

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 6, inclusive, answered orally.

Enterprise Ireland

7. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of companies Enterprise Ireland is currently assisting in diversifying their export markets to reduce reliance on Britain in the wake of Brexit. [14460/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): There are 1,500 Enterprise Ireland (EI) client companies recording exports to the UK. They employ 100,000 people across the country and have exports of over €7 billion.

In Budget 2017, I secured additional monies, both current and capital, to support Enterprise Ireland's strategic response to Brexit, including 39 targeted posts, both at home and abroad to support its clients across all markets.

Extra staff will be placed in EI's domestic and overseas offices with sectoral knowledge and expertise such as in engineering, food, life sciences and construction. This will drive export growth to other international markets where there are known opportunities, and will reduce reliance on the UK.

With regard to export diversification, the EU and the Eurozone in particular present significant opportunities. EI is currently finalising a strategy focused on the Eurozone, targeting a 50% increase in exports by 2020.

Furthermore, the US and Canada will continue to be key markets for Irish companies. We will also continue to support companies to build their market share in high potential markets of China, South Korea, India, Asean, the Gulf, Latin America and Africa.

These client companies are spread right across the regions. EI's support to increase and diversify their export footprint in turn drives regional employment growth.

Questions Nos. 8 to 13, inclusive, answered orally.

Foreign Direct Investment

14. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the progress to date in advancing a project (details supplied); if she will ensure that the IDA gives a particular focus to the border region in trying to attract this investment; and if she will make

a statement on the matter. [14443/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): I understand that Cavan will be included in a study, currently being commissioned by IDA Ireland, to identify potential strategic land banks for the sustainable development of large-scale data centre projects. This will evaluate all viable land options nationally and will be conducted over a number of stages. For a site to be considered suitable, I understand that it must be both supported by the necessary infrastructure and compatible with the evolving needs of data centre investments.

This study is part of IDA Ireland's wider strategy to ensure that Ireland and its regions are best able to win and sustain mobile data centre investments of scale. In recent times companies including Facebook, Apple, Microsoft and Google have announced significant data centre investments for Ireland and the goal is to ensure that this trend continues.

More broadly, I regularly engage with stakeholders from the area and, on 19 January, I hosted a large delegation of elected representatives from Cavan and Monaghan to discuss issues around investment and job creation in the region.

Research and Development Funding

15. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if she is satisfied with the level of funding allocated to the programme for research in third level institutions on an annual basis in 2017; and the amount of funding that has been ring-fenced for research and frontier research in 2017. [14450/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): The Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLTI) has involved €1.2 billion investment of private and public investment. It has supported the provision of top-class research infrastructure (buildings, laboratories and cutting edge equipment) as well as human capital development, through Structured PhD programmes across Ireland's Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). It has facilitated Ireland in producing world class research in key strategic areas and has provided the base infrastructure for research teams funded by Science Foundation Ireland and other funders.

In 2017, PRTLTI has an allocation in my Department's Vote of €14.4m. The annual allocation to PRTLTI has been reducing in recent years as we are discharging the remaining liabilities for projects funded under Cycle 5 of the programme. In addition to the PRTLTI allocation, my Department is also allocating €162.5 million to Science Foundation Ireland in 2017 to fund oriented basic and applied research. SFI does not predetermine or "ring fence" specific funding allocation for basic or applied research. Funding decisions are made through international peer review on the basis of research excellence and impact.

In addition in 2017 my Department has allocated a further €122m to Enterprise Ireland specifically to support investment in research, development and innovation in Irish enterprise. The IDA also invests in RDI through its R&D Grants, with a total of €55.6m in investment in this area in 2015.

Innovation 2020, Ireland's strategy for research and innovation, provides for the establishment of a new programme to fund frontier research across all disciplines and all career stages. The Irish Research Council (an agency of the Department of Education and Skills) has responsibility for developing and implementing this Programme.

IDA Site Visits

16. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the status of the work of the IDA in marketing County Kildare as a jobs location in the past five years; the number of site visits that have taken place in that time and other initiatives that have taken place to contribute to highlighting County Kildare as a destination for new businesses; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14430/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): According to the 2016 Annual Employment Survey, conducted by my Department, there are 23 IDA supported client companies, employing 10,139 staff in County Kildare. Under IDA's strategy, the Agency aims to increase investment by 30-40% in each region outside of Dublin by 2019.

From 2012 to 2016, there were 18 site visits to Kildare. Visits to the county rose from one in 2014 to eight in 2016. Data on site visits is collated on a quarterly basis. Q1 2017 figures will be available next month.

Kildare is a part of the Mid-East region along with Meath and Wicklow, and has the lowest unemployment rate in the State at just 5.3%. The Mid East Action Plan for Jobs was launched in January 2016, and aimed to increase employment in the region by 10-15% over the course of the Plan to 2020. The first progress report was published in Q4 2016 shows the significant progress made to date. 163 of the Plan's actions are currently underway. IDA Ireland has appointed a dedicated Regional Business Development Manager for the Mid East and an additional 2,100 people entered employment in the last quarter of 2016 alone.

Site Visits to Kildare 2012-2016

Kildare Site Visits	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
	1	1	1	7	8

Enterprise Support Schemes

17. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the status of the Succeed in Ireland scheme; if she will direct the IDA to suspend any proposals to deny the operating contract of the scheme to ConnectIreland; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14418/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): The Succeed-in-Ireland initiative has been operated by ConnectIreland on the basis of a contract with IDA Ireland that was originally agreed in March 2012. The contract, which was extended by 12 months in March 2016, is now set to conclude on 26 March. I understand that it would not be permissible for any further extension to be granted on account of public procurement law.

The Board of IDA Ireland, at its meeting in November 2016, did consider the future of the initiative. It decided that the Agency would not re-tender for its continuation at this stage. A definitive decision was not taken, however, on the ultimate future of The Succeed-in-Ireland programme.

I have asked my Department to commission a review of the initiative after the conclusion of the current contract. This will help provide us with a better understanding of Succeed-in-Ire-

land's results and its wider contribution to employment generation in the State. The review may also consider the development of a new programme. I believe it is important that this review be undertaken before a determination is made on how we proceed.

Small and Medium Enterprises Supports

18. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation her contingency plans to assist small and medium enterprises operating both sides of the border in view of the uncertainty surrounding Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14424/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): At this stage it is not possible to predict with certainty the extent of Brexit for SMEs trading across the border. Much will depend on the nature of the deal that will be negotiated between the UK and the EU. This Government will seek, during that process, to highlight our unique economic ties with Northern Ireland.

The Government is very conscious of the specific challenges facing businesses in the border region who export to Northern Ireland. To help address this issue it has provided additional resources to InterTrade Ireland, the Cross Border Body which has specific responsibility for developing Cross Border Trade, in order to enable that Body to provide additional services and support to such companies. Inter Trade Ireland has commissioned a study by the ESRI which will improve our understanding of the impact of different trade and tariff regimes which might be imposed following Brexit. This study will also provide useful data on the extent and concentration of cross border trade, including information on this trade by product and firm type as well as barriers to trade. Inter Trade Ireland, in their day to day operations are very successful in fostering cross border trade. For example in 2016, the Body had a job creation impact of 2,339, it helped 79 companies to innovate for the first time and helped 88 companies to export for the first time.

Both Enterprise Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) have initiated a series of actions to assist their client companies.

I am actively engaged with our Agencies to ensure that Irish jobs are maintained and created in the context of the challenges and opportunities which Brexit presents for us. I chair a Brexit Coordination Group, which includes the senior management of my Department and the CEOs of relevant agencies. I also recently organised an engagement event in Carrick on Shannon, to hear the views of stakeholders, both directly and through representative bodies.

Action Plan for Jobs

19. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the key measures in the action plan for jobs 2017 for persons with disabilities. [14449/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): Since the first Action Plan for Jobs was launched in early 2012, almost 206,000 more people are at work. Over 66,000 jobs were created during 2016. Employment growth is spread across all regions and all sectors of the economy and society.

In February, we published the Action Plan for Jobs 2017. This Government's goal is to en-

sure that all of our people have the opportunity to enjoy rewarding work and to participate and contribute to their full potential to our economy and society.

The 2017 Action Plan sets out a whole of Government response to secure employment and retain jobs in the face of global uncertainty by strengthening the resilience and agility of our enterprise base. In developing APJ 2017, I had a number of discussions with my colleague Minister Finian McGrath T.D., Minister of State with special responsibility for Disabilities and with representatives of the disability sector. Minister McGrath will shortly publish a new strategy Make Work Pay to address the under-representation of people with disabilities in the workforce.

The 2017 Plan commits to the implementation of the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for Persons with Disabilities and ensure that people who are able to, and want to work are supported and enabled. This strategy falls under the remit of the Department for Justice and Equality. There are a range of measures to equip people with the skills to avail of job opportunities as they arise, including activation measures under Pathways to Work. The Government is also committed to increasing the target for employees with disabilities in the public sector towards 6 per cent by 2024 from the current level of 3.5%.

We will continue to work across Government to ensure that people with disabilities have the opportunity to participate fully in the workforce.

Brexit Issues

20. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to maximise Irish food and drink exporters' opportunities to fill the potential void in British exports to the EU as a result of Brexit; her views on whether her Department has been allocated enough extra spending to support this; if consideration will be given to putting in place an export fund to assist exporters replace the reduction in goods that the UK currently exports to Europe; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14458/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): As part of 2017 Budget negotiations, I successfully secured a €100 million increase in the Department's expenditure ceilings by year end 2016 and for 2017. This includes €3 million which is specifically for "Brexit" related posts across the Department and its Agencies. Part of this funding will support 39 targeted posts in Enterprise Ireland, located at both at home and abroad, to support its clients across all markets.

While Enterprise Ireland supports companies in the Food and Drink sector in Ireland, Bord Bia under the Department of Agriculture and Food works with these companies to access overseas markets. Both Agencies work closely together.

While the UK remains a key market, Enterprise Ireland is also working closely with Irish Food and Drink companies to build on their international reputation for product excellence and to drive growth in other key markets such as the Eurozone, Canada, the US and Asia.

In summary, the key focus is on supporting companies through:

1. Greater competitiveness
2. Markets diversification
3. More innovation
4. Better risk management and strategic financial skills.

My Department, working closely with the Department of Finance, the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI), EI and various stakeholders, has conducted a structured engagement with a large and diverse range of companies, to ascertain what, if any, impact Brexit is having on their business. This detailed work will provide a strong evidence base for the development of appropriate, tailored and targeted responses to support real business needs. Work on the data is well advanced and I will shortly be considering what options, in addition to those already being provided by the Agencies, should be introduced.

Brexit Issues

21. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the status of current work by her Department and agencies under its aegis regarding Brexit, protecting jobs and attracting new jobs here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14412/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): My Department and the enterprise agencies are fully committed to supporting business and all of our stakeholders in this period of heightened uncertainty.

I have established various structures in my Department, commissioned research and secured additional funding to support our work on Brexit.

Enterprise Ireland and the LEOs are steadily working with companies to make sure that they are better prepared to respond to the challenges that Brexit will bring.

Enterprise Ireland has been systematically engaging with its 1,500 clients that export to the UK. Enterprise Ireland's strategy is to:

- Strengthen our ability to penetrate the UK market so as to sustain and grow exports.
- Strengthen our ability to penetrate other key markets to reduce dependence on the UK.
- Invest in programmes to ensure that clients have the finances, innovation, leadership and scale to grow in international markets.
- Strengthen the ability at local and regional level to generate more start-ups and businesses with export potential.

IDA Ireland continues to actively pursue any opportunity for mobile investment. IDA will continue to:

- Work with its existing client base to assist and support them to grow;
- Highlight Ireland's continued strong offering – for example, Ireland's continued access to the EU market; and
- Be in contact with clients and prospective clients across the globe and continue to market a competitive value proposition to attract mobile investment from global locations including the UK.

Science Foundation Ireland is working to strengthen collaboration with the UK and is also seeking to expand its range of actions to take advantage of Brexit opportunities.

Enterprise between North and South could be impacted in many ways by the UK's withdrawal from the EU - in this regard the role of Intertrade Ireland is vital.

We are providing InterTrade Ireland with additional funding this year to undertake a range of initiatives for SMEs. This will involve the provision of factual advice, supports for capability building and the provision of other specialist expertise for companies.

My Department is also funding a research project to be undertaken for InterTrade Ireland by the ESRI. This will improve our understanding of the impact of different trade and tariff regimes which might be imposed following Brexit.

Brexit Issues

22. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the additional supports put in place to date to assist businesses that are heavily or totally dependent on Northern Ireland or the British market for an export market in view of the uncertainty that has arisen due to Brexit and currency fluctuations; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14444/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): In Budget 2017, I secured additional monies, both current and capital, to support Enterprise Ireland's strategic response to Brexit, including 39 targeted posts, both at home and abroad to support its clients across all markets.

There are 1,500 Enterprise Ireland (EI) client companies recording exports to the UK. They employ 100,000 people across the country and have exports of over €7 billion. Enterprise Ireland is particularly working with companies in the UK market who are most exposed in areas such as engineering, food, construction and timber to maintain their market share.

Over €1bn of EI exports go to Northern Ireland and I am very conscious of the challenges that may be faced by companies operating in close proximity to the border.

EI will continue to provide various targeted supports and programmes to assist client companies. These include management capability, leadership, marketing/sales, innovation and R&D. EI will also deliver a suite of supports that help clients reduce supply-chain costs and drive efficiencies and cost reductions as a means of improving operating margins, thereby increasing competitiveness.

InterTrade Ireland (ITI) will have an important role to play in protecting cross border trade following Brexit. We will continue to support the work of ITI as it takes steps to help clients deal with the uncertain business climate ahead.

Job Creation Data

23. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 815 of 7 March 2017, her views on whether her Department's focus on regions rather than individual counties might mean that some counties get neglected in favour of their more developed or profitable neighbours; the initiatives she has planned to combat economic stagnation and underinvestment in County Wexford specifically; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14427/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): The Regional Action Plans for Jobs are aimed at maximising the strengths and assets of each region, to support enterprise growth and job creation.

I am satisfied that the key strength of the stakeholders like the local authorities, the educational bodies, the enterprise development agencies and the private sector all working collaboratively to maximise opportunities, means that every county will benefit under this initiative.

Wexford has recorded significant improvements with the CSO's monthly Live Register figures showing that the numbers on the Register in County Wexford have fallen by almost 1,800 in the past year, from 14,300 in February 2016.

Furthermore, the unemployment rate in the South East has fallen to 9.4% from a peak of 20.1% in 2012. Numbers unemployed in the region have fallen by 23,500 over this period.

Wexford is home to 17 existing IDA Ireland clients who between them employ almost 2,630 people.

Waters Corporation recently opened a new site expansion at their facility in Wexford. The expansion will allow for significant increases in operations, services and development functions onsite.

Enterprise Ireland companies currently support 4,816 jobs in Wexford.

Total employment among LEO Wexford clients was 1,192 at the end of last year.

215,000 people are now at work in the South East. This represents a net increase of almost 13,000 jobs in the region since Q1 2015.

My Department is providing additional funds through the agencies out to 2020. Together with Enterprise Ireland, I am currently finalising plans for a regional initiative of up to €60m to support collaborative approaches to grow and sustain jobs across the regions, and to encourage each county to reach its full potential.

Brexit Issues

24. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the degree to which provision continues to be made for issues arising as a result of Brexit, with particular reference to the need to ensure that Ireland is not disadvantaged as a result of a decision taken elsewhere and over which there is no control; if it is expected that, in view of the magnitude of the negative impact on investment and jobs here, steps can be taken to ensure that adequate provision is made to counter the situation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14431/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): A whole of Government approach is in place focusing on Brexit issues and my Department and agencies are to the forefront of this effort.

The UK's decision to leave the European Union will impact significantly on all policy fields across the Department as well as our family of Agencies. Brexit is the number one priority for my Department.

In advance of the Referendum my Department conducted a contingency risk assessment of the potential impacts of Brexit across policy areas of my Department. We have refined our analysis post-Referendum and we have been working with Agencies to put in place actions to mitigate risks and maximize opportunities.

We have been working with colleagues across Government to analyse potential sectoral im-

pacts and consider the implications of various scenarios which may emerge as a result of Brexit.

We have already taken a number of important initiatives, including actions taken through Budget 2017 to enhance the capacity of our enterprise agencies to assist companies.

The recent Action Plan for Jobs 2017 advances this work. It contains measures to support enterprises, particularly those most dependent on the UK, to identify and target new markets, and to expand and scale. A new trade and investment strategy has also just been published as part of a major drive towards market diversification.

Foreign Direct Investment

25. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which she continues to endeavour to attract foreign direct investment and indigenous investment to the manufacturing and service sectors, with particular reference to the need to ensure that in the wake of Brexit the degree of investment continues to remain sufficient to meet any eventualities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14432/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): At the strategic level, Enterprise 2025 sets out the roadmap for enterprise development, and details the actions required and being taken to support the manufacturing and service sectors. Our new trade and investment strategy, Ireland Connected, will be backed up by increasing our agency resources both at home and overseas and an intensified programme of trade missions.

Responding to Brexit has also been prioritised in the Action Plan for Jobs 2017 which sets out 20 specific actions aimed at growing and diversifying markets for Irish exports and maximise opportunities in foreign direct investment and research and innovation.

In addition to protecting the Northern Ireland Peace Process, maintaining the Common Travel Area, and influencing the future of the European Union, we have made it a priority to minimise the impact of Brexit on Ireland's trade and on our economy. Supporting the development and growth of indigenous companies and maximising Foreign Direct investment are key activities of my Department and Agencies.

Almost 50 additional staff are being deployed by my Agencies to support firms to enter new markets and to attract new investment.

Enterprise Ireland is working with firms to support product and service innovation, the adoption of lean systems, smarter sourcing strategies and, crucially, the identification of new overseas markets. Enterprise Ireland will shortly launch its new Eurozone strategy, with the aim of increasing indigenous exports to the Eurozone by 50% over the period to 2020. In addition, we are engaging with companies to help them adapt to currency fluctuations and to support product and market diversification. The Local Enterprise Offices are working with non-EI client companies providing support and advice services as well as bespoke services to foster new business opportunities in local areas.

IDA continues to identify potential for mobile FDI in key sectors and actively pursue these opportunities including through targeted trade missions and rollout of advertising campaigns to promote Ireland's offering.

My Department is currently undertaking research to examine the implications at firm-level for the most exposed enterprise sectors of the UK being outside of the European Single Market and Customs Union. This research will inform an assessment of the way in which Brexit will

affect individual sectors of the economy and our targeted response.

Further, my Department is also funding a project through InterTrade Ireland on the North-South trade implications of Brexit. This project will provide an understanding of the impact of different trade and tariff regimes which might be imposed following Brexit.

Legislative Measures

26. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation when she will publish the heads of the terms of employment (information) (amendment) and organisation of working time (amendment) Bill 2016 proposals regarding protections for workers on insecure low-hour contracts; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14453/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): My colleague, Minister Breen, and I intend to bring forward proposals in this area for consideration by Government. In this respect, work has progressed well on developing a policy response to the Programme for Government commitment to address the increased casualisation of work and to strengthen the regulation of precarious employment. We intend to include protections aimed particularly at low-paid, more vulnerable workers. Our proposals will address the issue of employees on low hour contracts who consistently work more hours each week but whose contracts do not reflect the reality of their hours worked. The proposals will also seek to ensure that employees are better informed about the nature of their employment arrangements and their core terms at an early stage in their employment.

The policy response is being informed by the University of Limerick study on zero hour contracts and low hour contracts as well as the extensive material and practical examples provided by respondents to the public consultation conducted by my Department.

Developing policy proposals in this area is a complex matter. A balance needs to be found between protecting the rights of employees and avoiding unintended consequences on business which may negatively affect the competitiveness of the Irish economy.

My Department engaged in an intensive dialogue with ICTU and Ibec in an effort to secure broad agreement before finalising proposals. The intention now is to submit our proposals to Government in the coming weeks for consideration and approval to draft a Bill giving effect to those proposals.

Employment Rights

27. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if her attention has been drawn to threats of disciplinary action made by the management of a company (details supplied) against employees that took part in industrial action in February 2017; the steps her Department will take to prevent such intimidation when employees exercise their democratic right to take industrial action; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14436/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): Employment legislation protects from victimisation employees and managers seeking to avail of or availing of their rights under the legislation. This means that employers may not penalise an employee by dismissal, unfair treatment or an unfavourable change in conditions of employment.

