, will be made in the context of the review and the Housing Agency analysis, and I expect to make announcements in this regard in the coming months.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Eligibility

79. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when details of the new 2013 tenant purchase scheme will be made available; when the new scheme will open to tenants that wish to make an application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13473/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The 1995 tenant purchase scheme for existing local authority houses closed for new applications on 31 December 2012. I intend to advance the necessary legislative proposals as soon as possible to replace that scheme with a new incremental purchase scheme, involving discounts for tenants linked to household income and a discount-related charge on the property that will dwindle away over a period unless the house is resold or the purchaser fails to comply with conditions of the sale.

Local Authority Housing Maintenance

80. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the current funding for remedial works schemes in respect of council housing; and the future of this programme. [13483/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I recently allocated some €19 million in respect of 25 remedial works projects which are currently on-going across 16 local authorities. All of the available funding has been committed at this stage. New projects will be considered in the context of the level of commitments and the funding available in 2014.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Provision

81. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide an update in the status of the investment programme application submitted by Fingal County Council in August 2011 regarding Malahide waste water management. [13522/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Malahide Sewerage Scheme is included in my Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2010 - 2013 as a scheme to advance through planning. Fingal County Council's draft Brief for the appointment of a Consultant to prepare a Preliminary Report for the scheme is under examination in my Department at present and a decision will be made as soon as possible.

Local Authority Housing Mortgages

82. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and

Local Government if he will examine the case of persons making new or joint applications for local authority housing loans currently being refused on the basis of having previously obtained a loan in the context of a previous relationship; if, in view of their housing needs and equality legislation, steps can be taken to ensure that such applicants are not disallowed on the basis of the aforesaid criteria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13543/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): One of the conditions applying to the availability of local authority mortgages is that the applicant be a first time buyer. However, Section 92B of the Stamp Duties Consolidation Act 1999 defines first time buyers as including a spouse to a marriage the subject of a decree of judicial separation, a deed of separation, a decree of divorce or a decree of nullity in the case of the first acquisition of a house by the spouse following the separation or divorce provided that the spouse had, in relation to the former marital home,

- left that home;

- not retained an interest in that home;

- immediately prior to the date of the decree or deed of separation is not beneficially entitled to an interest in a house other than the marital home. At the date of the decree or deed of separation, the separated/former spouse must also be in occupation of the home which was occupied by both spouses prior to the separation or dissolution of marriage. In such circumstances, an applicant may be considered a first time buyer for the purposes of local authority loans.

I am happy that the current mortgage loan model is fair, adequately meets the needs of prospective borrowers and facilitates participation in housing acquisition initiatives such as the tenant purchase schemes.

Local Government Reform

83. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the abolition of town councils; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13582/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): My Department is currently considering possible mechanisms to address the matter of ongoing development planning by planning authorities that are proposed to be amalgamated or abolished. In the meantime, planning authorities must continue to meet their statutory obligations in regard to development planning until the matter is addressed.

Prison Accommodation

84. **Deputy Luke ‘Ming’ Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans for Harristown House, Castlerea, County Roscommon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13443/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Harristown House is a 22 roomed two storey property situated just outside of the boundary wall of Castlerea Prison. It was most recently used for accommodating persons who were under the care of the Probation Service. The property has been refurbished with the intention of using it as a low-security facility.

Prisoners housed there will be those who have demonstrated good behaviour over a period of time, have engaged with the therapeutic services in the prison and are deemed to be a low risk of absconding and a low risk of re-offending. It is intended that the prisoners housed at Harristown House will be taking part in a Temporary Release Programme. It is expected that five to six prisoners will initially be involved and eventually up to 15 prisoners. Those involved will be employed in the grounds under the control of an Industrial Manager. They will be obliged to abide by all the normal terms of temporary release as well as reporting daily to the Main Gate at Castlerea Prison. CCTV coverage of the house and surrounding areas will be monitored from the control room. They will also be visited during the day by prison staff. Harristown House will be secured by a fence and there will be strict conditions on access and egress at night.

The usual risk assessments will be completed by my officials in the Irish Prison Service, prior to any prisoners being moved into the facility.

Personal Insolvency Act

85. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the Personal Insolvency Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13472/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Personal Insolvency Act 2012, was passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas on 19 December, 2012 and signed into law by the President on 26 December, 2012.

The Act provides for the introduction of three new debt resolution processes, which though requiring approval by the court, are essentially non-judicial in nature:

- The Debt Relief Notice (DRN) will allow for the write-off of qualifying unsecured debt up to €20,000, subject to a three year supervision period.

- The Debt Settlement Arrangement (DSA) provides for the agreed settlement of unsecured debt, with no limit involved, normally over five years.

- The Personal Insolvency Arrangement (PIA) will enable the agreed settlement of secured debt up to €3 million, although this cap may be increased with the consent of all secured creditors, and unsecured debt without limit, normally over six years.

The Act also continues the reform of the Bankruptcy Act 1988, begun in the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011 and will include, critically, the introduction of automatic discharge from bankruptcy, subject to certain conditions, after 3 years in place of the current 12 years.

The Act provides for the establishment of an Insolvency Service to operate the new insolvency arrangements. The Act provides for the Regulation of Personal Insolvency Practitioners. The Act also provides for the appointment of new specialist judges of the Circuit Court to deal with applications under the new debt resolution processes.

Part 6 of the Act was commenced on 18 January 2013. The provisions of Part 1 (other than section 6), Part 2 (other than section 13), sections 25 and 47, sections 126 to 141, Part 5 and Schedules 2 and 3 of the Personal Insolvency Act 2012 came into operation on 1 March 2013. The Insolvency Service was established on 1 March 2013 by Ministerial Order made on 20 February last.

The Act will be fully commenced as soon as all of the necessary preparations for administra-

tion of its provisions are finalised.