Furthermore, dismissal for trade union activity or membership is automatically unfair under

Section 6 of the Unfair Dismissals Acts 1977 to 2015.

Where alleged breaches occur, employees concerned can refer the matter to the Workplace Relations Commission for adjudication.

The parties to this difficult dispute are availing of the mechanisms of the State. They both jointly agreed to engage with the Labour Court on February 24th. Mandate has suspended industrial action and the company has agreed to make no changes to contracts pending the outcome of talks. This is a positive sign from both sides and this move by the parties should be respected.

The parties voluntarily agreed to take part in talks under the auspices of the Labour Court and they should be given time to resolve this dispute with the help of the Industrial Relations institutions of the State. I hope that you can join with me in encouraging all sides to make every effort to reach a resolution by agreement between the company management and the workers represented by their trade unions.

Action Plan for Rural Development

28. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the efforts she is making to secure and create employment opportunities in County Tipperary; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14419/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): The Regional Action Plans for Jobs are aimed at maximising the strengths and assets of each region, to support enterprise growth and job creation. This has ensured that 61% of new jobs in Enterprise Ireland supported firms and 52% of new jobs in IDA supported firms were outside Dublin.

The key strength of the stakeholders like the local authorities, the educational bodies, the enterprise development agencies and the private sector all working collaboratively to maximise opportunities, means that every county will benefit under this initiative.

Tipperary is covered by both the South East Action Plan for Jobs and the Mid-West Action Plan for Jobs.

I am committed to working with the various agencies and stakeholders in the South East and Mid-West, through the Regional APJ Implementation Committees, to ensure that the positive employment trends we saw across all regions in 2016 continue and that more jobs are ultimately created.

Tipperary is home to 12 existing IDA Ireland clients who between them employ almost 3,370 people.

In 2016, Enterprise Ireland supported 120 companies in Tipperary employing 5,352 people, a net gain of 290 on 2015.

Client companies supported by the Tipperary Local Enterprise Office created 436 gross new jobs in 2016. Total employment among LEO Tipperary clients was 1,437 at the end of last year.

My Department is providing additional funds through the agencies out to 2020. Together with Enterprise Ireland, I am currently finalising plans for a regional initiative of up to €60m to support collaborative approaches to grow and sustain jobs across the regions, and to encourage each county to reach its full potential.

I met the five Tipperary TDs earlier this week and discussed the closure of the Coty factory in Nenagh with them.

The existing Inter Agency Group in Tipperary charged with coordinating the provision of State services for redundant workers will extend its scope to deal with the Coty closure.

The Group will also help drive job creation by the development Agencies, particularly IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland.

I have arranged to meet the Chairman and members of the Group next week and I have invited the Tipperary TDs to the meeting also.

Employment Rights

29. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 426 of 23 February 2017, the number of inspections carried out by the Inspectorate and Enforcement Division of the Workplace Relations Commission in 2016 and to date in 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14410/17]

43. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 426 of 23 February 2017, her views on the high number of 157 contraventions found during inspections of two thirds of the fishing fleets in 2016; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14413/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): I propose to take Questions Nos. 29 and 43 together.

The Workplace Relations Commission's objective is to facilitate voluntary compliance insofar as contraventions of employment rights legislation are concerned. In this regard, Employers/Vessel Owners are afforded all reasonable opportunity to rectify contraventions and, where relevant, pay any unpaid wages and/or make good on entitlements arising from these contraventions. Following the detection of contraventions, the WRC issues, in all cases, a contravention notification to the vessel owner. Such notifications have issued in respect of the 157 contraventions of employment rights and employment permits legislation detected to date by WRC Inspectors. If the owner addresses the contravention to the WRC's satisfaction within the time specified in the notice, the matter can be closed without recourse to further proceedings.

However, it is the policy of the WRC to issue Compliance Notices or Fixed Payment Notices and/or to initiate legal proceedings in cases where an owner has failed or is unwilling to effect compliance. I am advised by the WRC that it has been necessary to date to initiate two prosecutions and that further prosecution proceedings will be initiated where owners refuse or fail to engage with Inspectors and/or address contraventions.

The Deputy will be aware that arising from the recommendations of the Task Force on allegations regarding treatment of workers on Irish fishing trawlers, an atypical work permission scheme was introduced for non-EEA fishers working on Irish fishing vessels. The scheme is administered by the Department of Justice and Equality and the Irish National Immigration Service (INIS) on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

A number of agencies and organisations are involved in the monitoring and enforcement of the scheme and have signed up to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in order to provide a rigorous and effective inspection system. They include An Garda Síochána, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, INIS, the Naval Service, the Revenue Commissioners, the Sea Fisheries Protection Au-

thority, my Department, the Workplace Relations Commission, the Health and Safety Authority, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and, with a number of exclusions, the Marine Survey Office of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

The WRC's responsibilities relate to the enforcement of the Employment Permits Acts and employment rights legislation including minimum wage legislation. The Marine Survey Office in the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport is responsible for enforcing legislation relating to rest periods and maximum working time for seafarers and fishing vessel crew.

Some 113 of the 174 fishing vessels which come within the aegis of the Atypical Scheme have been inspected to date by the WRC and the remainder will be inspected by Summer of this year. Case files relating to all vessels will remain open until such time as WRC inspectors are satisfied that compliance has been achieved.

Horizon 2020 Strategy Negotiations

30. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if she will report on the latest EU Council discussion on investment into research and innovation in the latest framework programme. [9929/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): I understand that the Deputy's question relates to the EU Competitiveness Council (Research and Innovation) discussion on international cooperation under the framework programme Horizon 2020 which was held on 29 November 2016.

The discussions were informed by the second EU Commission Report on the Implementation of the European Strategy for International Cooperation and a Presidency document.

The discussion focussed on the framework conditions to boost international cooperation, the measures to strengthen international cooperation in and beyond the current framework programme (Horizon 2020) and the role of science diplomacy.

There was a consensus at the EU Council that there is a need to collaborate at a global level across disciplines and sectors to find effective solutions to global challenges.

A number of delegations stressed the need for the EU Commission to raise the profile of Horizon 2020 to encourage international cooperation and to continue to support excellence in research and innovation.

As Innovation 2020 makes clear, the Government is committed to international cooperation in order to maximise the impact of international and national investment in research and innovation as part of the overall vision that Ireland should become a Global Innovation Leader.

Brexit Issues

31. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the actions she has taken to work with InterTradeIreland to protect cross border trade in the wake of Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14459/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): InterTradeIreland (ITI) will have an important role to play in protecting North-South trade following Brexit as the body is uniquely well-positioned when it comes to understanding the needs

of businesses on both sides of the border. We will continue to support ITI's work as it takes steps to help clients deal with the uncertain business climate ahead.

ITI has already published material for companies providing helpful information connected to Brexit. It has also organised a series of information sessions to raise awareness amongst SMEs of the challenges that Brexit may likely present. Additional funding was secured as well for ITI for 2017 to enable it to roll out a range of new measures aimed at affording further practical assistance to companies engaged in cross-border trade.

In addition, my Department has provided specific funding to ITI to sponsor a research project, being undertaken by the ESRI, to examine the impact of differing trade regimes which may emerge in the post-Brexit environment. This study will include analysis of tariff rates and data on the current extent and concentration of cross-border trade. Work is continuing on this project.

IDA Supports

32. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the current position regarding a site (details supplied) on the Dublin Road in Mullingar; the IDA interventions that have happened with the workers and on site; the plans being made to replace this key employment for Mullingar; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14415/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): I very much regret the decision by the company in question, which is not an IDA Ireland client, to close its facility in Mullingar.

Whilst I am informed that IDA Ireland does not own the property in question, I understand that the Agency is aware that it is available and has engaged with its owners about marketing the facility as suitable for potential foreign direct investment. The property has also been included on IDA Ireland's database of available office and manufacturing buildings in County Westmeath.

The availability of this property should assist in the Agency's ongoing efforts to encourage both current and prospective clients to invest further in Westmeath and the wider region.

Private Sector Staff Redundancies

33. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if her attention has been drawn to the fact that a company (details supplied) is in receipt of numerous public contracts paid by the State in addition to a contract with a bank (details supplied) and is now planning to lay off 65 workers at its Dublin base and move these jobs abroad; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14456/17]

38. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if she has had contact with a company (details supplied) that is planning 65 redundancies to its workforce in order to move part of its profitable operations to other countries; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14455/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): I propose to take Questions Nos. 33 and 38 together.

Arising from its obligations under the Protection of Employment Act 1977, the company in

question wrote to me on 7th February 2017 to give notice of pending collective redundancies in its employment.

Under their governing legislation, the enterprise development agencies under the remit of my Department are precluded from providing grant support to companies that operate exclusively in the area of sales and distribution. In this context, the company in question is not a client of any of the enterprise development agencies.

The proposed job losses will be a significant blow to the employees involved and their families. My Department remains focused on creating the most competitive environment for enterprise to succeed so that we can achieve our goal of sustainable employment for all. Working with our enterprise agencies and with colleagues across Government, we are committed to delivering a range of actions outlined in our National and Regional Action Plans for Jobs to ensure that quality and sustainable jobs continue to be created throughout all regions of the country.

Brexit Issues

34. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation her specific plans to minimise the impact of Brexit in County Donegal; and the engagement she has had with the IDA to ensure it secures new investment in County Donegal in view of Brexit. [14421/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): Enterprise Ireland (EI), the Local Enterprise Offices and IDA Ireland are engaging on an ongoing basis with all client companies regarding the impacts being felt as a result of Brexit. They have clear plans in place to mitigate challenges and maximise opportunities arising from the UK decision.

In Budget 2017, I secured additional monies, both current and capital, to support the enterprise agencies' strategic response to Brexit.

I have a particular focus on the trade implications for the border region and am heavily engaged with all stakeholders in the Region on an ongoing basis.

InterTrade Ireland also has a programme of initiatives to deal with the practical consequences of Brexit for cross-border trade.

The Regional Action Plan for the North East/North West, which has a strong Brexit focus, aims to support 28,000 new jobs across Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan, and Louth by 2020. There is strong progress to date, with 5,600 more people in employment across the region since the start of 2015.

Brexit is a standing item on the Regional Action Plan for Jobs implementation meetings.

HGV Sector

35. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to ensure there is no disruption to the current HGV driver sector in anticipation of Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14426/17]

36. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if her attention has been drawn to the potential damage to the economy caused by the unavail-

ability of drivers in the HGV sector across the EU; the action being taken to ensure drivers can be recruited outside of the EU while unavailable within the EU; if her attention has been further drawn to the fact that there is a severe shortage of HGV drivers in the EU; if she will consider putting the category of HGV driver on the highly skilled eligible occupations list to allow the employment permits system to operate in the sector; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14425/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): I propose to take Questions Nos. 35 and 36 together.

Research undertaken by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (EGFSN) does indicate issues regarding recruitment of HGV drivers. Meeting the demand for these drivers requires an integrated approach primarily involving labour market activation and upskilling/training. As part of that approach, the employment permits regime offers only a short-term solution where genuine skills shortages exist.

The EGFSN recommended, as a priority, that a HGV Driver apprenticeship be developed to help address the demand for HGV drivers with the required licence. Engagement between industry representatives and education and training providers is a crucial factor in ensuring that skills needs of particular sectors are met.

Employment permit policy is part of the response to addressing skills deficits which exist and are likely to continue into the short and medium term. It is not intended over the longer term to act as a substitute for meeting the challenge of up-skilling our resident workforce. Where a shortage exists, changes may be made to the lists which determine the eligibility of occupations for employment permits.

Changes to access to the Irish Labour Market for specific occupations via the employment permits system are made on the basis of research undertaken by the EGFSN in tandem with a consultation process in which submissions are sought from stakeholders on the appropriateness of the lists during the bi-annual review process. A review of the eligible listings is being finalised at present; the situation in relation to HGV drivers is under consideration as part of this review. It is expected that the outcome of this review will be available within the next few weeks.

Both the Irish and British Governments have indicated their strong desire to maintain operation of the Common Travel Area following the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

Workplace Relations Commission

37. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the reason the Workplace Relations Commission labour inspectorate is seeking legal advice on the implementation of the atypical worker permit scheme for migrants working on Irish fishing vessels; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [12375/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): Arising from the recommendations of the Task Force on allegations regarding treatment of workers on Irish fishing trawlers, an atypical work permission scheme was introduced for non-EEA fishermen working on Irish fishing vessels.

The scheme is administered by the Department of Justice and Equality and the Irish National Immigration Service (INIS) on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. A number of agencies and organisations are involved in the monitoring and enforcement of the

scheme and have signed up to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in order to provide a rigorous and effective inspection system. They include An Garda Síochána, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, INIS, the Naval Service, the Revenue Commissioners, the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority, my Department, including the Workplace Relations Commission and the Health and Safety Authority, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and, with a number of exclusions, the Marine Survey Office of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

The WRC is an independent statutory body set up by the Workplace Relations Act 2015 and the Labour Inspectorate Division of the WRC has responsibilities that relate to the enforcement of the Employment Permits Acts and employment rights legislation. I, as Minister, have no function in the day to day operations of the WRC and while the WRC may seek external legal opinion on operational matters from time to time I am not privy to these matters.

Notwithstanding this, I am informed that in relation to the atypical work permission scheme, no legal advice has been sought by the WRC.

Question No. 38 answered with Question No. 33.

Question No. 39 answered with Question No. 13.

Unemployment Levels

40. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the discrepancy between County Wexford's unemployment rate of 18.5% and the rate for the south-east region as a whole, which has fallen to 9.4%; the measures she is taking to bridge this gap and bring more job opportunities to County Wexford specifically; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14428/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): The official rate of employment and unemployment in the state is measured by the CSO's Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) and unemployment rates are published at regional level only. In the South East region, which includes Wexford, the current (Q4 2016) unemployment rate is 9.4%.

The only unemployment data available at county level is the CSO's monthly Live Register, which may be the figure referred to by the Deputy. However, this is not designed to measure unemployment, as it includes part-time workers (those who work up to three days per week) and seasonal and casual workers entitled to Jobseekers' Benefit and Jobseekers' Allowance.

The latest Live Register figures show that the numbers on the Register in County Wexford have fallen by almost 1,800 in the past year.

The key policy response for supporting employment growth in the South East region, including Wexford, is the South East Action Plan for Jobs, which involves public and private stakeholders actively engaged in delivering a range of innovative and practical actions set out in the Plan.

The core objective of the Plan is to see a further 25,000 at work in the region by 2020 and to reduce the unemployment rate to within 1% of the State average.

The first progress report on the implementation of the Action Plan was published last December and shows that good progress was made in implementing the Plan, with a 92% implementation rate for actions to be reported on.

As a result of a focused collaborative approach and a range of reforms delivered in the region over recent years, the unemployment rate in the South East has fallen from a peak of 20.1% in 2012 to the current rate of 9.4%.

215,000 people are now at work in the South East.

This represents a net increase of almost 13,000 jobs in the region since Q1 2015. That is over half of our target of 25,000 additional jobs in the region by 2020.

The enterprise agencies are working extremely hard towards the ambitious targets set out in the South East Regional Action Plan.

Enterprise Ireland companies currently support 20,450 jobs in the South East region, 4,816 of which are based in Wexford. This is an increase of 2,140 since end-2014 for the region, and an increase of 332 for Wexford.

Wexford LEO has supported gross job gains in 2016 of 197 in its client companies. Total employment among LEO Wexford clients was 1,192 at the end of last year.

Wexford is home to 17 existing IDA Ireland clients who between them employ almost 2,630 people in a range of manufacturing and service operations. Since end 2014, IDA-supported companies have seen a net increase of 127 jobs in Wexford.

My Department is providing additional funds through the agencies out to 2020. Together with Enterprise Ireland, I am currently finalising plans for a regional initiative of up to €60m to support collaborative approaches to grow and sustain jobs across the regions, and to encourage each county to reach its full potential.

Fishing Industry

41. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the reason no prosecutions have followed from the 151 infringements against the rights of migrant fishing crew that have been uncovered in the industry (details supplied). [12376/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Pat Breen): The Workplace Relations Commission's objective is to facilitate voluntary compliance insofar as contraventions of employment rights legislation are concerned. In this regard, Employers/Vessel Owners are afforded all reasonable opportunity to rectify contraventions and, where relevant, pay any unpaid wages and/or make good on entitlements arising from these contraventions. Following the detection of contraventions, the WRC issues, in all cases, a contravention notification to the vessel owner. Such notifications have issued in respect of the 157 contraventions of employment rights and employment permits legislation detected to date by WRC Inspectors. If the owner addresses the contravention to the WRC's satisfaction within the time specified in the notice, the matter can be closed without recourse to further proceedings.

However, it is the policy of the WRC to issue Compliance Notices or Fixed Payment Notices and/or to initiate legal proceedings in cases where an owner has failed or is unwilling to effect compliance. I am advised by the WRC that it has been necessary to date to initiate two prosecutions and that further prosecution proceedings will be initiated where owners refuse or fail to engage with Inspectors and/or address contraventions.

The Deputy will be aware that arising from the recommendations of the Task Force on allegations regarding treatment of workers on Irish fishing trawlers, an atypical work permission

scheme was introduced for non-EEA fishers working on Irish fishing vessels. The scheme is administered by the Department of Justice and Equality and the Irish National Immigration Service (INIS) on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

A number of agencies and organisations are involved in the monitoring and enforcement of the scheme and have signed up to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in order to provide a rigorous and effective inspection system. They include An Garda Síochána, Bord Iascaigh Mhara, INIS, the Naval Service, the Revenue Commissioners, the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority, my Department, the Workplace Relations Commission, the Health and Safety Authority, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and, with a number of exclusions, the Marine Survey Office of the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

The WRC's responsibilities relate to the enforcement of the Employment Permits Acts and employment rights legislation including minimum wage legislation. The Marine Survey Office in the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport is responsible for enforcing legislation relating to rest periods and maximum working time for seafarers and fishing vessel crew.

Some 113 of the 174 fishing vessels which come within the aegis of the Atypical Scheme have been inspected to date by the WRC and the remainder will be inspected by Summer of this year. Case files relating to all vessels will remain open until such time as WRC inspectors are satisfied that compliance has been achieved.

Motor Insurance Regulation

42. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the progress on publishing the heads of a Bill to enhance the powers of the Personal Injuries Assessment Board, PIAB, as the Minister responsible for this recommendation in the cost of motor insurance report; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14454/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): One of the recommendations in the Cost of Insurance Working Group Report on the Cost of Motor Insurance published on 10 January 2017 by the Minister for Finance, Mr Michael Noonan T.D., and the Minister of State for Financial Services, Mr Eoghan Murphy T.D. is to publish Heads of a Bill to enhance the powers of the Personal Injuries Assessment Board.

In June 2014, Minister Bruton, the then Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation commenced a public consultation on the operation and implementation of the Personal Injuries Assessment Board Acts, 2003 and 2007, with a view to identifying any areas relating to the scope, powers or operation of the legislation which might require change. The 2003 Act had been in force for over eleven years and it was considered timely to take stock of how the legislation is operating in practice.

Twenty nine submissions were received from a range of interests including Government Departments and agencies, industry, insurance and legal interests, and individuals. The Department has been examining these submissions with a view to identifying areas which might require change. The General Scheme of the Bill is now being prepared and it will have regard to the relevant recommendations of the Report of the Cost of Insurance Working Group. It is hoped to seek Government approval for the drafting of a Bill in the second quarter of this year.

Question No. 43 answered with Question No. 29.

44. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the policies her Department has in place to address the issue of under-employment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [8360/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O’Connor): The Action Plan for Jobs, which was introduced in early 2012, is one of the Government’s key instruments to support job creation. It is a whole-of-Government, multi-annual initiative which mobilises all Departments to support job creation. The Action Plan for Jobs is working.

Since the first Action Plan for Jobs was launched in early 2012, almost 206,000 more people are at work. Over 66,000 jobs were created during 2016, well in excess of the APJ 2016 target of 50,000 new jobs. Employment growth is spread across all regions and all sectors of the economy and society. The annual increase in employment was 3.3%. Full-time employment increased by 4.7% while the number of part time workers declined by 1.4%, based on seasonally adjusted data. Almost four out of every five part-time workers are working part-time by choice. The number of under-employed part-time workers declined by 11.5% during 2016. Under-employed refers to those who would work longer hours if available.

On the 1st February, we published the Action Plan for Jobs 2017. This Government’s goal is to achieve sustainable full employment so that all of our people have the opportunity to enjoy rewarding work and to participate and contribute to their full potential to our economy and society.

The 2017 Plan sets out a range of measures to address the immediate challenges of the UK’s decision to leave the EU and also in response to a more volatile and changing external environment by strengthening the resilience and agility of our enterprise base. This includes actions to drive innovation, grow and scale Irish businesses, diversify our exports, promote entrepreneurship, improve our competitiveness performance, deliver the skills needs of our growing economy and ensure finance is available at competitive cost to support and underpin growth.

Securing full, sustainable employment in the face of global uncertainty will be challenging. I will work closely with colleagues across Government to ensure the effective delivery of the 2017 Plan to keep us on track to deliver on our 2020 target to have an additional 200,000 people at work, including 135,000 people outside of Dublin.

Employment Rights

45. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the provision of a sectoral employment order in the bus industry; if she will engage with unions and management in the area to work towards providing these agreements; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14242/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O’Connor): The Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act of 2015 provides for a new statutory framework – Sectoral Employment Orders - for establishing minimum rates of remuneration and other terms and conditions of employment for a specified type, class or group of workers. This is in effect a framework to replace the former sectoral Registered Employment Agreement (REA) system which was found to be unconstitutional in 2013 in McGowan-v-The Labour Court.

The new framework sets down a mechanism whereby at the request, separately or jointly from organisations substantially representative of employers and/or of workers, the Labour Court can initiate a review of the pay and pension and sick pay entitlements of workers in a particular sector and, if it deems it appropriate, make a recommendation to myself as Minister

on the matter. If I am satisfied that the process provided for in the 2015 Act has been complied with by the Labour Court, I can then make the Order. Where such an order is made it is known as a Sectoral Employment Order (SEO), will be binding across the sector to which it relates, and will be enforceable by the Workplace Relations Commission.

To-date four applications for SEOs have been made to the Labour Court – one was withdrawn and one was rejected. The remaining two are being considered by the Labour Court. No application has been made by or on behalf of workers or employers in the Transport Sector.

In situations such as the Bus Eireann dispute I would always advise and appeal to parties to use the offices of the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court and they have done so on this occasion. I would encourage both sides to continue to engage with the Workplace Relations Commission to try to resolve this dispute.

Work Permits Eligibility

46. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the request from an organisation (details supplied) for her Department to ease restrictions on the issuing of work permits for foreign workers in the racing industry. [14435/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): The State's general policy with regard to the employment of non-EEA nationals is to promote the sourcing of labour and skills needs from within the workforce of Ireland and the European Economic Area. The employment permits system is intended to offer an interim solution for employers where specific skills prove difficult to source within the EEA. The system offers a route into the Irish labour market for non-EEA nationals with in-demand skills. It is operated as a vacancy-led system. Vacancies must be for eligible occupations – the system is ordered by the use of lists of highly skilled and ineligible occupations, which are reviewed bi-annually.

Work riders are currently included on the Ineligible Categories of Employment List, as research undertaken by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, which underpins the review of the lists, has not indicated that there is any shortage of such workers.

The next review of the lists is due to commence in April, and at that time, submissions to the review will be invited from interested parties – this is the mechanism whereby stakeholder input to the review process is accessed. The organisation in question may wish to make a submission to the review at that time. An official of my Department will advise this organisation when the requests for submissions is opened.

Garda Disciplinary Proceedings

47. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality her views on a matter (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14600/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Deputy will appreciate that disciplinary matters within An Garda Síochána are governed by the Garda Síochána Act 2005 and the Garda Síochána (Discipline) Regulations 2007. They are a matter in the first instance for the Garda Commissioner.

I have been advised by the Garda Commissioner that this case is ongoing and that the matters referred to in the details supplied with this Parliamentary Question relate to proceedings currently being conducted under the Garda Síochána (Discipline) Regulations 2007. As the

matter is currently being dealt with under these Regulations, I am not in a position to comment further.

Garda Deployment

48. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding members of the An Garda Síochána who were injured seriously in the line of duty and have been accommodated with their employment and in situations in which an arrangement has been put in place for lighter duties; the number of such instances in place in An Garda Síochána; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14605/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will appreciate, it is the Garda Commissioner who is responsible the allocation of all resources, including personnel, and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter.

I have requested the specific information sought, from the Commissioner and when it is to hand I will forward it to the Deputy.

Garda College

49. **Deputy Alan Kelly** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality if the refurbished Garda College swimming pool and gym could be made open to members of the public residing in Templemore and surrounding areas on allocated hours on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. [14643/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Deputy will appreciate that the Garda Commissioner is primarily responsible for the effective and efficient use of the resources available to An Garda Síochána, including the College and its facilities, and I as Minister have no role in the matter.

The Deputy will be aware that the College is in the ownership of the Office of Public Works which has the responsibility for the maintenance of the College and its facilities. I am advised by the Commissioner that the policy and protocols surrounding the use of the sporting facilities at the College by members of the public are currently the subject of an ongoing review by Garda management.

Garda Resources

50. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the details of the total moneys collected by An Garda Síochána in respect of moneys paid by event organisers for the provision of security services and the policing of sporting and other events for each of the years 2015 and 2016; the total amount of moneys collected for both years which was subsequently re-allocated to members of the Garda Reserve for duties carried out in respect of such events; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14691/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the management and distribution of Garda resources and I, as Minister, have no role in the matter. I have asked the Commissioner for the specific information requested by the Deputy and, when it is to hand, I will inform him accordingly.

Irish Sign Language

51. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality her plans to have Irish Sign Language recognised as an official language; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14692/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy Finian McGrath): I consider that it is appropriate and necessary that the needs of users of Irish Sign Language (ISL) in the State are met, particularly when questions of statutory entitlement or obligations are at issue. In this respect, as the Deputy will be aware the Department of Justice and Equality has recently concluded a three-phase consultation process with a view to developing a new National Disability Inclusion Strategy, which will be submitted for consideration to Government shortly. Issues in relation to the Deaf Community featured strongly in the consultation process, and I intend that the new Strategy will respond credibly. I can confirm that the Strategy contains an action that proposes legislation that will ensure that all public bodies provide ISL users with free interpretation when availing of or seeking their statutory services. I believe that this approach will make a real and measurable difference in the lives of ISL users.

As the Deputy will be aware, a Private Members' Bill, the Recognition of Irish Sign Language for the Deaf Community Bill 2016, is currently awaiting Committee Stage. I will be finalising my proposals for amendments to the Bill in early course and I look forward to a substantive discussion on all the issues involved, including formal recognition of ISL as a language used by the Deaf Community, at that time.

Departmental Expenditure

52. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the details of any payments made by her Department, its agencies or any bodies under her aegis to any broadcasters here in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016; the broadcaster to which the funds were provided; the reason for the payments; and if there are any reasons for payments to broadcasters in 2017. [14727/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The information sought by the Deputy is set out in the tables.

Private Security Authority

The Private Security Authority (PSA) uses Mediavest, the organisation that holds the Department contract for the purpose of running all information campaigns in the print and broadcast media, to conduct its radio broadcast campaigns. On this basis the PSA does not pay such broadcasters directly and instead radio advertising campaigns are arranged and paid for by Mediavest on the PSA's behalf. Mediavest then recoups the relevant payments from the PSA.

Radio advertisement or information campaigns are used by the PSA for the purpose of, *inter alia*, advising the public that a new sector within the private security industry has become licensable, advising the public of safety issues, advising the public of regulatory requirements when engaging the services of those working in the industry, advising those working in the industry that they must be licensed operators where appropriate as required by the Private Security Services Act 2004 (as amended). Details in respect of the PSA and payments made to broadcasters by Mediavest on its behalf are set out in the table:

Questions - Written Answers

Date	Campaign	Cost (Including VAT) €	Broadcasters/Stations
2017 (to end of March)	Locksmiths Licensing	22,855.86	Newstalk, Today FM, Radio 1
2016	Licensed Door Security/Security Guards and identity badges	24,615.99	Today FM, Newstalk, Urban Stations - 96/103FM, Q102. Limerick 895FM, Galway Bay FM, LMFM, FM104, WLR
	Using licensed Intruder Alarms Contractors	32,626.98	Today FM, UTV Urban Access (106 FM, Today FM, Urban list), Newstalk, RTE Radio, TIP FM, radio Kerry, Tipp MidWest
	Electronic Gates Safety	40,420.88	Radio 1, Urban Stations - FM104, Cork 96/103FM, Limerick Live, LMFM, Galway Bay FM, Local Radio - Clare FM, East Coast Radio, Highland Radio, KFM, Midlands 103, Northern Sound/ Shannonside, Ocean FM, Radio Kerry, Radio Nova, South East Radio, Sunshine 106.80,
2015	Licensed CCTV & Your Business	30,122.70	RTE Radio 1, Urban - FM104, Cork 96/103FM, Q102, Limerick Live LMFM, Galway Bay, WLR, Local, Clare FM, East Coast Radio, Highland Radio, KCLR, KFM, Midlands 103, Midwest Radio, Northern Sound/ Shannonside, Ocean FM, Radio Kerry, Radio Nova, South East Radio, Sunshine 106, 80, Tipp FM

Date	Campaign	Cost (Including VAT) €	Broadcasters/Stations
	Private Investigator Licensing	9,950.70	Radio 1
	Licensed Security/ Security Guards and identity badges	31,069.80	Radio 1, Urban Stations - FM104, Cork 96/103FM, Limerick Live, LMFm, Galway Bay FM, Local Radio - Clare FM, East Coast Radio, Highland Radio, KFM, Midlands 103, Northern Sound/ Shannonside, Ocean FM, Radio Kerry, Radio Nova, South East Radio, Sunshine 106.80, Tipp FM
	Licensed Electronic Security for your home and business	31,069.80	Radio 1, Urban Stations - FM104, Cork 96/103FM, Limerick Live, LMFm, Galway Bay FM, Local Radio - Clare FM, East Coast Radio, Highland Radio, KFM, Midlands 103, Northern Sound/ Shannonside, Ocean FM, Radio Kerry, Radio Nova, South East Radio, Sunshine 106.80, Tipp FM
2014	Licensed Electronic Security for your home and business	47,709.41	Newstalk, 96FM, Live95FM, Radio 1, IRS, WLR
	Licensed Door Security/Security Guards and identity badges	19,164.36	Newstalk, Today FM, UTV urban stations

2. Garda Síochána Commission

In 2014 the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission paid RTE TV Library sales €61.50 (incl. VAT) for a transcript of a recording of Prime Time from 09 May 2013.

3. COSC - the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence.

In 2014 approximately €270,000 and in 2015 €278,000 was awarded to over 80 local and national domestic and sexual violence organisations for awareness raising activities. Some

of this funding was allocated to advertising on local radio. It would take a disproportionate amount of time and resources to give a breakdown of how much of this funding was paid to broadcasters. However, an approximate indication would be in the region of 18% of the total cost of the expenditure for the two years in question.

On the 16 November 2016, I launched the national awareness campaign ‘*What would you do?*’ which has been developed by Cosc. ‘*What would you do?*’ is a high impact media campaign to reach a national audience which features TV ads, cinema, radio, outdoor, social and digital advertising. It is intended that the campaign will run for 6 years up to 2021, with the first three years dedicated to domestic violence and the final three years focussing on sexual violence.

The breakdown of payments to broadcasters in 2016 as part of the national awareness campaign ‘*What would you do?*’ are as follows:

Media type	Broadcasters	Cost
TV	RTE, TV3, UTV Ireland, Medialink (C4, C4+1, E4, E4+1, MORE4, FILM 4) & Sky Media (Sky1, Sky 2, Sky Atlantic, Sky Living, Sky News, Sky Sports 1, Sky Sports 2, Sky Sports 3, Sky Sports 4, Sky Sports 5, Sky Sports News, Gold, Alibi, Challenge, Discovery, Comedy Central, Dave, Universal, E!, Pick, TLC)	€188,740.28
Radio	2FM, Today FM, IRS+ (Radio Kerry, Clare FM, Highland Radio, Kildare FM, Tipp FM, Ocean FM, Midwest, KCLR, Midlands 103, Northern Sound, Shannonside, South East Radio, East Coast), Media Central (Spin 103, 98FM, Classic Hits 4FM, iRadio, Beat 102 103, Spin South West) & Newstalk	€197,618.75

4. Charities Regulatory Authority

Date	Campaign	Stations	Cost (Including VAT) €
2016	DVD of RTE programme - research on a charity	RTE	61.50
2017	Refund on deposit related to an FOI request	RTE (journalist)	80.00

5. Property Services Regulatory Authority

Date	Campaign	Stations	Cost (Including VAT) €
Apr 2016	Public information campaign informing the public of the requirement of property services providers to be licensed and that unlicensed operators provide no consumer protection for clients.	FM104, Cork 96/103 FM, Q102, Limerick Live, LMFM, Galway Bay FM, WLR, Clare FM, East Coast Radio, Highland Radio, KCLR, KFM, Midlands 103, Midwest Radio, Northern Sound/Shannon, Ocean FM, Radio Kerry, Radio Nova, South East Radio, Sunshine 1106.80, Tipp FM	22,702
		Radio 1	15,300
		FM104, Cork 96/103FM, Q102, Limerick Live, LMFM, Galway Bay FM, WLR	9,908
November 2016	Public information campaign informing the public of the requirement of property services providers to be licensed and that unlicensed operators provide no consumer protection for clients.	Clare FM, East Coast Radio, Highland Radio, KCLR, KFM, Midlands 103, Midwest Radio, Northern Sound, Shannonside, Ocean FM, Radio Kerry, Radio Nova	10,949

6. Insolvency Service of Ireland

Section 9 of the Personal Insolvency Amendment Act requires the Insolvency Service of Ireland (ISI) to “promote public awareness and understanding of matters relating to personal insolvency” and to “develop strategies for communicating with the public aimed at promoting the use of insolvency arrangements and enhancing their effective application”.

The following expenditure was incurred to promote awareness of the ISI’s solutions.

Date	Campaign	Stations	Cost (Including VAT) €
		Newstalk	2,863.44

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Date	Campaign	Stations	Cost (Including VAT) €
2014	To promote public awareness and understanding of matters relating to personal insolvency” and to “develop	Urban Radio; FM104Cork 96/103FMQ102Limerick LiveLM-FMGalway Bay FM, WLR	15,639.20
	strategies for communicating with the public aimed at promoting the use of insolvency arrangements and enhancing their effective application”.	IRS stations: Clare FM, East Coast Radio, Highland Radio, KCLR, KFM, Midlands 103, Midwest RadioNorthern Sound/Shannonside, Ocean FM, Radio KerryRadio Nova, South East Radio, Sunshine 106.80, Tipp FM	10,140.62
2015September	To promote public awareness and understanding of matters relating to personal insolvency” and to “develop	Midlands 103FM	1,107
Jan-March	strategies for communicating with the public aimed at promoting the use of insolvency arrangements and enhancing their effective application”.	IRS stations: Clare FM, East Coast Radio, Highland Radio, KCLR, KFM, Midlands 103, Midwest RadioNorthern Sound/Shannonside, Ocean FM, Radio KerryRadio Nova, South East Radio, Sunshine 106.80, Tipp FM	66,641.40

Date	Campaign	Stations	Cost (Including VAT) €
2016 June	To promote public awareness and understanding of matters relating to personal insolvency” and to “develop strategies for communicating with the public aimed at promoting the use of insolvency arrangements and enhancing their effective application”.	IRS Stations: Clare FM, East Coast FM, Highland Radio, KCLR, Kerry, KFM, Midlands 103, MWR, Ocean FM, South East Radio, Shannonside, Northern Sound, Tipp FM, Nova, Sunshine	4,675.68
October		Newstalk 2 FM IRS stations: Clare FM, Eastcoast FM, Highland Radio, KCLR, Kerry, KFM, Midlands 103, MWR, Ocean FM, South East Radio, Shannonside, Northern Sound, Tipp FM, Nova, Sunshine	34,927.01
October (TV)		RTE, TV3, TG4, Alibi, UTV	12,640.95
2017	Campaign	Stations	Cost (Including VAT) €
TV	To promote public awareness and understanding of matters relating to personal insolvency and to develop strategies for communicating with the public aimed at promoting the use of insolvency arrangements and enhancing their effective application.	RTE, TV3, TG4, UTV Ireland, Sky-media	201,406.16
		IRS stations: Clare FM, East Coast Radio, Highland Radio, KCLR, KFM, Midlands 103, Midwest Radio, Northern Sound/Shannonside, Ocean FM, Radio Kerry, Radio Nova, South East Radio, Sunshine 106.80, Tipp FM	61,283.52
Radio Jan- March		4FM, Sunshine FM, FM104	3,021.49

Garda Reserve

53. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the most recent figures for the number of Garda Reserve members in each Garda division, in tabular form. [14750/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the distribution of resources, including personnel, among the various Garda Divisions and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. Garda management keeps this distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure that the optimum use is made of these resources.

This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. This year, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

I was very pleased to announce today the launch of a new recruitment campaign for Garda Reserves. This new campaign is necessary to fulfil the Programme for Government commitment to increase the strength of the Reserve to 2,000 by 2021, to act in a supportive role undertaking local patrols and crime reduction measures. Garda Reserve members have undergone training in many of the skills required to be effective full-time members of An Garda Síochána and it is important that we build on the very real contribution that they are making to the policing of communities right across the country.

I would encourage anyone interested in pursuing policing as a career to consider first becoming a member of the Reserve where they can see at first-hand what being a member of An Garda Síochána actually involves. The competition is being run by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Garda Commissioner and applications can be made online by 13 April, 2017, through www.publicjobs.ie.

For the Deputy's information I have set out in the table, as provided by the Commissioner, the strength of the Garda Reserve in each Division as of 31 January 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available.

Garda Reserve Strength 31 January 2017

Area	Amount
DMR South Central	47
DMR North Central	42
DMR North	49
DMR East	15
DMR South	25
DMR West	27
Waterford	24
Wexford	22
Tipperary	23
Kilkenny/Carlow	26
Cork City	48
Cork North	16
Cork West	12
Kerry	20

Area	Amount
Limerick	36
Donegal	21
Cavan/Monaghan	14
Sligo/Leitrim	21
Louth	32
Clare	6
Mayo	23
Galway	36
Roscommon/Longford	11
Westmeath	13
Meath	18
Kildare	22
Laois/Offaly	19
Wicklow	22
Total	690

Garda Data

54. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the most recent figures for the number of gardaí in the traffic corps in each Garda division, in tabular form. [14751/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As the Deputy will appreciate, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for the distribution of resources, including to the Garda Traffic Corps and I, as Minister, have no direct role in the matter. I am assured by the Commissioner that Garda personnel assigned throughout the country, together with the overall policing arrangements and operational strategies are continually monitored and reviewed. Such monitoring ensures that optimum use is made of resources and the best possible policing service is provided to the general public.

This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime. To make this a reality for all, the Government has in place a plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. This year, funding has been provided for the recruitment of 800 Garda recruits and up to 500 civilians to support the wide ranging reform plan in train in An Garda Síochána. Funding has also been provided for the recruitment of 300 Garda Reserves.

The 2017 Garda Policing Plan has indicated a commitment to increase the number of personnel dedicated to traffic duties by 10% to reflect the increasing numbers of personnel across the entire organisation. Given that there was no recruitment for a period of five years it will take some time before there are fully trained officers available to replace the number of personnel that have retired across the entire organisation, including traffic. However, the Commissioner has confirmed that the personnel requirement of the Garda Traffic Corps is currently being assessed to identify the most vulnerable areas in regard to serious traffic collisions and the level of compliance with Road Traffic Legislation. I understand that the Assistant Commissioner, Roads Policing and Major Event Management is currently assessing the capacity of Divisions and Districts to identify and target areas where An Garda Síochána could accelerate the deploy-

ment of personnel to traffic in 2017. The filling of any vacancies identified will be conducted on a structured basis and will be further enhanced with the recently renewed recruitment campaigns to An Garda Síochána.

Road traffic legislation is, of course, also enforced as part of the day to day duties of members of An Garda Síochána. Both targeted and general methods of enforcement have a valuable role to play in An Garda Síochána's enforcement programme, which targets locations with a view to preventing the commission of offences, detecting errant motorists, changing their behaviour and ultimately reducing death and injuries on our roads.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the strength of the Garda Traffic Corps on 31 January 2017, the latest date for which figures are readily available, is as set out in the table.