Garda Resources

86. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 165 of 6 March 2013, if he will elaborate the way the allocation of Garda resources is constantly monitored in the context of demographics, crime trends, policing needs and other operational strategies in place on a district, divisional and regional level; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13474/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy will be aware that the Commissioner is responsible for the detailed allocation of resources and that I have no direct function in that matter. It is clear, however, that the Commissioner and senior Garda management keep under continuing review the measures necessary to efficiently and effectively match the allocation of resources with policing demands, and that this may involve ongoing adjustments in that allocation.

Garda Transport

87. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda cars that have been taken off the road in the past three years; the number of these that have been replaced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13484/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Decisions in relation to the provision and deployment of Garda transport are matters for the Garda Commissioner. In that context I am advised by the Garda authorities that the number of Garda vehicles procured and the number of vehicles decommissioned in the period referred to by the Deputy were as detailed in the following table:

Year	Procured	Decommissioned
2010	165	124
2011	52	306
2012	213	324

With regard to Garda transport generally, the Deputy will appreciate that decisions in this area are made by the Garda Commissioner in the light of his identified operational demands and available resources. In that connection the Deputy may be aware that currently the Garda authorities are rolling out a supply of 171 new vehicles which have been procured by means of an additional allocation of €3 million I made available to An Garda Síochána towards the end of last year. These vehicles are being deployed on the basis of operational needs.

In addition, I am advised by the Garda authorities that, arising from the financial provision of €5 million in the Garda budget for the purchase and fit-out of Garda transport in 2013, arrangements are being made to place an order for further new vehicles which, the Deputy can be assured, will be deployed as effectively as possible.

This represents a very considerable financial investment in Garda transport, particularly at a time when the level of funding available across the public sector is severely limited. It is a clear indication of my commitment to ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, An Garda Síochána

are provided with sufficient resources to enable them to provide an effective and efficient policing service.

Garda Recruitment

88. **Deputy Tom Barry** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if and when the next round of Garda recruitment commences, the Garda Reserve Force will be given preferential consideration. [13497/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Recruitment to An Garda Síochána is governed by the Garda Síochána (Admissions and Appointments) (Amendment) Regulations 2006. These regulations provide that in a competition for full-time membership of An Garda Síochána, the Public Appointments Commission shall take into account any service by the candidate as a Reserve member of the Garda Síochána, and shall give due recognition to evidence of satisfactory service as such a member.

Gambling Legislation

89. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to prohibit fixed odds betting terminals in upcoming legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13511/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I draw the Deputy's attention to my press statement of 21 September 2011 in which I announced that the Government had agreed to my proposals for new legislation to update our laws on gambling. In that statement I announced that the Government had decided, in the public interest, that the new legislation should prohibit fixed odds betting terminals.

My Department has prepared Heads of a Bill that will give effect to the proposals approved by the Government in 2011. It is provisionally entitled the Gambling Control Bill. I hope to bring the Heads to the Government soon, for its approval and for authorisation to draft a Bill. Therefore, subject to the Government approving the Heads, a prohibition on fixed odds betting terminals can be expected to be included in the new Bill.

Citizenship Applications

90. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding a citizenship application in respect of a person (details supplied). [13512/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that a valid application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in February, 2013.

The application is being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation, such as good character and lawful residence, and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

As well as being a significant event in the life of its recipient, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation as provided for in law is also a major step for the State which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and

it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

Probation and Welfare Service

91. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current situation in County Kerry regarding probation officers; if there are probation officers available to deal with cases that need assistance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13517/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Probation Service, which is the lead agency in the assessment and management of offenders in our communities, is divided into seven operational regions. County Kerry comes within the South West Region which also encompasses Cork City and County; County Clare; and Limerick City and County.

The team operating out of Tralee covers a caseload of both adult and young offenders. In addition to professional probation staff, the team also has the support of one full time clerical officer and two part time community service supervisors.

The Service allocates its resources and prioritises its workload to maximise efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of front-line services. In that context, it focuses primarily on cases which have a statutory responsibility including high risk cases, community service, and young offenders.

Residency Permits

92. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason a person (details supplied) was granted just one year even though similar applicants secured five years of residency; the reason for the delay in making a decision; if he will justify the fact that the applicant has spent all personal savings on living here for four years in order to qualify; if humanitarian grounds are considered; and if he will write directly to the applicant. [13526/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised that the person concerned was granted five years residency based on her EU Treaty Rights application but that this permission was subsequently revoked for reasons which were outlined to her at the time. The immigration status in the State of the person concerned is currently under consideration by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service and once a decision has been made, this decision and its consequences, will be conveyed to her.

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.

Naturalisation Applications

93. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a review of the file in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Donegal arising from which the original or photocopy of their child's birth certificate appears to have been missing; if the missing document has been found; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13545/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that a valid application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in November, 2012.

The application is being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation, such as good character and lawful residence, and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

A photocopy of an Irish birth certificate for her child born in 2009 was included in documentation provided with her application for a certificate of naturalisation. This is being returned to the applicant as it is not relevant to this application. I understand that further clarification has been sought from the Deputy in regard to the issue raised in his question.

As well as being a significant event in the life of its recipient, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation as provided for in law is also a major step for the State which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

Naturalisation Applications

94. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress made to date in the evaluation of naturalisation application in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; when the procedures will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13546/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that valid applications for a certificate of naturalisation were received from the persons referred to by the Deputy in October, 2011.

The applications are at an advanced stage of processing and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible. As well as being a significant event in the life of its recipient, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation as provided for in law is also a major step for the State which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

out 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.

Asylum Applications

95. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedure to be followed to facilitate an application for asylum or refugee status in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13547/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Applications for refugee status from persons already in the State are made in the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner, 79/83 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2. A comprehensive Information Leaflet for applicants for refugee status in Ireland is available on the website of the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner at www.orac.ie.

Naturalisation Applications

96. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedures to date and that still remain outstanding in the matter of determination of eligibility for naturalisation in the case of persons (details supplied) in Dublin 22; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13548/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that a valid application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the first named person referred to by the Deputy in December, 2011.