Division	Inspector	Sergeant	Garda	Total
D.M.R. South Central	0	1	10	11
D.M.R. North Central	1	2	14	17
D.M.R. North	0	1	12	13
D.M.R. East	1	2	6	9
D.M.R.S.	0	1	11	12
D.M.R. West	0	1	12	13
D.M.R. Traffic	2	12	93	107
Waterford	0	1	15	16
Wexford	0	2	13	15
Tipperary	0	2	18	20
Kilkenny/Carlow	0	2	24	26
Cork City	1	5	33	39
Cork North	1	6	26	33
Cork West	1	4	17	22
Kerry	1	2	14	17
Limerick	1	3	19	23
Donegal	1	2	17	20
Cavan/Monaghan	0	4	20	24
Sligo/Leitrim	0	2	21	23
Louth	0	1	13	14
Clare	0	2	15	17
Mayo	0	1	10	11
Galway	0	5	34	39
Roscommon/Longford	0	2	17	19
Westmeath	0	3	25	28
Meath	1	1	15	17
Kildare	0	1	24	25
Laois/Offaly	0	3	19	22
Wicklow	0	3	14	17

Division	Inspector	Sergeant	Garda	Total
Total	11	77	581	669

*In addition, there is 1 Chief Superintendent and 1 Superintendent attached to the DMR Traffic Corps, there is also 1 Superintendent attached to the West and South Region, the other 3 Regions have Traffic Inspectors attached.

Child Abuse

55. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of allegations of child abuse referred by the Health Service Executive to An Garda Síochána for prosecution; the number of cases that were deemed to be unfounded; and the number of cases of false reporting referred for prosecution under section 5 of the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998, each year after that Act was signed into law and before the responsibility for dealing with allegations of child abuse was transferred to Tusla. [14772/17]

56. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality the number of allegations of child abuse referred by Tusla to An Garda Síochána for prosecution from 2014 to 2016; the number of cases referred for prosecution; the number of cases that were deemed to be unfounded; and the number of cases of false reporting referred for prosecution under section 5 of the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 (details supplied). [14773/17]

Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 55 and 56 together.

I have requested a report from the Garda authorities in relation to these matters and I will contact the Deputy directly when the report is to hand.

Tax Rebates

57. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Finance the cost of refunding VRT and VAT on 1,000 public service vehicles. [14622/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The amount of Vehicle Registration Tax (VRT) charged can be based on a combination of the Open Market Selling Price (OMSP), CO2 emission levels and particular category of vehicle in question, or as a flat rate charge for larger commercial vehicles. VAT is normally charged at 23% of the list price of the vehicle. Unfortunately, the Deputy has not provided enough information in relation to the above criteria to allow a calculation to be made of VRT and VAT.

EU-IMF Programme of Support

58. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the volumes owed directly by the State as a result of the EU-IMF bailout, by institution; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14573/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The outstanding balances on the loans provided to Ireland under the EU/IMF Programme of Financial Support, as of end-February 2017, and as provided by the NTMA, are outlined in the table.

Institution	Outstanding Balance at end-February 2017€bn equivalent
International Monetary Fund (IMF)	4.3
United Kingdom	4.0
Sweden	0.6
Denmark	0.4
European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF)	18.4
European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism (EFSM)	22.5

Figures are unaudited and include the effect of currency hedging transactions

Central Bank of Ireland Investigations

59. **Deputy Josepha Madigan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will address matters (details supplied) regarding the Central Bank tracker mortgage redress scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14591/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Deputy may wish to note that this morning the Central Bank of Ireland published a further update report on the Examination of Tracker Mortgage Related Issues and that this is available on its website www.centralbank.ie. This is the latest in a series of status updates since the examination commenced and sets out the progress being made by lenders in completing the review.

The immediate focus of the examination is to ensure that the interests of consumers are protected and that lenders prioritise the identification of impacted customers. Under the Principles for Redress lenders must stop further harm to impacted customers at the earliest possible time and must put in place a redress and compensation programme to fully address the impact their actions have had on impacted customers. The Principles for Redress also set out the Central Bank's expectations for lenders to provide, amongst other things, additional payments to allow impacted customers to seek independent professional advice.

The Tracker Examination continues to be a priority for the Central Bank and is being progressed as quickly as possible with specific timelines having been set for each lender to complete their reviews and to report to the Central Bank. The Central Bank has indicated that it will continue to monitor the examination as it progresses with appropriate supervisory action, up to and including enforcement action being taken by the Central Bank where necessary, in order to ensure lenders' deliver fair outcomes for their customers. Enforcement activity will be influenced by the outcome of the reviews currently being conducted as part of the Examination.

Tax Credits

60. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons in receipt of the incapacitated child tax credit for each year since 2010; the detail and nature of the incapacity of the qualifying child; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14608/17]

61. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the number of applications received for the incapacitated child tax credit for each year since 2010; the number approved and rejected respectively, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14609/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 60 and 61 together.

The legislation governing entitlement to the incapacitated child tax credit is contained in section 465 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997.

The legislation provides that an individual is entitled to the tax credit for a year of assessment if he or she proves that at any time during the year of assessment, he or she has a child who is under 18 years of age and is permanently incapacitated by reason of mental or physical infirmity, or if over the age of 18 years at the beginning of the year, is permanently incapacitated from maintaining himself/herself and had become so permanently incapacitated either before reaching 21 years of age or after that age while receiving full-time instruction at any university, college, school or other educational establishment.

A child under 18 is regarded as permanently incapacitated by reason of mental or physical infirmity only if that infirmity is such that, if the child were over 18, there would be a reasonable expectation that he/she would be incapacitated from maintaining himself/herself.

I am advised by Revenue that a Costs of Tax Expenditures Table is available on the Revenue Statistics webpage at <http://www.revenue.ie/en/about/statistics/costs-expenditures.html>. The information provides an annual breakdown of the cost to the Exchequer and the associated numbers for the “Additional Credit for Incapacitated Child” for the years 2004 to 2014, the most recent year for which complete data are available. Updates will be published in due course when data for more recent years become available.

I am advised by Revenue that it does not hold information that would be readily accessible, on the nature of the relevant incapacities, nor are there statistics available in respect of the number of applications received for the incapacitated child tax credit that were unsuccessful.

Income Data

62. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons with taxable income of over €100,000, €150,000 and €170,000 per annum respectively. [14623/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by Revenue that the Revenue Statistics webpage contains detailed information on income distribution statistics, which can also be accessed directly at http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/pssn/rv01/homepagefiles/rv01_statbank.asp.

The available information in relation to the numbers of persons by taxable income is under the ‘Income Tax and Corporation Tax Distribution Statistics’ heading in Table ‘RVA02: Distribution of Income Tax by Range of Taxable Income, Marital Status, Year and Statistic’. These statistics are for the years 2004-2014, the latest year for which data are currently available.

Financial Services Sector

63. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of companies that have received derogations (details supplied); the number of jobs this equates to; the way these derogations are supervised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14624/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Central Bank that under various European and Irish regulations, Fund Service Providers are permitted to out-

source/delegate activities.

On this basis, derogations are not required in order for work to be performed in other jurisdictions on behalf of Irish Fund Service Providers, so this information is not collected.

The Central Bank informs me that it regularly reviews the controls and procedures in place surrounding these outsourcing/delegating arrangements.

It should be noted that the Irish Financial Services sector includes significant employment in outsourced financial services so the existing regulatory environment is important to the State's economy.

If the Deputy is seeking information on employment commitments made to State Enterprise Agencies, this question is best directed to the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

Universal Social Charge Yield

64. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the expected revenue that would be raised by USC in the year 2021 based on a no policy change basis and the relevant economic forecasts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14646/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The most recent economic and budgetary forecasts prepared by my Department were published as part of Budget 2017. On that basis, and assuming a no policy change, which does not take account of the allocation of fiscal space beyond T+1, the expected Universal Social Charge (USC) yield would be in the region of €5.2 billion in 2021. This expected increase in USC yield is driven by the projected rise in wage and employment growth over the forecast horizon.

Finally, as the Deputy will appreciate these figures are expected to change as part of the upcoming Stability and Programme Update, in April this year, which will incorporate the most up to-date macro-economic data.

Tracker Mortgage Data

65. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance the number of accounts in County Louth affected by the removal of their tracker mortgages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14686/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Deputy may wish to note that this morning the Central Bank of Ireland published a further update report on the Examination of Tracker Mortgage Related Issues and that this is available on its website *www.centralbank.ie*. This is the latest in a series of status updates since the examination commenced and sets out the progress being made by lenders in completing the review. However, the Central Bank have advised me that it does not, in the context of the Tracker Mortgage Examination, publish breakdowns of the figures affected by county.

Departmental Meetings

66. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 128 of 31 January 2017, the detail of the recent engagement the Irish authorities

have had with the Brazilian Federal Revenue Service on the inclusion of Ireland on their tax blacklist; if the promised technical delegation has travelled to Brazil to discuss the issue with the authorities there; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14701/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): A technical delegation travelled to Brazil recently to meet with the Brazilian Federal Revenue Service to discuss the inclusion of Ireland on the Brazilian list. The meeting provided the opportunity for officials to discuss the issue in the context of Ireland's request to be removed from the list and allowed Irish officials to provide further information on Ireland's transparent and robust corporate tax regime. Technical engagement with the Brazilian Federal Revenue Service is continuing and no final decision on Ireland's request has been made at this stage.

Tax Yield

67. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the yield from the exit tax on life assurance in 2016; the projected yield in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14702/17]

68. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the yield from the 1% levy on life assurance products in 2016; the projected yield in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14703/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 67 and 68 together.

I am advised by Revenue that the yield from the exit tax on life assurance was in the order of €228 million in 2016. The projected yield in 2017 is €238 million.

The yield from the 1% Stamp Duty levy on certain life assurance premiums was €21.4m in 2016. The projected yield for 2017 is €25.4m.

Departmental Expenditure

69. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance the details of any payments made by his Department, its agencies or any bodies under his aegis to any broadcasters here in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016; the broadcaster to which the funds were provided; the reason for the payments; and if there are any reasons for payments to broadcasters in 2017. [14723/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I understand that the Deputy is referring to payments specifically in respect of audio and visual broadcasting. Details of payments made by my Department are listed in the table provided. Of the 18 bodies under the aegis of my Department, 15 have confirmed a nil response to the information sought, the Office of the Revenue Commissioners and the Credit Reviewer have provided details of payments to broadcasters and are listed in the table. It was not possible for NTMA to provide the information sought in the time available and therefore I will make arrangements to provide the outstanding information in line with Standing Orders.

Payments made in 2014, 2015, 2016 & 2017 by the Department of Finance

Broadcaster	Year and Reason for payment
Oireachtas Broadcasting	Budget 2015 (€959.40) Budget 2016 (€780)

Broadcaster	Year and Reason for payment
VITEL Productions	National Economic Dialogue 2015(€15,152.25)
AVTEK Solutions	National Economic Dialogue 2016(€17,656.65)

Payments made in 2014, 2015, 2016 & 2017 by Bodies under the aegis of the Department of Finance

Body	Payments made in 2014, 2015, 2016 & 2017	Broadcaster	Reason for payments
Office of the Revenue Commissioners	2014: €481,216 2015: €289,939 2016: €673,842 2017: €117,821	All Irish broadcasters, through MediaVest advertising agency.	Advertising
Credit Reviewer	2014: €70,505 2015: €85,472 2016: €80,421 2017: €28,522	RTE Radio 1 Newstalk Today FM UTV VFM104 Q102 Cork FMWLR Limerick Live LMFM Galway Bay	Advertising

VAT Payments

70. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Finance the options that are open to charitable organisations that are suffering significant VAT charges and are not in a position to recover this VAT due to their charitable status (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14755/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by Revenue that the supply of goods and services are generally liable to VAT at the various rates specified in the VAT Consolidation Act, 2010. Under the EU VAT Directive there is no scope to exempt supplies on the basis of charitable status.

Generally, activities engaged in by charities are outside the scope of VAT and therefore they do not account for VAT on their supplies and accordingly have no entitlement to VAT deductibility on their inputs. There is, however, provision for refunds of VAT to charities in certain circumstances, including VAT on the purchase of new medical instruments and appliances or the purchase of medical research equipment which are funded by voluntary donations. Please see attached link for further information: <http://www.revenue.ie/en/tax/vat/leaflets/charities.html>.

In addition, the Deputy will be aware that my officials have been engaged with the Irish Charities Tax Reform Group in recent years to examine how charities might be compensated for VAT incurred on their inputs. The report of this group is available on my Department's website. In Budget 2017 I asked my officials to re-engage with that group to review the options in this regard. This work is ongoing.

VAT Yield

71. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Ques-

tion No. 89 of 9 March 2017, the details of the VAT collected by the Revenue Commissioners under EU rules governing the place of supply of TBE services, setting out the amount collected on behalf of and remitted to each member country in that month, for each month from January 2015 to February 2017, in tabular form. [14756/17]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): On 1 January 2015, new EU VAT rules came into effect changing the place of supply in respect of all supplies of telecommunications, broadcasting and electronic (TBE) services to consumers, from the place where the supplier is located to the place where the consumer resides. The VAT Mini One Stop Shop (MOSS), which is an optional scheme, also came into operation on 1 January 2015 allowing business to submit returns and pay the relevant VAT due to EU Member States through the web portal of one Member State, instead of having to register for VAT in multiple Member States.

I am informed by Revenue that the total VAT collected under the TBE rules, 1 January 2015 to the end of February 2017 and paid over to other Member States is shown in the table.

Month Year	Net Collection€m	Pay-over to Other Member States€m
Jan-15	-	-
Feb-15	-	-
Mar-15	-	-
Apr-15	149.3	-
May-15	8	91.5
Jun-15	1.6	35.4
Jul-15	105.6	1.4
Aug-15	24.7	92.4
Sep-15	0.3	8
Oct-15	75.6	0.3
Nov-15	31.5	69.7
Dec-15	5.3	6.9
Jan-16	99.7	3.4
Feb-16	21.4	71.7
Mar-16	0.1	4.6
Apr-16	122.2	4
May-16	10.4	95.6
Jun-16	-0.9	5.7
Jul-16	137.6	0
Aug-16	6.8	99.7
Sep-16	-0.3	3.8
Oct-16	144.6	0.5
Nov-16	10.7	101.5
Dec-16	0.8	9.8
Jan-17	341.3	0.6
Feb-17	0.6	243.9

The majority of VAT MOSS returns and payments are received on a quarterly basis, in the month following the quarterly period. VAT MOSS payments are subsequently transferred to Member States by the 10th of the subsequent month. Therefore a monthly breakdown is not available. The table provides an overview of the VAT collected and transferred to each Mem-

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ber State on a quarterly basis from the 1st of January 2015 to the end of February 2017. Small variations may be observed between the two tables due to rounding. Please note that some of these values are provisional and maybe subject to revision.

€ Mil- lion	2015- Q2	-	2015- Q3	-	2015- Q4	-	2016- Q1	-	2016- Q2	-	2016- Q3	-	2016- Q4		2017- Q1	-
Country	Col- lected	Paid	Col- lected	Paid	Col- lected	Paid	Col- lected	Paid	Col- lected	Paid	Col- lected	Paid	Col- lected	Paid	Col- lected	Paid
GB	44.4	35.2	39.4	29.9	35.1	25	33.8	24.3	44.2	31.9	44.1	31.8	47.7	34.4	114.4	81.6
DE	30.5	26.4	24.2	19.3	18.5	13.4	20	14.6	24.5	17.8	23.1	16.8	26.5	19.2	61.9	44.2
FR	25.3	20.9	19.8	15.3	15.9	11.3	15.1	10.8	21.4	15.2	22	15.7	22.9	16.3	48.3	34.2
IT	10.6	8.9	8.2	6.4	6.3	4.5	6.9	5	8.2	5.9	8.6	6.2	9.3	6.6	21.7	15.4
ES	7.6	6.2	6.5	5	5.2	3.7	5.2	3.7	7.5	5.4	8.3	5.9	8.6	6.1	15.3	10.8
NL	6.5	5.2	5.7	4.4	4.8	3.5	6.9	4.9	7.4	5.3	7.1	5.1	7.8	5.6	14.8	10.5
SE	6.7	5.3	5.6	4.3	4.8	3.4	5.1	3.6	7.4	5.3	6.5	4.6	7.1	5	16.5	11.6
DK	5.1	3.9	4.5	3.3	3.9	2.8	4	2.8	5.7	4	5.2	3.7	5.5	3.9	12.6	8.9
BE	4.3	3.4	3.7	2.7	3.1	2.2	3.3	2.3	4.2	3	4.1	3	4.3	3	8.7	6.2
AT	3.5	3	2.5	2	1.9	1.4	2.1	1.5	2.7	1.9	2.5	1.8	2.9	2.1	7	5
PL	2.5	2.1	2	1.6	1.7	1.2	1.7	1.2	2.3	1.7	2.5	1.8	2.7	1.9	4.1	2.9
FI	2.2	1.7	1.8	1.3	1.5	1.1	1.6	1.1	2.3	1.6	2	1.4	2.2	1.5	4.1	2.9
PT	1.3	1	1.1	0.9	1	0.7	1	0.7	1.3	0.9	1.4	1	1.5	1	2.3	1.7
EL	1.4	1.1	1.3	0.9	0.5	0.4	0.9	0.6	1.1	0.8	1.3	1	1.3	0.9	2.4	1.7
CZ	1.3	1	0.9	0.7	0.8	0.6	0.9	0.6	1.2	0.8	1.4	1	1.3	0.9	2.2	1.6
HU	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.9	0.6	1	0.7	1	0.8	1.8	1.3
RO	0.9	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.4	0.7	0.5	0.8	0.6	0.8	0.5	1.4	1
HR	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.4
SK	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.8	0.6
BG	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.4
LU	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2
LT	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.3
CY	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2
SI	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3
EE	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.3
LV	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.3
MT	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

72. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the similar third level courses (details supplied) in different universities that are not both eligible for SUSI; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14572/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): Approved undergraduate courses for the Student Grant Scheme 2016 are prescribed in the Student Support Regulations 2016 and in the Student Support Act 2011.

The Regulations prescribe that an approved undergraduate course is a full-time course leading to a major higher education and training award which takes a minimum of two years to complete in an approved institution.

Courses that are part-time or that are less than two years in duration or leading to a special purpose/minor award rather than a major award are not approved for the purposes of the Student Grant Scheme.

I understand that the new dental nursing course in UCC does not lead to a major higher education and training award and as such, is not an approved course. However, should UCC recalibrate the course content and final award, then the course could be considered for grant support.

School Staff

73. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will sanction a fourth teacher in September 2017 for a school (details supplied) which is a rural DEIS school with an enrolment of 88 for the upcoming 2017/18 academic year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14577/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The criteria used for the allocation of teachers to primary schools is published annually on the website of the Department of Education and Skills. The key factor for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level is the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and pupil enrolments on the previous 30 September. The staffing schedule operates in a clear and transparent manner and treats all similar types of schools equally irrespective of location.

Staffing arrangements for the 2017/18 school year are set out in Circular 0017/2017 which is available on my Department's website.

The staffing arrangements include an appeals mechanism for schools to submit an appeal under certain criteria to an independent Appeals Board.

Home Tuition Scheme Provision

74. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if home tuition will be approved for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14594/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department's policy is focused on ensuring that all children, including those with autism, can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in school settings through the primary and post-primary network.

In terms of the education provision for children who have autism, my Department has always recognised the importance of early intervention. Children with autism can be enrolled in an early intervention class from the age of 3.

Children in early intervention classes benefit from a reduced pupil-teacher ratio of 6:1. Class teachers are fully qualified and have access, through the Special Education Support Service, to training in a range of autism-specific interventions. Each class will have a minimum of 2 Special Needs Assistants.

As each child with autism is unique they should have access to a range of different approaches to meet their individual needs. This facilitates access to individualised education programmes which can be supported by Special Needs Assistants and fully qualified professional teachers who may draw from a range of autism-specific interventions, including Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), Treatment and Education of Autistic Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH) and Picture Exchange Communications System (PECS) as well as the appropriate school curriculum with the option, where possible, of full or partial integration and interaction with other pupils.

The use of ABA as part of the range of interventions is particularly useful for addressing behavioural issues. My Department supports the use of ABA and training is provided for teachers in its use.