The application is being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation, such as good character and lawful residence, and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

As well as being a significant event in the life of its recipient, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation as provided for in law is also a major step for the State which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

There is no record of an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the second named person referred to by the Deputy. 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.

Naturalisation Applications

97. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedures followed and progress made to date in the determination of entitlement to naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13549/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned was granted permission to remain in the State for an initial 2 year period on Stamp 4 conditions from 11 July, 2005, under the revised arrangements for the non-EEA national parents of children born in Ireland prior to January, 2005, commonly known as the IBC/05 Scheme. The grant of permission to remain was renewed regularly and is currently valid until 11 July, 2013.

Officials in the Citizenship Division of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) inform me that there is no record of an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to in the Deputy's question.

Section 15 of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, provides that the Minister may, in his absolute discretion, grant an application for a certificate of naturalisation provided certain statutory conditions are fulfilled. The conditions are that the applicant must

- be of full age

- be of good character

- have had a period of one year's continuous residency in the State immediately before the date of application and, during the eight years immediately preceding that period, have had a total residence in the State amounting to four years

- intend in good faith to continue to reside in the State after naturalisation

- have, before a judge of the District Court in open court, in a citizenship ceremony or in such manner as the Minister, for special reasons, allows -

- (i) made a declaration, in the prescribed manner, of fidelity to the nation and loyalty to the State, and

- (ii) undertaken to faithfully observe the laws of the State and to respect its democratic values.

A foreign national who is married to, or is the Civil Partner of, an Irish citizen for at least three years may apply for naturalisation under section 15A of the Irish Naturalisation and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, where they have been continuously resident in the island of Ireland for the year immediately prior to the date of their application and for two out of the four years prior to that year. The marriage or civil partnership must be subsisting and recognised under Irish law. Section 15A provides that the Minister may waive certain conditions for naturalisation if satisfied that the applicant would suffer serious consequences in respect of his or her bodily integrity or liberty if not granted Irish citizenship.

Section 16 of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, provides that the Minister may, in his absolute discretion, waive some or all of the statutory conditions in certain circumstances i.e. where an applicant is of Irish descent or of Irish associations; where an applicant is a person who is a refugee within the meaning of the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees; or where an applicant is a Stateless person within the meaning of the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Stateless persons.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for citizenship if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 as amended.

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.

Naturalisation Applications

98. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedure to date and still remaining in the determination of eligibility for residency-naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 22; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13550/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned was granted temporary permission to remain in the State in September, 2001 under the arrangements then in place for the non-EEA parents of children born in Ireland. This permission was renewed on a regular basis and is currently valid until 30 September, 2014.

A valid application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in February, 2012. The application is being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation, such as good character and lawful residence, and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

As well as being a significant event in the life of its recipient, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation as provided for in law is also a major step for the State which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

Residency Permits

99. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding residency entitlement and/or eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 8; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13551/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned was granted temporary permission to remain in the State on 27 September, 2001 under the arrangements then in place for the non-EEA parents of Irish born citizen children. This permission was renewed on a regular basis and is currently valid until 7 January, 2015.

There is no record of an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to in the Deputy's question.

Section 15 of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, provides that the Minister may, in his absolute discretion, grant an application for a certificate of naturalisation provided certain statutory conditions are fulfilled. The conditions are that the applicant must:

- be of full age

- be of good character

- have had a period of one year's continuous residency in the State immediately before the date of application and, during the eight years immediately preceding that period, have had a total residence in the State amounting to four years

- intend in good faith to continue to reside in the State after naturalisation

- have, before a judge of the District Court in open court, in a citizenship ceremony or in such manner as the Minister, for special reasons, allows -

(i) made a declaration, in the prescribed manner, of fidelity to the nation and loyalty to the State, and

(ii) undertaken to faithfully observe the laws of the State and to respect its democratic values.

A foreign national who is married to, or is the Civil Partner of, an Irish citizen for at least three years may apply for naturalisation under section 15A of the Irish Naturalisation and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, where they have been continuously resident in the island of Ireland for the year immediately prior to the date of their application and for two out of the four years prior to that year. The marriage or civil partnership must be subsisting and recognised under Irish law. Section 15A provides that the Minister may waive certain conditions for naturalisation if satisfied that the applicant would suffer serious consequences in respect of his or her bodily integrity or liberty if not granted Irish citizenship.

Section 16 of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, provides that the Minister may, in his absolute discretion, waive some or all of the statutory conditions in certain circumstances i.e. where an applicant is of Irish descent or of Irish associations; where an applicant is a person who is a refugee within the meaning of the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees; or where an applicant is a Stateless person within the meaning of the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Stateless persons.

It is open to any individual to lodge an application for citizenship if and when they are in a position to meet the statutory requirements as prescribed in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956 as amended.

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.

Residency Permits

100. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding residency/entitlement to naturalisation in the case of persons (details supplied) in County Kildare; if update of Stamp 4 will issue in the interim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13552/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Natu-

ralisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that applications for a certificate of naturalisation were received from the persons referred to by the Deputy in April 2012.

The applications are currently being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicants meet the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

As well as being a significant event in the life of its recipient, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation as provided for in law is also a major step for the State which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

The first and second persons concerned were granted permission to remain in the State for an initial 2 year period on Stamp 4 conditions from 22 September, 2005 under the revised arrangements for the non-EEA national parents of children born in Ireland prior to January, 2005, commonly known as the IBC/05 Scheme. The grant of permission to remain was renewed regularly and is currently valid until 12 April, 2013.

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.

Residency Permits

101. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding determination of eligibility of residency-naturalisation arising from the Zambrano judgment in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow; if the case is likely to be impeded in any way in view of the fact that the child's passport is in their homeland and in respect of which application has been made but the applicants cannot travel there for obvious reasons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13553/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I refer the Deputy to my detailed Reply to his recent Parliamentary Question, No 190 of Thursday, 28th February, 2013, in this matter. The position in the State of the person concerned is as set out in that Reply which is copied beneath (in italics).