However, my Department does not accept, based on research, advice and best practice, that ABA should be the only approach used. While ABA helps to improve behaviour, other approaches, such as a number of those to which I have referred, are just as important in developing children's communication and speech skills.

An application for Home Tuition for the child referred to by the Deputy has recently been received in Special Education Section of my Department. Special Education Section are currently assessing the application with regard to the criteria for eligibility as set out in the Home Tuition Circular 0046/2016.

The purpose of the Home Tuition Grant Scheme is to provide a compensatory educational service for children with Special Educational Needs who are seeking an educational placement, either in a special school, a special class, including an early intervention class within a mainstream school, or a mainstream class in a mainstream school, with additional resources allocated by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

In the event that no placement is available, home tuition can only be provided until such a placement becomes available. Home tuition is provided as an interim provision only and should not be regarded as an optional alternative to a place in school.

It is of course open to parents, where a state funded school placement has been identified, to choose alternative educational interventions to those identified and funded by the State.

Residential Institutions Redress Scheme Data

75. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the total cost of residential institutions redress, reported as costing the State €1.518 billion, includes payments to former residents of other institutions other than those run by the 18 religious congregations and orders that have contributed, or have promised to contribute, funds to the tune of €320.8 million; and if not, the total figure. [14633/17]

76. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the proportion of the total cost of residential institutions redress which is accounted for by institutions or organisations that are not part of the 18 religious congregations and orders. [14634/17]

77. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the efforts he has made in relation to institutions or organisations, separate from the 18 religious orders or congregations, to recoup part of the cost of residential institutions redress for abuse suffered by their former residents. [14635/17]

78. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the institutions and organisations that appear to have not contributed funds to residential institutions redress; and the amount paid out in compensation payments to former residents of those institutions and organisations. [14636/17]

79. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of redress for each institution for which payments were made by the Residential Institutions Redress Board to former residents. [14637/17]

80. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of residential institutions redress, per applicant, per institution. [14638/17]

81. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of appli-

cants for residential institutions redress per institution, successful and otherwise. [14639/17]

82. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the religious denomination, if applicable, of institutions whose former residents were offered compensation by the Residential Institutions Redress Board. [14640/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 75 to 82, inclusive, together.

The Redress Board was set up under the Residential Institutions Redress Act, 2002 to make fair and reasonable awards to persons who, as children, were abused while resident in industrial schools, reformatories and other institutions subject to state regulation or inspection.

The estimated overall cost of awards made by the Residential Institutions Redress Board and associated applicant costs is in the order of € 1.25 billion. The Redress Board, which has made awards to nearly 15,600 applicants, operates independently and the application process is confidential in accordance with the terms of the 2002 Act.

The 2002 Act provides that applications coming before the Redress Board are treated in a confidential manner. This confidentiality is required in order to protect the identity of applicants and because the Redress Board, when considering an application, is not permitted to address any issue of fault or negligence arising out of the evidence given in an application and is not empowered to make a finding of fact relating to fault or negligence in relation to evidence submitted with an application.

The Act prohibits the publication of any information regarding an application made under the Act that refers to any other person, relevant person or institution by name or which could reasonably lead to such identification.

Therefore my Department does not have the application details sought by the Deputy.

The 2002 Indemnity Agreement between the Government and religious congregations provided for a collective contribution of €128 million from the 18 participating congregations in cash, counselling services and property.

The cash contributions of €54.42m under the Agreement have been received while information has been provided to my Department that confirms that counselling services in excess of the €10m provided for in the agreement have been funded directly by the contributing congregations.

Work to complete the outstanding property transfers is actively progressing and I should point out that in most of the remaining cases the transfer process is at a very advanced stage. It is worth noting also that most of the properties are already in use by the intended recipients.

Questions Nos. 78 to 82, inclusive, answered with Question No. 75.

State Examinations Commission

83. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to a petition (details supplied); if he will address the concerns regarding the time-frame for this exam; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14644/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations.

In view of this I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to you.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

84. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will ensure that all children approved for resource hours will receive the allocated number of hours; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the new resource teaching allocation model may result in some children losing some hours; and if he will ensure that these hours remain in place per child irrespective of the number of pupils that leave the school. [14653/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that DES Circular 0013/2017 for primary schools and 0014/2017 for post primary schools were published on 7th March 2017.

These Circulars set out the details of the new model for allocating special education teachers to schools.

The revised allocation process replaces the generalised allocation process at primary and post primary school level for learning support and high incidence special educational needs, combined with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) allocation process which provided additional resource teaching supports to schools, to support pupils assessed as having Low Incidence disabilities.

The new Special Education Teaching allocation provides a single unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs to each school, based on each school’s educational profile.

Allocations based on the school profiles were issued to all schools on 7th March while details of the special education teaching allocations have been published on the NCSE website.

For the introduction of the new allocation model, from September 2017, the NCSE ‘Low Incidence’ allocations which had been made for each school during the preceding 2016/17 school year, have been used to establish the complex needs component of the new model for each school.

This means that on the introduction of the new allocation model and until allocations are reviewed, no school will receive an allocation, for the support of pupils with complex needs, which is less than the allocation they had received to support pupils with Low Incidence special educational needs during the 2016/17 school year.

This also means that no allocation for pupils made by the NCSE will be removed from schools as long as that pupil remains in the school.

Whereas schools will have greater discretion as to how they can distribute resources under the new model, based on the individual needs of pupils, no reduction in allocations have been made to schools in respect of any pupils who were previously in receipt of a Low Incidence special needs allocation in that school.

Under the previous General Allocation Model, each school decided the level of support

required to be provided to children with learning difficulties and certain special educational needs e.g. high incidence special educational needs. We know that schools have done this well.

We also know that under the pilot of the new allocation model that was conducted in 2015/16 that schools welcomed the discretion that they had to allocate resources under the new allocation model to pupils based on their individual learning needs, as opposed to primarily based on a diagnosis of a disability.

A category of disability, by itself, does not identify how much support a child should receive – two students, with the same disability can need completely different levels of support.

Schools use their own knowledge of their students to allocate teaching supports and they can also call on a wide number of support services to assist them. These include the Visiting Teacher Service, NEPS, Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) and other support services such as the Special Educational Support Services. Under the new allocation model, schools will continue to receive guidance when making decisions about supporting students' learning needs.

Guidelines for schools on supporting children with special educational needs under the new allocation model are also currently being prepared and will be published shortly.

Under the new model, schools will be guided as to how to identify pupils for additional teaching support and how to prioritise pupils for support taking into account the extent of their learning needs in order to ensure the appropriate level of support is being given to the child. Schools should inform parents about this process and how to request a review of their child's additional teaching support, if this is required.

However, despite these measures, some parents, might still disagree with the level of support being given to their child. In such cases parents should discuss this first with their child's class /subject teacher or his/her support teacher.

If parents remain unhappy with the level of support being given to their child in a school they may then raise this issue with the school principal and if necessary, at a later point with the Chairperson of the school Board of Management, who are the body which has responsibility for the management of the school.

The Guidelines for Schools Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools, which are due to be published shortly will support schools in identifying and addressing the needs of children with special education needs and also in monitoring their deployment of resources to meet those needs.

The Guidelines have drawn on best practice to assist schools to allocate the greatest level of resources to the pupils with the highest levels of needs. The school self-evaluation process also supports schools to examine their own practices in the area of special education, to identify what is working well but also to identify areas that require improvement. Schools will set targets for improvement and implement agreed actions at a whole-school level. This process will enable schools to monitor their deployment of resources in area of special education needs.

Summer Works Scheme Applications

85. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an application for funding under the summer works scheme by a school (details supplied) will be approved; and the level of funding being considered. [14657/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department is in receipt of a Category 10 application, external environment project, under the Summer Works Scheme (2016-2017) from the school to which he refers.

Nearly 50% of schools have applied for inclusion under the scheme which reflects a very high demand. Details of successful school applicants in respect of Categories 1 and 2 were announced in April last and are published on my Department's website *www.education.ie*. Assessment of valid projects in further categories is now being undertaken by my Department, subject to the overall availability of funding, in accordance with the terms and conditions of the scheme as outlined in Circular Letter (055/2015), which may be accessed on my Department's website. The application from the school in question is available to be considered in this context.

School Accommodation

86. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills to outline the status of an application for additional accommodation by a school (details supplied); when the funding will be made available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14658/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy is aware, the school in question has submitted an application to my Department, for capital funding for additional school accommodation. The application is being considered in the context of the very significant challenges facing my Department in prioritising available capital funding for essential mainstream classrooms to meet the demand for extra school places and in cases where additional teachers have been appointed.

A decision will be conveyed to the school authority as soon as the assessment process has been completed.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

87. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to increase the number of autism spectrum disorder, ASD, units in mainstream schools in the next school year 2017/2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14690/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware that this Government is committed to ensuring that all children with Special Educational Needs, including those with autism, can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in school settings through the primary and post primary school network.

Such placements facilitate access to individualised education programmes which may draw from a range of appropriate educational interventions, delivered by fully qualified professional teachers, with the support of Special Needs Assistants and the appropriate school curriculum.

The NCSE has advised that there are almost 18,000 students with ASD attending schools nationally. The Department of Education and Skills invests over €300m annually in providing additional resources specifically to support students with autism in schools enabling:

- 63% of students to attend mainstream schools
- 23% to attend special classes in mainstream primary and post-primary schools, and
- 14% to attend special schools.

The NCSE, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), in consultation with the relevant education partners, is responsible for the establishment of special classes in various geographical areas as required. Special classes are part of a continuum of educational provision that enables students with more complex special educational needs to be educated, in smaller class groups, within their local mainstream schools and are for students who have a recommendation for a special class placement in their professional reports.

Special classes offer a supportive learning environment to students with ASD who are unable to access the curriculum in a mainstream class, even with support, for most or all of their school day. Special class for students with ASD are staffed with a lower pupil–teacher ratio of 6:1 at primary level and 6:1.5 at post primary level, and also have Special Needs Assistant support normally amounting to 2 SNAs for a class of 6 children.

Students enrolled in special classes should be included in mainstream classes to the greatest extent possible, in line with their abilities.

Progress in developing the network of Special Classes has been significant over the past 6 years.

In 2011 there were 548 special classes, of which 224 were primary ASD classes, 72 were post primary ASD classes and 34 were early intervention classes. The remaining 218 were special classes service children with mild to moderate/severe general learning difficulties and specific learning difficulties including speech and language difficulties.

There are currently 1,153 special classes, which is an increase of over 100% on the number available in 2011. Of these, 127 are ASD early intervention classes, 525 are primary ASD classes and 237 are post-primary ASD classes. The remainder are non ASD special classes.

The NCSE is currently engaging with schools in opening special classes where there is an identified need for special class provision. In so doing, they must take into account the present and future potential need, location and sustainability in looking to establish special classes in certain areas.

Details of all special classes for children with special educational needs are available on www.ncse.ie.

The NCSE recently launched guidelines for Boards of Management and Principals of Primary and Post Primary schools which provide information on setting up and organising special classes. These guidelines are available to download from www.ncse.ie.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

88. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his Department and the National Council for Special Education, NCSE, can assist a family (details supplied) in Cork city to find a suitable secondary school place for a person with special needs. [14694/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The enrolment of a child to a school is a matter in the first instance for the parents of the child and the Board of Management of a school. My Department has no role in relation to processing applications for enrolment to schools. Where a parent seeks to enrol their child in a school and that school refuses to enrol a pupil, the school is obliged to inform parents of their right under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 to appeal that decision to the Secretary General of my Department. Only

where an appeal under Section 29 is upheld, may the Secretary General of my Department direct a school to enrol a pupil.

The Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016, published on 6th July 2016 and passed second stage on 17th November 2016, provides that where a school has places available it must admit all applicants. The Bill also contains a provision for the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) to designate a school for a child who has no school place for reasons related to the child's special educational needs, and for the Child and Family Agency to designate a school for a child who has no school place (other than a child with special educational needs). The NCSE or the Child and Family Agency will not be able to increase a school's capacity, a school must have places available for a designation to be made.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible for organising and planning provision for children with Special Educational Needs, including establishing special classes in mainstream primary and post primary schools.

The NCSE, in consultation with the relevant education partners, must take into account the present and future potential need, location and sustainability in looking to establish special classes in certain areas.

Parents are encouraged to liaise with their local Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) to discuss supports available for their child using the contact details available on www.ncse.ie.

The NCSE also works in collaboration with the Educational Welfare Services (EWS) of the Child and Family Agency which is the statutory agency that can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place for their child or can offer assistance where a child is out of school. The EWS may be able to offer assistance and advice on securing a school placement within a pupil's area. The contact details for the EWS is Educational Welfare Services, Child and Family Agency, Floors 2-5, Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, Dublin 8. Telephone 01 7718500 email: ewsinfo@tusla.ie.

Children with autism may be eligible for home tuition if a school placement is not available for them and/or where a determination is awaited in respect of an expulsion or refusal to enrol taken under section 29 of the Education Act, 1998. Details in relation to the Home Tuition schemes are available on my Department's website at www.education.ie.

School Enrolments Data

89. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to provide a solution for the year-on-year problem of over subscription to a school (details supplied); if he will provide a solution as soon as possible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14709/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department is monitoring the pupil enrolment position in the area in question, together with all areas nationally, to take account of updated demographic data. In that regard, my Department is aware of the demand for junior infant places in the area referred to and is liaising directly with the relevant schools.

There are a total of 13 primary schools in the school planning area in question with 11 schools enrolling junior infants – this includes two Junior Primary Schools (catering for Junior Infants to 2nd class) and two Senior Primary Schools (catering for 3rd to 6th class).

The Department was contacted by one school in the Swords area to advise that they have a waiting list of over 100 children for September 2017. The indications are that pupils on the waiting list are also on the waiting lists for other schools and may already have been offered a school place. The Department has been in direct contact with a number of primary schools in the area concerned in respect of their junior infant capacity. In that regard it is understood that at least two primary schools are under subscribed and have expressed a willingness to enroll further junior infants in September 2017, if necessary.

The school enrolment position for September 2017 will be clarified when the schools concerned have completed their enrolment process in the coming weeks. In that context the Department understands that further offers of places will be made by schools with junior infant places remaining available for September 2017.

While the situation may result in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice, the Department's main responsibility is to ensure that the existing schools in the area can, between them, cater for the demand for Junior Infant places in September 2017. It is important that school size is monitored and that a balance is preserved among all schools in school planning areas to ensure that one school is not expanding at the expense of another school. In the meantime, my Department is monitoring the enrolment position in the area closely.

School Patronage

90. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will consider the views and concerns of a primary school board of management (details supplied) in relation to schools' admission policies; if his attention has been drawn to the concerns of some schools under the patronage of Protestant churches in relation to changes to school admission policies and the adverse impact particularly on smaller schools in rural areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14715/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): As the Deputy will be aware I ran a public consultation process from 24th January to 20th March 2017 on the role of denominational religion in the school admission process and possible approaches for making changes.

I have stated that I believe that it is unfair that preference is given by publicly-funded religious schools to children of their own religion who might live some distance away, ahead of children of a different religion or of no religion who live close to the school.

I also believe that it is unfair that parents, who might otherwise not do so, feel pressure to baptise their children in order to gain admission to the local school and I intend to reform the school admissions system in relation to the role that religion can play in that process.

In the Consultation paper I set out four possible approaches for dealing with the issue, in primary schools in the first instance, including:

- A catchment area approach, prohibiting religious schools from giving preference to children of their own religion who live outside the catchment area ahead of non-religious children who live inside the catchment;

- A 'nearest school rule', allowing religious schools to give preference to a religious child only where it is that child's nearest school of that particular religion;

- A quota system, which would allow a religious school give preference to children of its

own religion in respect of only a certain proportion of places, meaning that the remaining places would be allocated based on other admissions criteria – proximity to the school, lottery etc.;

- An outright prohibition on religious schools using religion as a factor in admissions, meaning that all places would be allocated based on other factors. Within this approach, there is capacity to allow religious schools to require parents or students to indicate some support or respect for the ethos of the school.

I am mindful of the need to avoid possible pitfalls and unintended consequences with each of these approaches, including possible impacts on minority religions and on the wishes of Protestant, Jewish, Islamic and other communities to be able to run schools in accordance with their ethos and admit children from their communities to attend those schools.

Other possible consequences to be avoided include possible breaches of the constitution, technical and administrative difficulties impacting on the capacity to effectively run the system of over 4000 schools and the possibility of creating ‘postcode lotteries’, such as other countries have experienced, resulting in pronounced divergence in the quality of schools in more advantaged compared to less advantaged areas.

The 8 week phase of receiving written submissions is part of the broader 12 week consultation process which will include additional steps, including any follow-up consultation that is required, collation of responses and development of next steps.

My Department has begun the process of examining the submissions, which includes the submission to which the Deputy refers, and formulating next steps. Clearly I will not make any decisions around next steps until such time as all of the submissions have been examined and considered.

Departmental Expenditure

91. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the details of any payments made by his Department, its agencies or any bodies under his aegis to any broadcasters here in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016; the broadcaster to which the funds were provided; the reason for the payments; and if there are any reasons for payments to broadcasters in 2017. [14721/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The details sought by the Deputy are not readily available. Officials in my Department are collating the information and I will arrange to have it forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it becomes available.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

92. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to implement an autism spectrum disorder, ASD, unit in all primary schools here; the action being taken to support children that find themselves left behind in the classroom; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14732/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware that this Government is committed to ensuring that all children with Special Educational Needs, including those with autism, can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in school settings through the primary and post primary school network.

Such placements facilitate access to individualised education programmes which may draw from a range of appropriate educational interventions, delivered by fully qualified professional teachers, with the support of Special Needs Assistants and the appropriate school curriculum.

The NCSE has advised that there are almost 18,000 students with ASD attending schools nationally. The Department of Education and Skills invests over €300m annually in providing additional resources specifically to support students with autism in schools enabling:

- 63% of students to attend mainstream schools
- 23% to attend special classes in mainstream primary and post-primary schools, and
- 14% to attend special schools.

The NCSE, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), in consultation with the relevant education partners, is responsible for the establishment of special classes in various geographical areas as required.

Special classes are part of a continuum of educational provision that enables students with more complex special educational needs to be educated, in smaller class groups, within their local mainstream schools and are for students who have a recommendation for a special class placement in their professional reports.

Special classes offer a supportive learning environment to students with ASD who are unable to access the curriculum in a mainstream class, even with support, for most or all of their school day. Special class for students with ASD are staffed with a lower pupil–teacher ratio of 6:1 at primary level and 6:1.5 at post primary level, and also have Special Needs Assistant support normally amounting to 2 SNAs for a class of 6 children. Students enrolled in special classes should be included in mainstream classes to the greatest extent possible, in line with their abilities.

Progress in developing the network of Special Classes has been significant over the past 6 years.

In 2011 there were 548 special classes, of which 224 were primary ASD classes, 72 were post primary ASD classes and 34 were early intervention classes. The remaining 218 were special classes for children with mild to moderate/severe general learning difficulties and specific learning difficulties including speech and language difficulties.

There are currently 1,153 special classes, which is an increase of over 100% on the number available in 2011 and an increase of approx. 16% on 2015/16 classes for children with Autism. These classes comprise of 889 classes for children with Autism; 127 early intervention classes, 525 primary ASD classes and 237 post-primary ASD classes.

My Department has no plans to open ASD classes in all primary schools. The NCSE, in looking to open special classes, must take into account the present and future potential need for such classes, taking particular account of the educational needs of the children concerned. The NCSE will also take account of location and sustainability in looking to establish special classes in certain areas.

In this regard, the NCSE is currently engaging with schools in opening special classes where there is an identified need for special class provision for children whose assessed needs clearly indicate the need for Special Class provision.

Details of all special classes for children with special educational needs are available on

www.ncse.ie.

Parents of children with special educational needs can contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs and to seek assistance in identifying placement options, using the contact details available on www.ncse.ie.

It is general practice to include a Special Needs Unit in the accommodation brief for new school buildings, unless local circumstances indicate that it will not be required. In addition, my Department may also provide capital funding to schools to establish special needs provision e.g. re-configure existing accommodation to provide a special class where this has been approved by the National Council for Special Education through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers.

The NCSE recently launched guidelines for Boards of Management and Principals of Primary and Post Primary schools which provide information on setting up and organising special classes. These guidelines are available to download from www.ncse.ie.

My Department provides a range of supports for schools which have enrolled pupils with special educational needs in order to ensure that, wherever a child is enrolled, they will have access to an appropriate education.