As stated in that Reply, all representations submitted by and on behalf of the person concerned will be considered before a final decision is made. In the event that documentary evidence is submitted which suggests that the terms of the Zambrano Judgment are applicable to the case of the person concerned then any such documentary evidence will be fully considered. The Deputy will appreciate that the Zambrano Judgment, in an Irish context, applies to certain third country national parents of an Irish born minor citizen child. As such, in the event that the person concerned is the parent of such a child, and that child is the holder of an Irish Passport, then it would be in his interests to have the child's Irish Passport, together with all the other relevant documentation, forwarded to my Department for consideration without delay.

Given that the person concerned has no current right of residency in the State, the issue of an application for naturalisation does not arise at this time.

The person concerned is a failed asylum applicant. Arising from the refusal of his asylum

application, and in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was notified, by letter dated 25th February, 2010, that the then Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why a Deportation Order should not be made against him. In addition, he was notified of his entitlement to apply for Subsidiary Protection in accordance with the provisions of the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations 2006.

The person concerned submitted an application for Subsidiary Protection. When consideration of this application has been completed, the person concerned will be notified in writing of the outcome.

In the event that the application for Subsidiary Protection is refused, the position in the State of the person concerned will then 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 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.

The position in relation to the immigration status of Long Term Residency is that, at the date of application, a person applying for such status must have been legally resident in the State for over five years (60 months) on the basis of work permit, work authorisation or working visa conditions and, as such, must have Stamp 1 or Stamp 4 endorsements on their Passport during such periods. Given that the person concerned has no current right of residency in the State, he would not be in a position to meet the lawful residency criteria applicable to persons applying to my Department for Long Term Residency status.

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.

Deportation Orders

102. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will urgently review the case of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow with a view to revoking a deportation order in view of the fact that they were in continuous employment with resultant statutory entitlements for more than five years during which time they met all requirements in terms of payment of taxes notwithstanding the finding arising from previous review; if their alleged illegality of their presence in the State has been examined in this context; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13554/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I refer the Deputy to my reply below to Parliamentary Question Number 8028/13 of 14th February, 2013. The situation is unchanged since then. I would like to add further that the person concerned did not have permission to work in the State.

The person concerned had her case examined in accordance with the provisions of Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999, (as amended), and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996, (as

14 March 2013

amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. Refoulement was not found to be an issue here. In addition, no issue arises under Section 4 of the Criminal Justice (UN Convention against Torture) Act, 2000. Consideration was also given to private and family rights under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

I am satisfied that the person concerned had her case fairly and comprehensively examined and, therefore, the decision to make a Deportation Order against her is justified. She is therefore illegally present in the State.

A Deportation Order was signed on 17 January 2013. The effect of the Deportation Order is that the person concerned must leave the state and remain thereafter outside the State. The enforcement of the Deportation Order is an operational matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

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 .

Residency Permits

103. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current position, procedure to date followed and issues outstanding, if any, in regard to residency/entitlement to naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 24 who has been resident here for 15 years, ten of which in permanent employment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13555/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that applications for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in September 2011.

The application is being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation, such as good character and lawful residence, and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

As well as being a significant event in the life of its recipient, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation as provided for in law is also a major step for the State which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process. The person referred to currently has permission to remain in the State until March 2015.

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.

Naturalisation Applications

104. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if an application for naturalisation has been received in the case of persons (details supplied) in County Dublin, only the latter of whose application has been acknowledged; if both applications have been assessed in relation to eligibility for naturalisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13556/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that applications for a certificate of naturalisation were received from the persons referred to by the Deputy in July 2012.

The applications are currently being further processed with a view to establishing whether the applicants meet the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

As well as being a significant event in the life of its recipient, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation as provided for in law is also a major step for the State which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

Residency Permits

105. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the residency status and-or entitlement to naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13557/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can inform the Deputy that the application has entered the final stage of processing and I intend to grant citizenship. A letter issued on 7 March 2013 to the person referred to by the Deputy asking her to submit the prescribed certification fee and other documents. Following receipt of the required documentation her application will be finalised and she will be invited in due course to a citizenship ceremony at which the declaration of fidelity to the Irish Nation and loyalty to the State is made and certificate of naturalisation is issued. The person referred to currently has permission to remain in the State until 25 May 2013.

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.

Police Internships

106. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if consider-

ation is likely to be given to the training of cadets for other police forces in this jurisdiction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13558/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): All training requests from Police Forces in other jurisdictions are given consideration and joint training with other police organisations and An Garda Síochána occur on a regular basis. An Garda Síochána regularly facilitates internships for students/cadets from other police forces. The aim of these internships is for students to work with a range of operational and administrative units within An Garda Síochána with a view to gaining an insight into the organisational framework and work of An Garda Síochána. The benefit to An Garda Síochána from these internships is they enhance the international reputation of An Garda Síochána and provide an insight into the training methods of foreign police forces.

Residency Permits

107. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding residency-entitlement and eligibility for naturalisation in the case of persons (details supplied) in Dublin 22; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13559/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the first name person referred to had her application granted and was presented with a Certificate of Naturalisation at a citizenship ceremony on 30 September 2011. There is no record of an application for a certificate of naturalisation from the second named person referred to by the Deputy.

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.

Deportation Orders

108. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will revoke the deportation order in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13568/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Following a comprehensive and thorough examination of his asylum application in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996, (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement the person concerned was informed that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order against him.

A Deportation Order was signed on 17 January, 2013. The effect of Deportation Orders is that the person concerned must leave the state and remain thereafter outside the State. The enforcement of Deportation Orders is an operational matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

However, if new information or circumstances have come to light, which have a direct bearing on his case and which has arisen since the original Deportation Order was made, there

remains the option of applying to me for revocation of the Deportation Order pursuant to the provisions of Section 3 (11) of the Immigration Act, 1999, as amended. However I wish to make clear that such an application would require substantial grounds to be successful.

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.