The range of supports and services which are made available include additional learning and resource teaching support, Special Needs Assistants support, funding for the purchase of specialised equipment, services of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), enhanced levels of capitation in Special schools and Special Classes and additional teacher training.

The NCSE also provides information for Parents of Children with Special Education Needs through its website (www.ncse.ie) and Pamphlet Series which inform parents and guardians of supports and services available for children and young people with ASD and their families.

The NCSE has published updated policy advice on the Educational Provision for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. In developing this policy advice, the NCSE consulted widely with parents, professionals and other stakeholders and interested parties while also conducting research. The report includes 11 key Recommendations which focus on improvements which might be considered to the range of provisions which are currently available for children with Autism in schools.

The NCSE also have a range of Information Booklets available on their website (<http://www.ncse.ie/information-booklets-pamphlets-2>) for parents of children with special educational needs, which are written for parents to answer key questions they may have about special education, both generally and as it relates to their child.

The availability and provision of health-related therapy services, including speech and language, occupational therapy and sensory therapy support, is the responsibility of the Health Service Executive (HSE), and matters in relation to the provision of such services should be directed to the Minister for Health through the Health Service Executive. My Department has no responsibility or mandate for such services.

Languages Programme

93. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the work being undertaken in his Department to consider the inclusion of Polish into the secondary school syl-

labus from junior cycle upwards, in view of the increase in Polish speaking citizens living here and the growing importance of the language here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14753/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department is currently finalising its Foreign Languages in Education Strategy and publication is expected shortly. Some 80 submissions were received during the consultation process, which is informing the Strategy. Submissions, including those from the Polish community, have been considered as part of the evidence base used in informing the development of the Strategy. I am very aware of the concerns of the Polish community, and acknowledge that the large Polish immigrant population now living in Ireland provides this country with a social, cultural and national resource that I welcome and want to nurture.

A number of meetings have taken place between officials from my Department and Polish representatives, including with representatives of the Polish embassy in September (along with Lithuanian, Latvian, and Romanian embassy representatives) to discuss the possibilities for Polish and other languages within the Foreign Languages Strategy. There was also a meeting with the Polish Ambassador in November 2016. I myself also met with the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Waszczykowski, when he visited Ireland in November last, and agreed to investigate the possibility of setting up a number of pilot projects in relation to providing Polish in schools. More recently, the issue of teaching Polish in Irish schools was among the items discussed when the Taoiseach met the Polish Prime Minister in Warsaw on 9 February.

The Deputy will be aware that Polish is offered as one of the suite of non-curricular Leaving Certificate EU languages (it is one of 16 languages offered in this way, and is also the most popular). The Foreign Languages in Education Strategy is considering the role of these Leaving Certificate non-curricular EU languages.

Special Educational Needs Service Provision

94. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to increase the number of autism spectrum disorder, ASD, units within primary and secondary schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14757/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The Deputy will be aware that this Government is committed to ensuring that all children with Special Educational Needs, including those with autism, can have access to an education appropriate to their needs, preferably in school settings through the primary and post primary school network.

Such placements facilitate access to individualised education programmes which may draw from a range of appropriate educational interventions, delivered by fully qualified professional teachers, with the support of Special Needs Assistants and the appropriate school curriculum.

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Special classes offer a supportive learning environment to students with ASD who are unable to access the curriculum in a mainstream class, even with support, for most or all of their school day. Special class for students with ASD are staffed with a lower pupil–teacher ratio of 6:1 at primary level and 6:1.5 at post primary level, and also have Special Needs Assistant support normally amounting to 2 SNAs for a class of 6 children.

Students enrolled in special classes should be included in mainstream classes to the greatest extent possible, in line with their abilities.

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There are currently 1,153 special classes, which is an increase of over 100% on the number available in 2011. Of these, 127 are ASD early intervention classes, 525 are primary ASD classes and 237 are post-primary ASD classes. The remainder are non ASD special classes.

The NCSE is currently engaging with schools in opening special classes where there is an identified need for special class provision. In so doing, they must take into account the present and future potential need, location and sustainability in looking to establish special classes in certain areas.

Details of all special classes for children with special educational needs are available on www.ncse.ie.

The NCSE recently launched guidelines for Boards of Management and Principals of Primary and Post Primary schools which provide information on setting up and organising special classes. These guidelines are available to download from www.ncse.ie.

State Examinations

95. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the details of the provision of readers for Irish examinations in the junior and leaving certificate in a situation in which a person with dyslexia has been granted a reader for their English exam but refused for Irish; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14759/17]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations. The Commission in this regard operates a scheme of Reasonable Accommodations in the Certificate Examinations.

In view of this I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for di-

rect reply to you.

Housing Provision

96. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the number of new home completions as measured by the building control management system for each month since the inception of the system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14584/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): The purpose of the Building Control Management System (BCMS) is to facilitate building control authorities, building owners, builders and construction professionals in discharging their separate responsibilities under the Building Control Act 1990. The system provides a common platform for clear and consistent administration of building control matters across the local authority sector.

The BCMS was not designed to report on housing completions. However, the BCMS does facilitate the receipt and lodgement of commencement notices, statutory certificates and compliance documentation in line with the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations. One such statutory certificate is the Certificates of Compliance on Completion, which confirms to the Building Control Authority that the building works, as constructed, are in compliance with the requirements of the Building Regulations. Certificates of Compliance on Completion are required for certain works that submitted a commencement notice on or after 1st March 2014. They are not required for one-off houses that have chosen to opt out of the statutory certification process since 1st September 2015. Certificates of Compliance on Completion may cover multiple buildings or works.

Building Control Authorities are required to keep certain information pertaining to building works that come under the Building Control Regulations 1997-2015 on a statutory register, including particulars in relation to Certificates of Compliance on Completion. BCMS is centrally hosted by the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) on behalf of the 31 Local Authorities and has enabled this information to be hosted on a central nationwide register, readily available and updated quarterly at <https://www.localgov.ie/en/link-type/bcms>.

Local Authority Housing

97. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government when he will provide funding to local authorities on the phase 2 house insulation programme. [14595/17]

98. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his plans to provide additional resources for housing maintenance for Dublin City Council in view of the need to upgrade and properly insulate the large older social housing estates located in the council's areas. [14596/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 97 and 98 together.

The regular management and maintenance of local authority housing stock, is a matter for each relevant local authority, and it is open to each authority to address maintenance or improvements to their housing stock from within their own resources.

However, my Department is committed to supporting local authorities in maintaining and improving the quality of the national social housing stock through a range of measures including large-scale urban regeneration programmes, improving the standard and energy efficiency of dwellings, pre-letting repairs and improvement and refurbishment works to vacant properties in order to return these to productive use as quickly as possible.

With regard to the Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme for social housing stock, my Department has provided very significant financial support to local authorities who are currently undertaking an ambitious programme of insulation retrofitting on the least energy efficient social housing homes. Funding of some €107 million was provided from 2013 to 2016 to improve energy efficiency and comfort levels in over 57,000 local authority homes, benefitting those at risk of fuel poverty and making a significant contribution to Ireland's carbon emissions reduction targets and energy reduction targets for 2020.

It will be a matter for each local authority, including Dublin City Council, to devise, prioritise and implement appropriate targeted Energy Efficiency Programme works that best fit the specific requirements in their areas. My Department will shortly request submissions from each local authority in respect of their proposed works and related funding requirements for 2017.

Local Authority Housing Maintenance

99. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if his Department has an evaluation system to invigilate on the performance of local authorities in regard to maintenance and refurbishment of their social housing estates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14597/17]

100. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he will establish an evaluation and invigilation system to monitor the performance of local authorities and voluntary housing bodies in relation to estate management of their social housing stock. [14598/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 99 and 100 together.

The efficient management of social housing stock is vital to ensure that we achieve optimum occupancy while the construction of new build continues to accelerate.

The Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan sets out measures to improve the management of Local Authority housing stock, including the adoption of a common national re-letting performance standard across all local authorities; a preventative maintenance approach to housing stock management; a greater focus on tenant's roles and responsibilities as well as funding mechanisms to incentivise swift turn-around, consistent standards and pro-active approaches.

The National Oversight & Audit Commission (NOAC) is an independent statutory body established under the 2014 Local Government Reform Act to provide oversight of the local government sector. At present NOAC is finalising a review of local authorities' management and maintenance of their housing stock.

Regarding Approved Housing Bodies (AHB's), as part of the Payment and Availability (P&A) Agreements entered into by AHBs under the social housing leasing programme, AHBs agree:

- to be responsible for the upkeep, management and maintenance of the dwelling the subject

of the agreement, and

- to comply at all times during the term of the agreement with the provisions and requirements of the Planning Acts and of the Building Regulations.

Housing authorities are responsible for monitoring compliance with the terms and conditions governing P&A agreements, including ensuring that the dwellings are in a lettable condition and are in compliance with the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2008. Provision has been made for an administrative fee to be paid in respect of this regulatory role being undertaken by housing authorities. This annual fee equates to 1% of the yearly leasing cost and is paid by my Department at the commencement of the leasing arrangements.

Housing Regeneration

101. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if there are grants being made available to enable persons to refurbish or carry out remedial works to dwelling houses in rural areas in order to make them fully habitable and suitable accommodation for families that wish to reside in same, or that actually owned them and wish to effect necessary improvements to make them habitable; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14601/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): Pillar 5 of the Government's Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness is specifically focused on Utilising Existing Housing Stock, with a key objective of ensuring that the existing vacant housing stock throughout the country and across all forms of tenure, in both the public and private sectors, is used to the optimum degree possible. In this regard, Action 5.1 of Rebuilding Ireland commits to the development of a National Vacant Housing Re-Use Strategy, informed by Census 2016 data, to

- inform the compilation of a register of vacant units across the country,
- identify the number, location and reasons for longer-term vacancies (i.e. over 6 months) in high demand areas, and
- set out a range of actions to bring vacant units back into reuse.

To this end, the Housing Agency, which has lead responsibility for coordinating the development of the Strategy, established a working group in September 2016 comprising of senior representatives from my Department, local authorities and from the Housing Agency itself to inform the Strategy. The Group is due to report in the coming weeks.

An important action that will have a significant impact in the regeneration of vacant properties is the Repair and Leasing Scheme (RLS), which has been developed to assist private property owners and local authorities or Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) to harness the accommodation potential that exists in certain vacant properties across Ireland. The scheme is targeted at owners of vacant properties who cannot afford or access the funding needed to bring their properties up to the required standard for rental property. Subject to the suitability of the property for social housing, and the agreement of the property owner, the cost of the necessary repairs will be met upfront by the local authority or an Approved Housing Body (AHB). This allows for the property owner to sign-up to a lease arrangement for a length that is linked to the value of the repairs, subject to a minimum of 10 years. The value of the repairs will then be offset incrementally against the agreed rental payment over a defined period within the lease.

A property owner can either choose to arrange for a contractor to carry out the repairs themselves, or the local authority or AHB can arrange this instead. Property owners will not be required to take on landlord responsibilities and the local authority or AHB will have on-going management and maintenance responsibilities in respect of the properties.

The local authority will determine the eligibility for the scheme, having regard to the location and the suitability of the property for social housing and also taking into consideration the extent of the repairs that may be required. The maximum costs of repairs allowable under this initiative will be €40,000. My Department is working closely with local authorities to implement the scheme locally.

Following on from the success of the initial pilot in Waterford and Carlow local authorities, the Repair and Leasing Scheme (RLS) is being rolled out on a national basis from 23 February 2017. I am making an additional €26m available to fund the scheme in 2017, which brings the total amount available this year to €32m. This additional investment in 2017 means that delivery under the scheme can be accelerated and up to 800 vacant properties can be brought back into use as new homes for families on local authority waiting lists this year. This funding represents a frontloading of the €140m being made available for the scheme over the next 5 years. Over the period 2016 to 2021, it is anticipated that up to 3,500 units will be secured for social housing under this scheme. Funding to support the cost of bringing new social houses into use using the Repair and Leasing Scheme in 2017 will be released based on proposals submitted by local authorities to my Department rather than by allocation to each local authority. I have provided funding to support ambitious delivery under the scheme in 2017 and I would urge every local authority to work hard to secure units as early as possible and maximise the use of this investment.

I will be carefully monitoring the scheme in 2017 to ensure that it works well and is cost effective. Likewise, this analysis will assist in determining its delivery potential for future years, as well as whether additional financial resources are required in that context.

The Repair and Leasing Scheme is one of a number of initiatives in Rebuilding Ireland to address vacant properties around the country. Other initiatives include the Buy and Renew Scheme. The full details of this scheme are being finalised and will be communicated to local authorities shortly. I have made an initial €25 million available for this initiative this year and propose to increase this to as much as €50 million in 2018, depending on the uptake. I expect this investment to deliver between 400 and 500 renewed houses for social housing use. The initiative may present opportunities for local authorities and approved housing bodies to tackle dereliction in towns and urban areas, but prospective housing units will always need to be suitable for social housing use, in an area of need, and to represent reasonable value for money.

The Built Heritage Investment Scheme, which comes under the remit of my colleague, the Minister of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs, is a €2m scheme for the repair and conservation of protected structures. Launched in October 2015, this scheme is expected to support in excess of 330 projects across the country in 2017 and to create employment in the conservation and construction industries, while helping to regenerate urban and rural areas.

Fire Service Staff

102. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the position regarding members of the Fire Service that were injured seriously in the line of duty and have been accommodated with their employment and in situations in which an arrangement has been put in place for lighter duties; the number of such instances in

place in the Fire Service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14606/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): Fire services are provided by local authorities in accordance with the provisions of the Fire Services Acts 1981 and 2003. Under the Local Government Act 2001, arrangements in relation to staffing in each local authority are the responsibility of the relevant Chief Executive for that authority.

The information requested by the Deputy is not held by my Department.

Housing Provision

103. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the number of homes delivered and tenanted through initiatives set out in Rebuilding Ireland to bring vacant stock back into use; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14607/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): Pillar 5 of the Government's Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness is specifically focused on utilising Existing Housing Stock, with a key objective of ensuring that the existing vacant housing stock throughout the country and across all forms of tenure, in both the public and private sectors, is used to the optimum degree possible.

To this end, the Housing Agency, which has lead responsibility for coordinating the development of the Strategy, established a working group in September 2016 comprising of senior representatives from my Department, local authorities and from the Housing Agency itself to inform the Strategy. The Group is due to report in the coming weeks.

The Rebuilding Ireland commitments are set out in line with best asset management practices, which will see all local authorities operating to a national re-letting performance standard and greater use of a preventative maintenance approach to social housing stock management. In 2016, over 2,300 vacant social housing units were returned to productive use. This figure does not include units returned to use by local authorities through funding from their own resources. Allocations for 2017 are due to be announced shortly and it is expected that in excess of 1,500 vacant social housing units will be brought back to use under the Voids Programme.

The Repair and Leasing Scheme (RLS) has been developed under Pillar 5 of Rebuilding Ireland to assist private property owners and local authorities or Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) to harness the accommodation potential that exists in certain vacant properties across Ireland. The scheme is targeted at owners of vacant properties who cannot afford or access the funding needed to bring their properties up to the required standard for rental property. Subject to the suitability of the property for social housing, and the agreement of the property owner, the cost of the necessary repairs will be met upfront by the local authority or an Approved Housing Body (AHB). This allows for the property owner to sign-up to a lease arrangement for a length that is linked to the value of the repairs, subject to a minimum of 10 years. The value of the repairs will then be offset incrementally against the agreed rental payment over a defined period within the lease.

Following on from the success of the initial pilot in Waterford and Carlow local authorities, the Repair and Leasing Scheme (RLS) is being rolled out on a national basis from 23 February 2017. I am making an additional €26m available to fund the scheme in 2017, which brings the total amount available this year to €32m. This additional investment in 2017 means that delivery under the scheme can be accelerated and up to 800 vacant properties can be brought

back into use as new homes for families on local authority waiting lists this year. This funding represents a frontloading of the €140m being made available for the scheme over the next 5 years. Over the period 2016 to 2021, it is anticipated that up to 3,500 units will be secured for social housing under this scheme.

Other initiatives include the Buy and Renew Scheme. The full details of this scheme are being finalised and will be communicated to local authorities shortly. I have made an initial €25 million available for this initiative this year and propose to increase this to as much as €50 million in 2018, depending on the uptake. I expect this investment to deliver between 400 and 500 renewed houses for social housing use.

This initiative may present opportunities for local authorities and approved housing bodies to tackle dereliction in towns and urban areas, but prospective housing units will always need to be suitable for social housing use, in an area of need and to represent reasonable value for money.

In addition, the Housing Agency is being provided with €70m in capital funding from the Exchequer, with the specific focus of engaging with banks and other entities to acquire properties for social housing nationally. Overall, some 1,600 units are targeted for acquisition under this initiative.

Wind Energy Generation

104. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the reason guidelines listed in a Government-commissioned document (details supplied) stated that the required setback position for wind turbines is 1,209 metres; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14645/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): I understand that the objective of the Report referred to, commissioned by SEAI, was to inform consideration of the impact of potential noise limits on the available wind energy capacity in Ireland. Commissioned by my colleague, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, I gather that this was solely an acoustic modelling exercise and that a number of assumptions were made in compiling the report. It is also worth noting the limited scope of this report, which did not include an environmental study.

Within a broader policy context, in December 2013, my Department published proposed draft revisions to the noise, setback distance and shadow flicker aspects of the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines. These draft revisions proposed:

- the setting of a more stringent day and night-time noise limit of 40 decibels for future wind energy developments,

- a mandatory minimum setback distance of 500 metres between a wind turbine and the nearest dwelling for amenity considerations, and

- the complete elimination of shadow flicker between wind turbines and neighbouring dwellings.

A public consultation process was also initiated on these proposed draft revisions to the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines, which ran until February 2014. The Department received submissions from 7,500 organisations and members of the public during this public consultation process.

In light of the commitment in the Programme for a Partnership Government to finalise the Guidelines and on-going policy and legal developments in this area, my Department is continuing to advance work on the Guidelines and related matters in conjunction with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, in order to bring the various issues to a conclusion as early as possible. I expect to be in a position to make a statement on the matter in the coming weeks, outlining the timelines for implementation of the various elements.

As part of the overall review, and with regard to the recent ECJ Judgement in Case C-290/15 on the Belgian/Wallonian wind energy guidelines, it is proposed to undertake a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) of the proposed revisions to the 2006 Guidelines - in accordance with the requirements of Directive 2001/24/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment - before they are finalised. The SEA process will include public consultation.

Bord Gáis Privatisation

105. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if sale proceeds from the sale of shares in Bord Gáis were put towards social housing; the amount that has been allocated to social housing; the date the funding was first allocated; the number of social houses that have been provided by the proceeds; if he has consulted the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and the Minister for Finance on the possible use of proceeds from the sale of Bord Gáis for housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14664/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): In Budget 2015 the Government announced that €400 million of the proceeds of the sale of Bord Gais Energy was to be made available to establish an off-balance sheet financial vehicle to provide financing to Approved Housing Bodies, with the aim of facilitating the provision of additional housing units in support of the Government's Social Housing Strategy. Work on this activity was carried out by my Department in consultation with the Department of Finance and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. However, despite a high level of engagement with a wide range of potential providers and financiers of social housing, no new model of provision and/or financing of social housing on an off-balance sheet basis could be identified.

In response to this outcome, it was decided instead to commit €10 million per annum from the Bord Gais proceeds, over a longer period, which could be used to secure the development of a pilot affordable rental scheme. Action 4.6 of the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan provided for the introduction of an affordable rental scheme to enhance the capacity of the private rented sector to provide quality and affordable accommodation for households currently paying a disproportionate amount of disposable income on rent. Provision was made for €10 million to be allocated through my Department's Vote in 2017.

As set out in the recently published Strategy for the Rental Sector, the commitment on affordable rental is now to be progressed through kick-starting supply in rent pressure zones. Lands held by local authorities in rent pressure zones are to be brought to market on a competitive tendering basis, with a view to leveraging the value of the land to deliver the optimum number of units for rent, targeting middle income households, in mixed tenure developments. The cost of providing rental units is to be permanently reduced by lowering the initial investment and development costs for providers - AHB or private - allowing the rental units to be made available at below market prices without the need for ongoing rental subsidies.

Accordingly, the provision of €10 million allocated for 2017 is being redirected to support additional activity under other housing programmes within my Department.