Departmental Expenditure

109. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Defence the position regarding a barracks (details supplied) in County Donegal; the costs to the State to date in 2013 of associated security; when there will be a transfer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13502/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): In the context of the 2009 Budget, the then Government announced the closure of four barracks including Rockhill House, Letterkenny. Agreement has been reached for the sale of the property to Donegal County Council and my Department has requested a meeting with the County Manager in Donegal to finalise the sale. The amount paid out to date in 2013 in respect of security costs for the property is €15,490.21.

Common Foreign and Security Policy

110. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence the extent to which he has received communication from his EU colleagues in the context of European defence and or security issues; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13570/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): Since the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, now conducts the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy assisted by the European External Action Service. During each European Union Presidency one formal and one informal meeting of Defence Ministers is held. In relation to the Informal Meeting of Defence Ministers that was held in Dublin discussions covered a range of issues including the upcoming European Council on Defence, Mali, the Horn of Africa and Partnerships between the EU and the United Nations. Ministers also had the benefit of the presence of the Under-Secretary General in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for the first time, at an EU Defence Ministers meeting.

Partnerships, in particular, between the EU and the United Nations, were the final item for discussion at the Informal meeting of Defence Ministers. This afforded EU Ministers of Defence and the Under Secretary General, Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the United Nations, the opportunity to discuss how to foster more effective co-operation and build partnerships in order to enhance the effectiveness of UN Peacekeeping operations.

Overseas Missions

111. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence if he has had discussions with his EU colleagues in regard to the issue of future participation in EU led peace keeping or peace enforcing missions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13571/13]

115. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence if he has had discussions at EU or UN level in the context of Irish participation in further or future overseas deployment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13575/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 111 and 115 together.

During each EU Presidency both formal and informal meetings of Defence Ministers are held. On 12-13 February 2013, I hosted an informal meeting of EU Ministers of Defence in Dublin Castle. The Operational Commanders of three of the four current EU-led missions were also in attendance. Discussions were focused on these current operations and future proposed developments.

Ireland contributes Defence Forces personnel to three of the four current EU military missions. Ireland contributes seven personnel to the Operation ALTHEA mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ireland also contributes ten Defence Forces personnel, including Mission Commander Brigadier General Gerald Aherne, to EUTM Somalia, the EU's mission to train Somali security forces in Uganda. Ireland will be contributing eight Defence Forces personnel to the new EUTM Mali mission as part of a joint contingent with the UK.

The other EU military mission, Operation EUNAVFOR ATALANTA, is the EU's first maritime operation which contributes to improving maritime security off the coast of Somalia and in the Indian Ocean. Ireland does not currently contribute personnel to this operation.

As well as these four military operations, the EU has recently launched three new civilian Common Security and Defence Policy civilian missions. These include EUCAP Nestor, a Regional Maritime Capacity Building mission to enhance the capacity of Somalia and the wider Horn of Africa region to fight piracy. This mission is complementary to and has close coordination with Operation EUNAVFOR ATALANTA and EUTM Somalia and international actors. This civilian mission is augmented with military expertise.

Ireland participated in the Austro-German led Battlegroup which was on standby from 1 July 2012 to 31 December 2012. The other members of the Austro-German Battlegroup were Austria, Germany, Czech Republic, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).

Regarding UN missions, Ireland currently contributes 361 personnel to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) Mission. Following the deployment of a contingent of some 170 personnel of the Armed forces of Finland to UNIFIL, a joint Irish-Finnish Battalion was formed in May 2012. Other personnel are serving as monitors and observers with several United Nations missions. Overall there are currently 436 Defence Forces personnel serving overseas.

The Department of Defence constantly reviews the deployment of Defence Forces personnel overseas. However, it is not anticipated that there will be any major deployments of troops to further missions in the foreseeable future.

Within the EU itself, a number of committees, including the Political and Security Committee and the EU Military Committee, keep the issues of troop deployments, including rapid response, under constant review in consultation with all EU Member States.

Defence Forces Training

112. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence if the Naval Service has access to modern training facilities in line with other Defence Forces throughout Europe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13572/13]

113. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence the extent to which the Air Corps has access to the modern training services and technology available to other such forces throughout Europe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13573/13]

114. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence the extent to which the Army can access the full range of training and equipment available to other defence forces throughout Europe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13574/13]

116. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence the extent to which he is satisfied that the entire Defence Forces continue to have adequate access to full technology and training facilities notwithstanding the budgetary reduction requirements arising from the memorandum of understanding entered into by his predecessors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13576/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 112 to 114, inclusive, and 116 together.

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 primary focus of military training is the attainment of a capability for military interoperability in order to conduct peace support operations to international standards. Troops selected for overseas service undergo a rigorous programme of training, designed to help them carry out their peacekeeping mission and to provide for their protection. Pre-deployment training is provided to members of the Permanent Defence Force and is updated on an ongoing basis in the light of any changes in the threat assessment or mission requirements.

Training standards in the Defence Forces are constantly benchmarked against best international practice and I am advised that Defence Forces personnel have the most modern and effective range of equipment and technology available, on a par with the best international practice and requirements, for training purposes and to carry out their day-to-day roles both at home and overseas.

The acquisition of new equipment, including equipment used for training, 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, training 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.

In regard to the Naval Service, 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 (OPV's). 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, I am satisfied that Naval Services training techniques and the technologies involved are up to date in all respects. A considerable training effort is also involved with the new ships programme to allow for a smooth entry of the two ships into operational service in 2014 and 2015.

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.

Question No. 115 answered with Question No. 111.

Question No. 116 answered with Question No. 112.

Defence Forces Reserve Training

117. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence the degree to which the army reserves continue to have access to available modern training facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13577/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Reserve Defence Force (RDF) is currently undergoing a major re-organisation. This is consistent with the recommendations of the recently published VFM Review. The new “Single Force” concept comprises Permanent Defence Force (PDF) Units with Reserve components, rather than a parallel Reserve force. Reserve Units within barracks are supported by their parent PDF Unit and have access to the training facilities within the barracks. The 16 Units outside of PDF installations have access to training facilities identified by the military as being most suitable from the pool of RDF training establishments already in place. I am satisfied that the changes when fully implemented will ensure a better Reserve and enhance overarching Defence capabilities.

Defence Forces Strength

118. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence if he is satisfied that he can continue to maintain the current strength of the Army, Navy and Air Corps notwithstanding cost cutting arising from the memorandum of understanding entered into by his predecessor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13578/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Military Authorities that the strength of the Permanent Defence Force at 31 January 2013, the latest date for which details are available, was 9,313. This is against the agreed stabilised strength for the Permanent Defence Force of 9,500. In this context it is my intention that targeted recruitment will continue within the resource envelope allocated to Defence. Targeted recruitment will ensure that into the future the Permanent Defence Force can continue to deliver all operational outputs required by Government in the domestic environment as well as 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.

Departmental Staff Redeployment

119. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of years employees of his Department have been seconded to two private companies, the Irish Horse Board Cooperative Society Ltd and Horse Sport Ireland Ltd; if there are any current employees of his Department working within these two companies; if so, the names of the persons and the length of time they have been seconded to HSI or IHB; if not, when his Department's employees' ceased working within the IHB and HSI; if there are any of his Department's employees currently or previously working within private companies other than IHB and HSI with their salaries paid by his Department; his views on whether it is appropriate that taxpayers here pay the salaries of civil servants working for private companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13580/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): One Superintending Veterinary Inspector has been seconded to Animal Health Ireland as its Chief Executive in September 2009 and my Department continues to pay his salary as part of its annual subvention to AHL. Two Executive Officers have been seconded from my Department since 1994 to Horse Sport Ireland Limited. The salaries in respect of the two individuals are recouped from Horse Sport Ireland Limited. No other civil servants have been seconded from my Department to work in private companies.

Horse Passports

120. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans, if any, to enforce the transfer of ownership regulations in relation to horse traceability, in order that horse ownership changes are recorded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13449/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): EU legislation 504/2008 provides that equine animals must be identified from 1 July 2009 with a passport and a microchip. The relevant national legislation is S.I. No. 357 of 2011 - European Communities (Equine) Regulations 2011 (as amended). This legislation provides that if an equine animal has not been identified within six months of the date of its birth, or by 31 of December in the year of its birth, whichever date occurs later, then the equine animal cannot be admitted to the food chain.

There is no provision in the EU or national equine legislation relating to the transfer of ownership; however, my Department is currently exploring options in relation to the introduction of obligations on owners to notify the Passport Issuing Organisation of the transfer of ownership on the sale of horses in the context of this legislative background.

My Department is also developing a central database of horses which will involve migration of selected data from Passport Issuing Bodies (PIOs) to the Department. The central database will be populated with information provided from the databases maintained by the PIOs, by the Department from records obtained at slaughter plants and knackeries and by Local Authority Veterinary Inspectors in respect of records maintained at appropriate slaughter plants. If a decision is taken by my Department to introduce ownership transfer notification requirements on horse owners, the Passport Issuing Organisations will be required to notify the central database of transfers of ownership.

Suckler Welfare Scheme Payments

121. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive payment in respect of their 2011 suckler cow grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13469/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named registered 2 animals in 2011 and 3 animals in 2012 for the Suckler Welfare Scheme. Errors were identified in relation to both of the 2011 born animals and following correspondence with the applicant these errors have now been resolved. Payment will issue shortly in respect of these animals.

One of the 2012 born animals is ineligible for payment as it was not registered within the statutory 27 days of birth. Details of the measures required under the Scheme have not yet been received for the other two animals and payment cannot be considered until this information has been received and found to be in compliance with the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

122. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a REP scheme payment will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13480/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced REPS 4 in April 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. These checks have now been completed for 2012 in this case and the 75% Year 4 payment amounting to €6,739.05 issued for payment on 5th March 2013 and the remaining 25% Year 4 balancing payment will issue shortly.

Suckler Welfare Scheme Payments

123. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment of the suckler cow welfare scheme will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13481/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named registered 5 animals under the 2012 Suckler Welfare Scheme. Errors have been identified in respect of all of these animals and the applicant has been written to with a view to resolving the issues. Payment cannot be considered until these issues have been resolved satisfactorily.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

124. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will be paid their agri-environment options scheme grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13489/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was approved for participation in the 2011 Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from the 1st September 2011. Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks

with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. During these checks issues were identified in relation to the claimed areas on the Natura action. Officials in my Department are currently investigating these issues with the intention of finalising and issuing payment for 2011 as soon as possible. Once these checks have been finalised the 2012 application will be further processed.

Forestry Sector

125. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reasons for the hold up in granting approvals for forestry plantations in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13496/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In the absence of specific details of the applications that are considered to be unduly delayed it is not possible to comment further on the matter. If the Deputy wishes Forestry Division in Wexford will contact him to obtain a list of such cases with the relevant details of the persons affected and I will be happy to have the matter investigated further.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

126. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding disadvantaged area aid in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [13516/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was recently confirmed as having satisfied the minimum stocking density requirements under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, following a review of the agri-environment plan for the holding. Processing of the application is now complete and payment is due to issue shortly to the nominated bank account.

Live Exports

127. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the procedure involved in the transport of live animals to a destination (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13520/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): All animals exported to destinations outside of the European Union are required to be accompanied by a veterinary certificate attesting to animal health requirements as stipulated by the importing country.

The requirements in relation to the transport of live animals on a commercial basis are laid down in Council Regulation (EC) 1/2005 of 22 December 2004 on the protection of animals during transport and related operations. This Regulation sets out the requirements for the authorisation of transporters of live animals, approval of means of transport, transport practices, required documentation etc. The Regulation is implemented in Irish law under the European Communities (Animal Transport and Control Post) Regulations 2006. Accordingly, specific requirements for the transportation of animals to destinations such as Lagos will ultimately depend on the transport method used. For example, livestock vessels used for the transport of animals by sea must be approved in accordance with the aforementioned Regulations and under

the Diseases of Animals (Carriage of Cattle by Sea) Orders, 1996 and 1998.