Pyrite Resolution Board

106. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government his views regarding the latest three monthly reports received by him from the Pyrite Resolution Board, regarding its assessment of the operation of the scheme; if any issues or trends have emerged over the course of the various reports over the years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14681/17]

109. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the number of reports by the Pyrite Resolution Board laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas since the inception of the pyrite remediation scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14684/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): I propose to take Questions Nos. 106 and 109 together.

In accordance with section 9(4) of the *Pyrite Resolution Act 2013*, the Pyrite Resolution Board, not later than 30 June in each year, shall prepare and submit to the Minister a report on the performance by it of its functions under the Act in the immediately preceding year, and the Minister shall, as soon as may be after receiving the report, cause copies of it to be laid before each House of the Oireachtas. In this regard, annual reports in respect of 2014 and 2015 have been received by my Department and have been laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas. The annual report for 2016 is due not later than 30 June 2017 and will be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas in due course.

With regard to the quarterly progress reports provided to my Department by the Pyrite Resolution Board, it is important to note that the *Pyrite Resolution Act 2013* provided for the making and implementation of a pyrite remediation scheme by the Pyrite Resolution Board for certain dwellings affected by significant pyritic damage. The scheme, which was first published by the Pyrite Resolution Board in early February 2014, was developed having regard to the relevant provisions of the Act and, inter alia, the recommendations set out in the *Report of the Pyrite Panel* (June 2012). The full conditions for eligibility under the scheme are set out in the scheme itself which is available on the Board's website at www.pyriteboard.ie.

The latest figures available indicate that approximately 1,593 applications have been received under the pyrite remediation scheme of which 1,197 have been approved for inclusion. The position on these 1,197 cases is as follows: -

- 235 are at remedial works planning stage,
- 47 are at tender/tender analysis,
- 90 are at decision to contract,
- 206 are under remediation, and
- 619 are complete.

A budget allocation of €22 million has been provided to fund the operation of the pyrite remediation scheme in 2017. The Board estimates that approximately 400 dwellings will be remediated or under remediation by the end of 2017, with the remaining dwellings being targeted

for remediation in 2018 and thereafter if required.

Applications under the scheme continue to be received at a rate of approximately 10 per week; this rate is likely to be maintained over the course of 2017.

Pyrite Resolution Board Membership

107. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the number of members of the Pyrite Resolution Board that have had their term of office extended; the number and timescale of those that will have to be replaced having served two terms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14682/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): The Pyrite Resolution Board, which was first established on an administrative basis in early 2013, was placed on a statutory footing on 10 January 2014 when the Pyrite Resolution Act 2013 came into effect. The Board is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the pyrite remediation scheme and is being assisted in this regard by the Housing Agency.

The current membership of the Board is as follows: -

- Sean Balfe (Acting Chairperson), (Director of Sustainability and the Built Environment, National Standards Authority of Ireland);

- Alec Flood (Practising Barrister and Chartered Engineer);

- Caroline Gill (Barrister and former Insurance Ombudsman and Deputy Financial Services Ombudsman); and

- Derek Sinnott (Doctor of Philosophy in Engineering and Head of Department of the Built Environment, Waterford Institute of Technology).

Both Mr. Sean Balfe and Ms. Caroline Gill, who served on the Board since its inception in early 2013, were recently re-appointed having indicated that they would be prepared to serve a second term of three years on the Pyrite Resolution Board which will conclude on 9 January 2020.

Mr Derek Sinnott was appointed to the Board on 2 September 2016 for a three year period which will conclude on 1 September 2019, following the normal process under the auspices of the Public Appointments Service (PAS) (State Boards Division) in accordance with the Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards (2014). Mr Alec Flood was appointed to the Board on 29 December 2016 for a three year period which will conclude on 28 December 2019, following similar arrangements.

Finally, arrangements are now at an advanced stage to fill the vacancy of chairperson through the PAS State Board appointments process.

Pyrite Resolution Board

108. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the details and value of gifts received by the Pyrite Resolution Board since its inception; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14683/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): The Pyrite Resolution Board, where possible, has sought to recover from parties, with a liability, and capacity, all or part of the costs of remediating dwellings that are included in the scheme. Under Section 12 of the Pyrite Resolution Act 2013, such contributions can be accepted by the Board with the consent of the Minister and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, as gifts. The table provides the details and value of gifts received by the pyrite remediation scheme to date.

Gifts under Section 12 of the Pyrite Resolution Act 2013

Name of Developer	Amount	Year
Charles Gallagher Limited	€150,000	2015
Charles Gallagher Limited	€250,000	2015
Dowdstown Developments Limited	€8,000	2016
Charles Gallagher Limited	€300,000	2016

Question No. 109 answered with Question No. 106.

Departmental Expenditure

110. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government the details of any payments made by his Department, its agencies or any bodies under his aegis to any broadcasters here in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016; the broadcaster to which the funds were provided; the reason for the payments; and if there are any reasons for payments to broadcasters in 2017. [14722/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The information requested in relation to my Department is currently being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy in accordance with Standing Orders. The details requested in relation to bodies under the aegis of my Department are a matter for the individual bodies concerned. Arrangements have been put in place by each Agency to facilitate the provision of information directly to members of the Oireachtas. The contact email address for each agency is set out in the table.

Agency	Email address
An Bord Pleanála	Oireachtasqueries@pleanala.ie
Ervia, Gas Networks Ireland	oireachtas@ervia.ie
Housing Sustainable Communities Agency	publicreps@housingagency.ie
Housing Finance Agency	oireachtas.enquiries@hfa.ie
Irish Water	oireachtasmembers@water.ie
Irish Water Safety	oireachtas@iws.ie
Local Government Management Agency	corporate@lgma.ie
Residential Tenancies Board	OireachtasMembersQueries@rtb.ie
Pobal	oireachtasqueries@pobal.ie

Mortgage to Rent Scheme

111. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government if he will ensure that persons (details supplied) are placed on the mortgage to rent

scheme without delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14766/17]

Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Mortgage to Rent (MTR) scheme for borrowers of private commercial lending institutions introduced in 2012 is targeted at those households in arrears who are eligible for social housing support whose mortgage is unsustainable. To be eligible for the scheme a household must have had their mortgage position deemed unsustainable by their lender under the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process (MARP) and agree to the voluntary surrender of their home. In addition, the household must be deemed eligible for social housing support.

I am not in a position to comment on any particular case nor would it be appropriate for me to do so. The reasons why a case has not progressed are varied and can depend on the lender, the property, the household and the ability of the Approved Housing Body to increase their involvement in the scheme. Where MTR is not an option, it will be a matter for the borrower to discuss with their lender if there are other options available to resolve their mortgage arrears situation.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

112. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Social Protection the current waiting time for appealing decisions on carer's allowance applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14585/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The average processing time for carer's allowance appeals, to the end of February 2017, is 21.9 weeks for appeals requiring an oral hearing, and 19.1 weeks for appeals which were determined by means of a summary decision.

Appeal processing times are kept under constant scrutiny by the Chief Appeals Officer and significant effort and resources have been devoted in recent years to reducing the length of time taken to finalise an appeal. This has resulted in a marked improvement in processing times.

Average processing times for carer's allowance appeals have reduced from 57.9 weeks for an oral hearing in 2011 to 25.9 weeks in 2015, 21.6 weeks in 2016 and 21.9 weeks to date in 2017. The average processing time for carer's allowance appeals determined by way of a summary decision reduced from 31.3 weeks in 2011 to 20.6 weeks in 2015, 17.6 weeks in 2016 and 19.1 weeks to date in 2017.

While carer's allowance processing times for the first two months of 2017 may appear to have increased slightly when compared with the 2016 annual figures, it should be noted that the corresponding figure for the first two months of 2016 was 22.7 weeks for an oral hearing and 18.9 weeks for a summary decision.

The quasi-judicial nature of the appeals system means that there are inevitable time-lags involved. However the system is designed to be flexible and fair and allows for review and submission of further information at all stages. The time taken is proportionate to the complexity of many of the issues under appeal which require a high level of judgement, and the need to ensure due process and natural justice.

The Chief Appeals Officer has advised me that appeal processing times will continue to be a priority for her office.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Staff Recruitment

113. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of EO vacancies in the Sligo social welfare office at present; the panels in place to fill these vacancies; and when these vacancies will be filled. [14662/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): My Department, like all Government departments and agencies, is required to operate within a staff ceiling figure and a commensurate administrative staffing budget, which for this Department has involved reductions in staff numbers.

Within these constraints, the Department is focusing on prioritising the filling of critical posts. The staffing needs for all areas within the Department, including the offices in Sligo, are continuously reviewed, taking account of workloads, management priorities and the competing demands arising, to ensure that the best use is made of all available resources with a view to providing an efficient service to those who rely on the schemes operated by the Department.

Given the ongoing need for the Department to respond to new and increasing demands in the wide range of services, vacancies which arise in one part of the Department may need to be filled in another area of the Department or in another location. Given this it is generally not possible to specify how many vacancies exist in a particular location at a particular time, although in the case of Sligo no requests to PAS for EOs are currently outstanding.

Executive Officer positions are filled from open, interdepartmental and internal panels in order of agreed sequences.

Data Protection

114. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection his views on a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14687/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Department of Social Protection is registered as a data controller with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner

The Department takes its responsibilities in relation to data protection very seriously. Every effort is made to ensure that personal customer data are used solely for business purposes and that they are not compromised in any way. The Department has data protection and information security policies, standards, procedures and guidelines in place governing the use of its computer systems and customer data.

On entry to the Department all new staff, including Medical Assessors, are required to sign an undertaking regarding obligations in relation to Data Protection and since 2016 the Staff Development Unit of this Department has developed and delivers an induction and orientation course to all new entrants.

Staff are regularly reminded of their data protection obligations and the consequences of not adhering to policies such as loss of pay increment(s), loss of entitlement to enter promotional competitions and dismissal. Staff members are required to sign annual undertakings that they have read, and will act in accordance with, data protection policies and guidelines.

The Department ensures oversight in relation to data protection by keeping records of data accesses which are then subject to audit.

JobPath Implementation

115. **Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Social Protection if his attention has been drawn to the fact that since the introduction of JobPath there has been a shortage of recipients of jobseeker’s allowance to participate in CE schemes; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that those on JobPath often remain on the scheme for longer than 12 months; and if he will review the scheme in view of the difficulties that are evident. [14576/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The aim of the JobPath service, which is provided for long term unemployed jobseekers only, is to assist them in finding sustainable full time paid employment by providing intensive individual support and assistance. The Community Employment schemes (CE) which provides part-time employment and training opportunities in local communities as a stepping stone back to employment for people on a range of Social Welfare payments including those on long term unemployment payments. CE does not, nor is it intended to, provide full-time sustainable employment.

The welcome reduction in the unemployment figures of 16% over the past year is a factor in recruitment to all programme and schemes like JobPath and CE. The number of people unemployed is dropping on average by 2,500 every month. However, there are still more people unemployed and looking for work than we would like so while the candidate pool may be diminishing my Department is satisfied that CE schemes can still fill places. The data shows that the number of people on CE schemes is in fact relatively stable.

Participants are referred to the JobPath service for one year only. If they undertake a course of training which is longer than four weeks during that year, their engagement with the JobPath service will be paused for up to 6 months to allow them complete the training and ensure they receive the full 52 weeks JobPath service. If they find full time sustainable employment whilst with JobPath, they will continue to receive in-work support for at least three months and up to twelve months while they remain in employment.

At the end of their 52 week engagement with JobPath, people who have not been successful in finding full time sustainable jobs are eligible to apply for placement on other activation supports and schemes such as CE and TÚS.

If there is a CE scheme experiencing particular difficulties in recruitment, they should contact their local DSP office so that the matter can be reviewed.

Carer’s Allowance Appeals

116. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a decision has been made on a carer’s allowance appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14581/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 15th February 2017. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When these papers have been received from the Department, the case in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral appeal hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Pro-

tection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy

Free Travel Scheme Data

117. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Social Protection the estimated cost of doubling the allocation for 2017 for the free travel pass. [14617/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The free travel scheme provides free travel on the main public and private transport services for those eligible under the scheme. These include road, rail and ferry services provided by companies such as Bus Átha Cliath, Bus Éireann and Iarnród Éireann, as well as Luas and services provided by over 80 private transport operators. There are currently approx. 874,000 customers with direct eligibility with an annual allocation of €80 million.

To double the allocation for free travel in 2017 would cost an additional €80 million per annum.

Any increase funding to the free travel pass scheme would have to be considered in the context of overall budgetary negotiations.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Free Travel Scheme Data

118. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing the subsidy to public bus operators for the free travel pass to the equivalent of that for private bus operators. [14618/17]

119. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Social Protection the estimated cost of increasing the subsidy for the free travel pass to ensure it pays for the entire cost of travel for free travel pass holders on each of the three CIÉ companies, Dublin Bus, Bus Éireann and Iarnród Éireann, rather than the percentage of the fare which is currently covered by his Department. [14619/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 118 and 119 together.

Transport companies are paid on the basis of fares foregone and payments are not made on a per passenger basis. Fares foregone refers to excess or spare capacity an operator might have. These are paid at a reduced rate to take account of travel generated by the Free Travel scheme.

My Department currently makes a block payment to the CIÉ Group and the apportionment of payment between the three constituent companies, Bus Éireann, Bus Átha Cliath and Iarnród Éireann is a matter for the CIE Group to determine. This block payment to the CIE group is a service charge that has been negotiated over the years based on a range of factors including passenger numbers, fares levels, availability and frequency of services, peak time access, service improvements and enhancements. On the other hand, payments to private operators are based on surveys. Therefore the discount rates applied to the CIÉ Group and to private operators do not refer to the same calculation methods and, as a result, are not comparable.

23 March 2017

My Department, the Department of Transport and the National Transport Authority are currently reviewing the funding level for the scheme which was set in 2010. We are also reviewing the payment mechanisms underpinning the free travel scheme. The outcome of these deliberations will help to inform future funding requirements for the scheme.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

120. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an application for carer's allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) will be re-examined in view of the fact it would appear that some medical evidence was not considered; and if an oral hearing will be arranged in order that the details of the medical circumstances can be explained. [14655/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Carer's Allowance (CA) is a social assistance payment made to persons who are providing full-time care and attention to a person with a disability requiring that level of care and whose income falls below certain limits.

Where the carer and care recipient live apart from each other, it is a condition for receipt of CA that there must be a system of communication between their homes.

All of the evidence submitted in support of this application was examined by a deciding officer.

It was decided that the person concerned was not entitled to CA on the grounds that the evidence did not indicate that care recipient required full-time care and attention and on the grounds that the carer was not providing full time care and attention as required and that there was no system of communication between households.

The person concerned was notified on 8 July 2016 of this decision, the reasons for it and of her right of review and appeal.

The person concerned appealed this decision and the case was submitted to the Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO) on 10 November 2016 for determination. An appeals officer (AO), having fully considered all of the available evidence, disallowed the appeal.

The person concerned was notified on 14 February 2017 of the AO's decision and was provided at that time with an explanation of the basis for this decision to disallow the appeal.

Under Social Welfare legislation, the decision of an AO is final and conclusive and may only be reviewed in the light of additional evidence or new facts.

The file has since been recalled by the SWAO and was forwarded to that office on 10 March 2017.

The SWAO are an independent office and it is a matter for them as to whether an oral hearing is required. However the person concerned could contact that office in writing with their request.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Citizen Information Services

121. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will, by virtue of the powers vested in him by the Comhairle Act 2000 and the Citizens Information Act 2007, direct the Citizens Information Board to suspend implementation of the proposed defunding of the national network of independent countywide and area-wide citizens information services pending the completion by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Social Protection of its ongoing review of that strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14668/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Citizens Information Board (CIB), which has statutory responsibility for the Money Advice & Budgeting Service (MABS) and the Citizens Information Services (CIS) decided, on 15th February 2017, to restructure the governance arrangements of these services. The decision was communicated by the Board of CIB to all CIS and MABS Boards and to all staff on the same day. The CIB assures me that there will be no job losses, no closure of services, no change to service delivery locations and no change to the terms and conditions of serving staff during the lifetime of the restructuring programme. There will be no disruption to CIS and MABS services for those who use them.

The decision comes after a lengthy and extensive analysis of options and a detailed consultation period with all stakeholders on the need for a more streamlined governance model. The restructured governance arrangements are being implemented at local company board level only. The decision does not include any proposal to defund the local network of services. The services provided by CIS and MABS services are funded by the State, by way of an annual grant from the Citizens Information Board.

The decision taken simply reduces the number of individual local CIS and MABS company boards from ninety three (93) to sixteen (16). A new regional board structure will be put in place which will comprise eight (8) CIS boards and eight (8) MABS boards. The valuable work carried out by the employees and volunteers working in CIS services and the employees of MABS services will continue as heretofore.

A more streamlined governance structure will result in a more targeted use of valuable staff resources, re-directed to increased front line service delivery, made possible by reduction in the current significant administrative burden associated with maintaining ninety three (93) individual companies nationwide. The changes will bring the CIS and MABS organisations more into line with modern public service governance guidelines and requirements where significant State funding is involved.

In 2017, CIB is set to receive State funding of €54 million, of which €15 million is allocated to CIS services (including €13.1 million to the 42 local Citizens Information Services, €1.2 million to Citizens Information Phone services and, the balance, €0.7 million to central and other supports), and €24.6 million is allocated to the network of MABS services (including €15.4 million to the 51 local MABS, €0.3m to National Traveller MABS, €2.0 million to MABS National Development Company, €3.3 million to the MABS Dedicated Mortgage Arrears initiative, €3.5 million to the Abhaile service, and the remaining €0.1m to MABS central supports).

Following on from the decision of the Board, a Restructuring Implementation Group is being set up by CIB to examine all aspects of implementing the new sixteen (16) board model. This work will include examination of the establishment costs of the new structure and the potential for future savings derived from the reduction in the administrative burden associated with ninety three (93) individual local companies. Current costs are an aggregate of the costs incurred by each of the ninety three (93) local companies on items such as audit fees, professional fees (including legal services), payroll administration and board of director expenses. While cost is not the driver of the restructuring project, some efficiencies are likely to result from moving to a reduced sixteen (16) company model.

The aim of the project is to improve existing governance arrangements and optimise the benefits from operating a more modern, streamlined and customer focused service delivery model.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Expenditure

122. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Social Protection the details of any payments made by his Department, its agencies or any bodies under his aegis to any broadcasters here in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016; the broadcaster to which the funds were provided; the reason for the payments; and if there are any reasons for payments to broadcasters in 2017. [14729/17]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I understand that the Deputy's question relates to payments to broadcasting organisations.

The statutory bodies operating under the aegis of my Department are the Citizens Information Board, the Pensions Authority, the Pensions Council, the Pensions Ombudsman and the Social Welfare Tribunal. No payments were made by any of these bodies to broadcasting organisations in 2014, 2015 or 2016.

The Department placed a number of small scale advertisements with local and regional radio broadcasters over the period from 2014 to 2016. It is important to note that the sole purpose of the advertising was to promote awareness to customers of my Department's services and activities, including its participation in local events such as Jobs Fairs. A full breakdown of the expenditure is outlined in the table below:

Payments made to broadcasters here in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016

Broadcasting Organisation	2014	2015	2016
92.5 Phoenix FM	€123.00		
Athlone Community Radio Ltd		€70.00	
Beat 102 - 103	€1,163.58		€1,201.71
Clare FM	€861.00		
Dublin City FM	€984.00		
Galway Bay FM		€1,414.50	
Highland Radio	€1,377.60	€1,446.48	€1,446.78
I Radio		€1,419.42	€1,221.46
Radio Northeast & Midlands	€1,303.80	€619.92	
KCLR FM		€184.50	
Limerick's Live 95FM	€1,549.80		
Midlands 103		€1,205.40	
Ocean FM			€1,225.08
Radio Kerry		€2,397.02	€4,792.08
Shannonside FM	€2,398.50	€1,452.38	

Broadcasting Organisation	2014	2015	2016
South East Broadcasting Co Ltd	€1,388.67		
South East Radio	€861.00		€1,414.50
Spin South West	€1,353.00		
Tipp FM		€590.40	

While there has been no expenditure of this nature to date in 2017, my Department will continue to communicate with customers during the year about forthcoming events, services and initiatives. Various media channels, including broadcast, will be used as appropriate.