The transport of animals by air is also governed by Council Regulation (EC) 1/2005 as well as by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Live Animals regulations, which set out the requirements for transporting different animal species by air, including among other things, the container specifications required for their transport.

Energy Usage

128. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Health the measure that have been taken by his Department and the Health Service Executive to reduce energy use and to increase the use of electricity generated from renewable sources; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13455/13]

129. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Health the savings that have been generated to date by energy saving initiatives in both his Department and the Health Service Executive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13456/13]

130. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Health if his Department and the Health Service Executive have estimated the amount of savings which could be achieved through reducing energy use and increasing energy efficiency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13457/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 128 to 130, inclusive, together.

My Department is participating in the Office of Public Works “Optimising Power @ Work” scheme. The aim of this staff energy awareness campaign is to reduce CO₂ emissions from energy consumption by the public sector. The main focus of the scheme is a staff energy awareness campaign and at the same time ensuring that the buildings are being operated in the most efficient manner possible regarding all energy consuming processes.

Savings have been achieved in the heating and electricity consumption at my Department’s headquarters in Hawkins House, notwithstanding the age of the building and the limitations arising from single glazed metal windows.

In 2012 the Department took the following steps to further improve energy performance and efficiency:

- continued to monitor and adjust heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems;
- carried out ‘Building Management System’ audits;
- renewed focus on staff awareness;
- recalculated benchmarks and HVAC control performance.

In addition work was carried out to the main heating system which involved upgrading/replacement of the original heating boilers including the installation of summer time immersion heating for hot water to the toilet/kitchen facilities. This also includes a more up to date BMS system allowing for additional local control of heating distribution.

My Department do not select the electricity provider as this is completed by the National Procurement Service who are attached to the Office of Public Works and therefore do not have

control on the amount of electricity consumed which is produced from a renewable source.

Since Hawkins House became involved with the Office of Public Works “Optimising Power @ Work” scheme the energy consumption of the building has been reduced by 14%. The position regarding the Health Service Executive (HSE) is a matter for themselves. I have requested the HSE to reply directly to the Deputy in this regard.

Health Services

131. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Health the support services available in County Cork for amputees; the funding assigned for prosthetic and orthotic services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13460/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy’s question relates to a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive, for a direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services

132. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question no. 252 of 6 March 2013, the services and treatments available to diabetes type 1 patients under the medical card scheme. [13463/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Dental Treatment Service Scheme (DTSS) provides access to dental treatment for adult medical card holders. All medical card holders are entitled to specific dental treatments e.g., an annual dental examination, two fillings in each calendar year, extractions as necessary. Patients with special needs, high risk patients and those who have greater clinical needs, including patients with type 1 diabetes, receive a wider range of services. This may include all fillings as required and more complex care such as root canal treatment, gum treatment and dentures. Dentists must apply to the HSE for approval to provide such additional services. The HSE has issued Standard Operating Procedures to HSE Principal Dental Surgeons and dental contractors to support equitable and priority funding and to provide clear guidance to dentists on the application of such requests.

Accident and Emergency Services

133. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when the on call for emergency management under the auspices of the major emergency management framework programme was formally agreed and implemented; if he will provide the details of the negotiators in relation to each side of this framework; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13465/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As the Deputy’s query relates to an operational issue, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Substance Misuse

134. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Health the progress that has been made

in introducing the recommendations arising from the national strategy of substances misuse which includes alcohol, particularly the need for structural separation of alcohol products from other products in supermarkets and other stores; if he intends to give statutory effect to section 9 of the Intoxicating Liquor Act in relation to this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13471/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that real and tangible proposals are currently being finalised on foot of the recommendations in the National Substance Misuse Strategy report. These proposals cover all of the areas mentioned in the report, including minimum unit pricing, advertising of alcohol, and the structural separation of alcohol from other products in mixed trading outlets. My Department is also working closely with the Department of Justice and Equality in relation to, inter alia, section 9 of the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2008, which deals with the structural separation of alcohol from other products in mixed trading outlets. The recommendation of the Substance Misuse Steering Group in this vein was to commence Section 9 of that Act.

The Cabinet Committee on Social Policy has considered these proposals and I intend to bring forward specific proposals for consideration by Government as soon as possible. In the meantime, work on developing a framework for the necessary Department of Health legislation is continuing. For example, in conjunction with Northern Ireland, a health impact assessment is being commissioned as part of the process of developing a legislative basis for minimum unit pricing. (Scotland commissioned the same sort of assessment before it drafted its legislation on minimum unit pricing.) The health impact assessment will study the impact of different minimum prices on a range of areas such as health, crime and likely economic impact.

Thalidomide Victim Compensation

135. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health his views on a submission (details supplied) regarding thalidomide survivors; the number of meetings he has had with the group and the number planned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13476/13]

143. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when his Department will come to a fair and reasonable decision in respect of victims of thalidomide to address the serious consequences arising from their disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13537/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 135 and 143 together.

Given the challenges that persist for each individual, this Government's aim is to address the health and personal social care needs of thalidomide survivors living in Ireland. I have stated that I am willing to enter into discussions about a health care package on a non-statutory basis; an ex-gratia payment having regard to current financial circumstances; and a statement to the Dáil recognising the challenges faced by survivors.

There are two thalidomide representative organisations. The largest group, the Irish Thalidomide Association announced publicly in 2012 that it had ceased talks with the Government. The Association's legal advisor has initiated personal injuries claims against the manufacturer and distributors of the Thalidomide drug and the State.

The second organisation, the Irish Thalidomide Survivors Society, has sought an independent agency and a statutory health care package including other aspects of their needs such as housing, heating, transport and clothing, which are outside the remit of the health sector. My

position remains unchanged from that outlined in my letter to the Irish Thalidomide Survivors Society in June last year in which I requested that the Society consider, in good faith, proceeding with a Health Care Protocol which envisaged appointing and training a multi-disciplinary team, arranging a multi-disciplinary health evaluation, identifying and documenting their healthcare needs/issues and developing plans to address those needs.

I met with both organisations in July 2011 and have been in correspondence since.

There are currently 32 Irish Thalidomide survivors. Each survivor received lump sum payments from a German Foundation and the Irish Government in the early 1970s. In 1975 the lump-sums paid by the Irish Government ranged from €6,400 to €21,000. In addition, each survivor receives on-going monthly payments from both the German Foundation and the Irish Government. Combining the Irish and German payments, most individuals receive €30,386 per annum or €2,572 per month, tax free. The German and Irish monthly allowance is not reckonable for State benefits and each individual is automatically entitled to a medical card.

Health Service Executive Staff Remuneration

136. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will re-examine a matter (details supplied) on the biomedical science training allowance at Beaumont Hospital, Dublin 9. [13485/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The HSE has in the past confirmed to all health sector employers that Student Medical Scientists on placement must be paid the monthly training allowance as set out in my Department's consolidated salary scales.

This allowance was approved for continued award to new beneficiaries, following the review of public sector allowances conducted in 2012. The current rate payable is €813.58 per month.

Following discussions with my Department, the HSE has indicated to all relevant hospitals that arrangements should be made to effect the necessary payments to the current and future student cohorts. I understand that the necessary arrangements are now in train.

Medical Card Applications

137. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 3. [13486/13]

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.

Pension Provisions

138. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that the restoration of outstanding pension entitlements to a Health Service Executive pensioner (details supplied) following a decision by the Pensions Ombudsman; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13500/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As the Deputy's query relates to an opera-

tional issue, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Medical Card Appeals

139. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will review an appeal for a full medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry. [13503/13]

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.

General Practitioner Services

140. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5, a medical card holder, who is in his 70s and entitled to a free driving licence every three years, has been asked to pay his GP €55 to sign a driving licence medical form. [13514/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Under the General Medical Services (GMS) contract, a general practitioner (GP) is expected to provide his/her patients who hold medical cards or GP visit cards with all proper and necessary treatment of a kind generally undertaken by a GP.

The contract between the HSE and GPs under the GMS Scheme stipulates that fees are not paid to GPs by the HSE in respect of certain medical certificates which may be required, for example, “under the Social Welfare Acts or for the purposes of insurance or assurance policies or for the issue of driving licences”.

Consultation fees charged by general practitioners to private patients and to GMS patients outside the terms of the GMS contract are a matter of private contract between the clinicians and the patients. While I have no role in relation to such fees, I would expect clinicians to have regard to the overall economic situation in setting their fees. I should add that General Practitioners who hold GMS contracts with the HSE must not seek or accept money from medical card or GP visit card holders in respect of routine treatment.

Health Services

141. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health in view of the fact that there are more than 220,000 persons with vision impairment here, the steps he will take to tackle this problem; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13515/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): There are detection and treatment services available at present, in the community and in acute hospital settings, for many conditions which can lead to vision impairment and blindness. The Department’s priorities are to continue to identify and address ophthalmic defects noticed at child health and/or school health examinations; to provide free eye examinations and free spectacles to all adult medical card holders; to screen for diabetic retinopathy and to reduce long waiting lists.

Medical Card Appeals

142. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13519/13]

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.

Question No. 143 answered with Question No. 135.

Medical Card Applications

144. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if and when a medical card will issue in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13544/13]

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.

Road Maintenance

145. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason South Dublin County Council received a lower amount of funding than Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council under the local and regional road maintenance initiative, despite the fact that south Dublin is geographically larger than Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13464/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads in its area, is a statutory function of each road authority in accordance with the provisions of section 13 of the Roads Act, 1993. Works on such roads are a matter for the relevant local authority to be funded from its own resources supplemented by State road grants.

As you know I recently announced additional funding of €2.7 million under a road maintenance initiative for road drainage schemes. In determining the annual non-national road grant allocations, the overall objective is to resource each local authority appropriately in as fair and equitable a manner as is possible, and using the established methodology which is applied to all local authority areas.

These additional grants, over and above the amounts announced by me in January last, were provided to assist local authorities with the urgent maintenance and upkeep of roads in their respective administrative areas. As there tends to be higher costs per kilometre in urban Council areas than in rural ones, these allocations are based on 'adjusted' road lengths.

Since a large part of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Council area comprises the highly built-up former Borough of Dun Laoghaire, it merits a factor of 2 (twice the road length) while the slightly less densely populated South Dublin County Council and also Fingal County Council have a factor of 1.5 (one and a half times the road length). Based on this methodology (which has been in use for some years), Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council was grant aided in the amount of €38,988 while South Dublin County Council was provided with €35,534, a difference of €3,454.

Tourism Promotion

146. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the marketing or support mechanisms in place to promote shooting and fishing holidays here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13494/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The matter raised is an operational matter for Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. I have referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland for direct reply. Please contact my private office if a reply is not received within ten working days.

Driving Licences

147. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the introduction of the new credit card style driving licence which was introduced in January 2013 will be reviewed to allow customers to bring their own photos with them to be scanned while applying for the licence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13504/13]

148. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in view of the threat, facing the professional ID market, and the possibility of a loss of jobs in the printed photographic industry, if the Road Safety Authority is reviewing an element of the process to see if there is a role of scanned photographs within the SAFE 2 process, which would permit a resolution of this difficulty and allow the photographic industry to coexist with SGS thus protecting the welfare of this industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [13532/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 147 and 148 together.

Under the terms of the Road Safety Authority (Commercial Vehicle Roadworthiness) Act 2012, the operation of the National Driver Licensing Service is a matter for the RSA. I have therefore referred these Questions to the RSA for direct reply, and would ask the Deputies to contact my office if a reply has not been received within ten days.