Irish Prisoners Abroad

123. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if his attention has been drawn to the deterioration in the health of a person (details supplied) who has been in prison in Egypt for considerable time; if he will re-engage with the Egyptian authorities with a view to emphasising the seriousness of the situation and the need for early release; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14669/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): This long-running and complex consular case continues to be a top priority for the Government and exceptional levels of resources are being devoted to the provision of consular support to the citizen and his family. The Government is doing everything it possibly can in our ongoing engagement with the Egyptian authorities to seek to have this young man returned to his home and his family at the earliest possible time. The reality is that it is the Egyptian authorities that are detaining this citizen, and only the Egyptian authorities can make the decision to return him to Ireland. The Government maintains open lines of communication at all levels with the Egyptian Government on the case. I once again urged the Egyptian Government to release this citizen without further delay when I met with my Egyptian counterpart, Foreign Minister Shoukry, in Brussels on March 6th.

My Department does everything possible to monitor the health and welfare of this citizen and we have emphasised the need to protect his health and welfare directly with the Egyptian authorities. Minister Flanagan raised the issue with Minister Shoukry earlier this month. Following representations from the Irish Embassy, the Court ordered a medical assessment of Ibrahim Halawa at the second last hearing. A further assessment was ordered at the last hearing (22 March). It is important that these medical assessments take place. I am disturbed by recent reports about Mr. Halawa's health and I am seeking urgent clarification in this regard.

We have made it clear to the Egyptian authorities that we hold them responsible for ensuring this citizen's welfare by carrying out regular medical checks and providing all required medical treatment. The Egyptian authorities have consistently given us assurances on these points.

Our Embassy in Cairo has paid an unprecedented number of consular visits to this citizen, more than 55 in all. The most recent consular visit was on March 1st. A further consular visit will be arranged in the coming days.

The trial in which this citizen is a defendant was back in court on Wednesday 22 March. Officials from the Embassy were present in the court to observe the proceedings, as they have been at every hearing in the case to date.

Humanitarian Aid Provision

124. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if, in view of the ongoing strife in the Horn of Africa and the likelihood of increased famine and starvation, the EU and UN can mobilise its resources sufficiently to address the issue of starvation and the protection of civilians; if a comprehensive aid programme supported by peacekeeping forces can be organised to address the most serious issues arising in Yemen, Sudan, Somalia and Nigeria; if the African Union can also be engaged to combat the activities of Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab in the short term; if an equally aggressive campaign to supply clean drinking water to the areas in question can be organised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14670/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Joe McHugh): I am deeply concerned by the situation of the more than 20 million people currently facing famine, or threat of famine, in South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and north-east Nigeria.

In 2016, Ireland provided a total of some €195 million in humanitarian assistance to people affected by crisis and conflict, including in the countries mentioned. This funding is directed towards the provision of life-saving assistance including food support, shelter, and the provision of basic services including health, education and water and sanitation. In 2016, we also provided €7.5 million in core funding to UNICEF, the UN Agency which leads efforts, globally, to provide clean drinking water in humanitarian crises.

The continued provision of timely humanitarian assistance to those in need in these countries is crucial, and we are currently preparing a package of assistance for the crises in South Sudan and in Somalia. This will be in addition to the €31 million Ireland has provided to South Sudan since December 2013 and the €27 million provided for Somalia since 2012. In the case of Yemen, Ireland has provided almost €6 million in humanitarian assistance since the conflict began in early 2015 and we intend to maintain similar levels of support in 2017. At the recent Oslo Conference, Ireland made an indicative commitment of at least €5 million in humanitarian funding for 2017 for north-east Nigeria and the Lake Chad region.

Intractable conflict is the main driver of the humanitarian emergencies for people in these countries. It is clear that action at political level and by humanitarian organisations is required to protect the rights of the populations affected. Ireland is working with our international partners, including the EU and the UN, to support a strong focus on the need for peaceful resolution of these conflicts. The EU has pledged up to €50 million in support of the Multinational Joint Taskforce to combat Boko Haram, which supports 8,700 troops from Nigeria and neighbouring countries to promote regional security. The EU is also funding the African Union peacekeeping Mission in Somalia, AMISOM, which is mandated by the UN Security Council to reduce the threat posed by Al-Shabab.

Together with our EU and UN partners, we will continue to monitor these four crises closely and to provide significant life-saving humanitarian assistance for those in most need.

Departmental Expenditure

125. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the details of any payments made by his Department, its agencies or any bodies under his aegis to any broadcasters here in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016; the broadcaster to which the funds were provided; the reason for the payments; and if there are any reasons for payments to broadcasters in 2017. [14724/17]

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Charles Flanagan): My Department made payments to broadcasters here in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016 and to date in 2017 as detailed in the table. Payments made to broadcasters here in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016 and to date in 2017.

Division/Unit	Year	Payee	Amount	Reason for Payment
Irish Abroad Unit	2014	RTÉ	€50,000	This amount was paid to RTE in connection with broadcasting of the Ceiliúradh (Celebration) concert held at the Royal Albert Hall, London, on 10th April 2014. The Ceiliúradh concert marked the occasion of President Higgins' State Visit to Britain. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade co-funded the broadcast, along with RTÉ and Tourism Ireland, as an important celebration of the cultural links between Ireland and Britain and to ensure that it could be viewed by as many people worldwide as possible.

Division/Unit	Year	Payee	Amount	Reason for Payment
Ireland, United Kingdom and Americas Division	2014	RTÉ	€11,000	A grant payment was made to RTÉ to support the production of five one-hour episodes of the "History Show" which were broadcast on RTÉ Radio 1 in August 2014. These episodes looked at Irish involvement in the First World War, including reaction to, and participation in, the war by nationalist and unionist communities across the island of Ireland. The project also examined how the events of the First World War have been commemorated in Ireland both generally and also within nationalist and unionist traditions. The project fell within the Reconciliation Fund's criteria of promoting reconciliation through education, dialogue and culture.
Coordination and Compliance Unit	2015	RTÉ	€72.60	Purchase of "Ireland & The United Nations" video.
Communications Unit	2017	RTÉ	€300	Attendance at RTE 'Mojocon' Mobile Journalism Conference (upcoming).

Office of Public Works Staff

126. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will address a matter (details supplied) with regard to recruitment in the Office of Public Works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14631/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Seán Canney): The Office of Public Works (OPW) recruitment advertisement for General Operatives Band 3 Rural positions at locations in Counties Carlow, Cork, Kerry, Kilkenny, Laois, Limerick, Tipperary and Wexford refers to positions that may be permanent, fixed-term or seasonal. The next stage of this recruitment competition is to form a short-list of those applicants to be invited for interview in May 2017. The purpose of the recruitment competition is to form a panel of suitable candidates which may be used to fill positions identified in the OPW's workforce planning process.

Sale of State Assets

127. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the final amount of money received from the sale of Bord Gáis; the details of the allocations made using the proceeds from the sale of Bord Gáis shares; the proportion that was used to pay off a portion of the national debt; the proportion that was used for other uses; if he has consulted with the Housing Agency and the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government on the possible uses of the proceeds of Bord Gáis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14667/17]

128. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the detail of items the proceeds from the sale of Bord Gáis shares were spent on; if all of it was used to pay off the national debt; if he has consulted with the Housing Agency or the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government on the use of Bord Gáis proceeds for the provision of social housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14665/17]

129. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he was in consultation with the Minister for Finance on the possible uses of the proceeds from the sale of Bord Gáis shares; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14666/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 127 to 129, inclusive, together.

To date, the Exchequer has received nearly €1.5 billion in cash arising from the State Assets Disposal Programme and the sale of the National Lottery licence, of which €350m was from Ervia in respect of the sale of Bord Gais Energy.

Under Eurostat rules, the amount of any dividends received from a State company, including proceeds from asset disposals, which can improve the GGB is limited by reference to the entrepreneurial income of the relevant company in the previous year. In order to comply with the fiscal rules of the Stability and Growth Pact, the scope for the Government to use such dividends for additional expenditure on a GGB neutral basis is therefore limited to the amount by which the dividends paid actually improves the GGB. This has meant that in order to take maximum advantage of the asset disposal proceeds, they cannot all be availed of at once but must be remitted to the Exchequer over a number of years.

When all of the remaining proceeds from the sale of Bord Gais Energy have been received, the final total from all of these State asset disposals is expected to be about €2.1 billion.

Since the State Asset Disposal Programme was agreed by Government, a number of significant announcements have been made of allocations of additional funding for capital investment to be funded from the proceeds of these asset disposals. Details of these investment programmes are on my Department's website, and further detail about individual projects and programmes is available from the relevant Ministers and their Departments. However, in summary:

- In July 2012, in its first infrastructure stimulus plan involving a total investment of €2¼ billion, the Government announced that on foot of the State Assets Disposal Programme, it would undertake further Exchequer investment including enabling works to support the PPP projects. Almost €100m was made available for enabling works on the roads and education PPPs.

- In June 2013, the Government allocated €150m additional Exchequer investment to schools, energy efficiency and roads projects;

- At Budget 2014, the Government announced that along with the €200m already committed to the National Children's Hospital, some €200m would be invested from the proceeds of the Lottery Licence transaction and used for a range of projects and programmes;

- In May 2014, the Government allocated a further €200m of investment for a range of capital projects in a number of different sectors and regions across the country.

- At Budget 2015, the Government announced that €400m of the proceeds to be received from the sale of Bord Gais Energy would be made available to support the Government's Social Housing Strategy.

- In 2015, the Government allocated the €335m proceeds from the sale of its shareholding in Aer Lingus to establish a Connectivity Fund, to support commercial projects that enhance connectivity both within and for the State. The Connectivity Fund was established as a sub-Fund of the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund and is being managed by that Fund.

In total, the Government has, to date, allocated over €1.5 billion from the proceeds of the State Assets Disposal Programme and the sale of the National Lottery licence to support jobs and economic development across the country. As indicated above, Ervia has to date paid €350m of the proceeds of the Bord Gais Energy transaction to the Government by way of special dividends. A further special dividend of €100m is expected in 2017. The remainder of the proceeds will be paid to the Government on a phased basis, as required by Government and in a manner that is consistent with protecting Ervia's investment grade credit rating while also maximising the GGB impact of the payments. In relation to the Bord Gais Energy proceeds earmarked for social housing, the Deputy will be aware that in Budget 2015 the Government announced that €400m of these proceeds were to be made available to establish an off-balance sheet financial vehicle to provide financing to Approved Housing Bodies, with the aim of facilitating the provision of additional housing units in support of the Government's Social Housing Strategy. However, despite a high level of engagement by the Department of Housing Planning, Community and Local Government with a wide range of potential providers and financiers of social housing, no new model of provision and/or financing of social housing on an off-balance sheet basis could be identified. This reflects the strict requirements under Eurostat rules to qualify for off-balance sheet status. In response to this outcome, it was decided to commit €10m per annum from the Bord Gais Energy proceeds, over a longer 20 year period, which could be used to secure the development of a pilot affordable rental scheme as envisaged in Rebuilding Ireland.

A decision on the use to which the remainder of the Bord Gais Energy proceeds is to be put is under consideration. In the meantime, pending payment of the proceeds to the Government by way of special dividend, Ervia has used the sale proceeds, on a temporary basis, to reduce debt balances, including debt associated with the assets disposed of, and to restructure its current debt facilities, resulting in cheaper finance for the Company.

Departmental Expenditure

130. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the details of any payments made by his Department, its agencies or any bodies under his aegis to any broadcasters here in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016; the broadcaster to which the funds were provided; the reason for the payments; and if there are any reasons for payments to broadcasters in 2017. [14728/17]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In response to the Deputy's question, the tables outline the details of payments made to broadcasters by my Department and the bodies under its aegis since 2014.

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Questions - Written Answers

Year	Supplier	Amount	Description
2015	Pi Communications	€780	Provision of sound engineering and manned camera support on Budget Day 2015

Special EU Programmes Body

Year	Supplier	Amount	Description
2014	Éanna ni Lamhna	€386	Acted as Master of Ceremonies for an environmental themed conference for the EU's INTERREG IVA Programme, held in Dundalk
2014	Speakers Corner Monty Hall	£6,108	Was the keynote speaker for an environmental themed conference for the EU's INTERREG IVA Programme, held in Dundalk
2014	David Hull Productions Ivan Lyttle	£840	Acted as Master of Ceremonies for the PEACE III annual information event held at the MAC Theatre, Belfast
2016	David Hull Productions Mark Carruthers	£1,200	Acted as Master of Ceremonies for the official launch of the EU's PEACE IV and INTERREG VA Programme, held at the Skainos Centre in East Belfast

Please note, the figures quoted in the above table represent 100% of the costs, which includes contributions from Ireland, Northern Ireland and the EU Programmes/ERDF.

Office of the Ombudsman

Year	Supplier	Amount	Description
2015	Donegal Highland Radio	€701	Advertising for the Ombudsman regional visit to Donegal
2016	Radio Kerry	€563	Advertising for the Ombudsman regional visit to Kerry

Public Appointments Service

Year	Supplier	Amount	Description
2015	Clear Blue Water	€29,561	Promote and encourage submission of expressions of interest for State Board roles
2015	Clear Blue Water	€30,231	Promote and encourage submission of expressions of interest for State Board roles
2016	K Brady Media Limited	€30,156	Promote and encourage submission of expressions of interest for State Board roles

Under the Guidelines on Appointments to State Boards, the Public Appointments Service are required to promote and encourage submissions of expressions of interest for State Board roles. In 2015 and 2016, PAS ran three radio campaigns on RTE Radio 1, Today FM and Newstalk to raise awareness of the process for applying for State Boards appointments. The above payments relate to the radio campaigns and were paid through the indicated agency.

Institute of Public Administration (IPA)

Year	Supplier	Amount	Description
2014	RTE	€12,012	Advertising of IPA products and services
2015	RTE	€15,120	Advertising of IPA products and services
2016	RTE	€8,386	Advertising of IPA products and services

Similar payments for advertising may be made during 2017.

Archaeological Sites

131. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the reason for the failure of her Department to put in place an appropriate preservation order when it became aware of toghers in the ancient bog at Mayne, Coole, County Westmeath; the reason unlimited extraction of peat is allowed to continue despite her Department's full knowledge of the importance of this ancient bog road; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14602/17]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Question No. 426 on 7 March 2017.

National Monuments

132. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs her plans for buildings on Moore Street, Dublin 1; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14641/17]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Works to fully conserve the national monument buildings at Nos. 14-17 Moore Street, which were acquired on behalf of the State in July 2015, and to open the buildings as a 1916 Commemorative Centre, have been suspended since early last year on foot of proceedings in the High Court. A limited scheme of works approved by the Court to preserve and protect the buildings until a permanent solution is found is due for completion next month.

In the meantime, I am awaiting the report of the Moore Consultative Group which I established after the High Court case to consider the best way forward for Moore St itself, how best to retain its historic character and how to reflect the part it played in the events of Easter 1916. I expect to receive the report shortly and will examine its recommendations as speedily as possible.

Seirbhísí Eitilte

133. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht, Gnóthaí Réigiúnacha, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta cén fáth nach bhfuil eitiltí breise ar fáil chuig Oileáin Árann mar a bhíodh ar an bpraghas céanna leis na heitiltí OSP; an dtuigeann sí an tábhacht a bhaineann le seirbhís sholúbtha a bheith ar fáil chuig Oileáin Árann ar phraghas réasúnach; an bhfuil sé i gceist aici aon rud a dhéanamh leis an staid a fheabhsú; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [14714/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Seán Kyne): Faoin gconradh atá idir mo Roinn agus Galway Aviation Services Limited (Aer Arann Islands) don tréimhse 1 Eanáir 2017 go dtí 31 Nollaig 2020, tá sceideal críochnúil eitiltí le cur ar fáil do na hoileáin Árann faoi Oibleagáid Sheirbhís Phoiblí. D'eascair an conradh seo as próiseas cuimsitheach tairisceana a réachtáladh anuraidh faoina raibh sé oscailte dóibh siúd a bhí ag déanamh tairisceana eitiltí bhreise a thairiscint gan uasteorainn, anuas ar an íosleibhéal seirbhísí a bhí iarrtha. Ba phróiseas casta a bhí ann, ag cur san áireamh na rialacha a bhain le soláthar poiblí, státchabhair agus trasfhóirdheonú lena mb'éigean do mo Roinn cloí. Sa chomhthéacs seo, ní bheadh sé cuí athchuart a thabhairt ar an próiseas seo.

Departmental Expenditure

134. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the details of any payments made by her Department, its agencies or any bodies under her aegis to any broadcasters here in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016; the broadcaster to which the funds were provided; the reason for the payments; and if there are any reasons for payments to broadcasters in 2017. [14717/17]

Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Heather Humphreys): In light of the volume of information concerned it is not possible to provide these details to the Deputy in the time available. Arrangements are therefore being made for the information requested in respect of both the Department and the bodies under its aegis to

be collated and forwarded to the Deputy in line with the timelines set out in Standing Orders.

Services for People with Disabilities

135. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Cork joined the waiting list for an assessment of need; the person's place on the waiting list currently; the number of children on the waiting list the person is on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14578/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for the questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Long-Term Illness Scheme

136. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health his plans to include Crohn's disease under the long-term illness scheme; and if he will include epi pens under the scheme. [14582/17]

156. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his plans to add a medical condition (details supplied) as a qualifying condition under the long-term illness scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14712/17]

158. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health if he will consider the inclusion of conditions (details supplied) onto the long-term illness card; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14748/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 136, 156 and 158 together.

The LTI Scheme was established under Section 59(3) of the Health Act 1970 (as amended). The conditions covered by the LTI are: acute leukaemia; mental handicap; cerebral palsy; mental illness (in a person under 16); cystic fibrosis; multiple sclerosis; diabetes insipidus; muscular dystrophies; diabetes mellitus; parkinsonism; epilepsy; phenylketonuria; haemophilia; spina bifida; hydrocephalus; and conditions arising from the use of Thalidomide. Under the LTI Scheme, patients receive drugs, medicines, and medical and surgical appliances directly related to the treatment of their illness, free of charge.

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

Hospital Appointments Status

137. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) will

be considered for the SDU initiative for a hip replacement. [14586/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Treatment Benefit Scheme Administration

138. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to difficulties in relation to referring persons with Ehlers-Danlos syndrome for the treatment abroad scheme, as in the case of a person (details supplied); the steps being taken to rectify this problem; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14587/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Service Executive (HSE) operates a Treatment Abroad Scheme (TAS), for persons entitled to treatment in another EU/EEA Member State or Switzerland under EU Regulation 883/04, as per the procedures set out in EU Regulation 987/09, and in accordance with Department of Health Guidelines. Subject to the EU Regulations and Guidelines, the TAS provides for the cost of approved treatments in another EU/EEA member state or Switzerland through the issue of form E112 (IE) where the treatment is:

- Among the benefits provided for by Irish legislation,
- Not available in Ireland,
- Not available within the time normally necessary for obtaining it in Ireland, taking account of the patient's current state of health and the probable course of the disease.

All patients in conjunction with their Irish based public referring hospital consultant have the ability to apply to the HSE TAS seeking access to public healthcare outside the State. Each application to the HSE TAS is reviewed individually on its own merits and there are no restrictions on a person making an application to the HSE TAS for review and decision. Each application is for an individual episode of care unless otherwise specified by the consultant on the application form.

Applications to the TAS are processed and a determination given in accordance with the statutory framework prior to a patient travelling to avail of treatment. The presence of a rare illness, such as Ehlers Danlos Syndrome, is not of itself criteria for availing of treatment abroad: most rare diseases are treated without any need for recourse to services in other jurisdictions. It is not possible to give a "blanket" statement on applications to TAS for patients with a particular condition.

As the HSE is responsible for the administration of the TAS they have been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Services for People with Disabilities

139. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 572 of 28 February 2017, the specific date when a person (details supplied) in County Cork joined the waiting list for an assessment of need; the specific number the person is on the waiting list for the assessment of need; the specific number of children on that waiting list; when he expects the person to have the assessment of need; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14588/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government, which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

As the Deputy's questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for the questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Card Applications

140. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will receive a decision on their medical card application. [14589/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information was issued to Oireachtas members.

Medicinal Products Reimbursement

141. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the status of the ongoing negotiations between the HSE and manufacturers regarding the drug Savitex; if he will ensure that the drug will be made available to persons; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14590/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE has statutory responsibility for decisions on the reimbursement of approved products in Ireland and suppliers of such products must apply to the HSE for reimbursement approval.

I am advised that, following receipt of an application from the supplier for the inclusion of Sativex on the High Tech Scheme, the HSE assessed the medicine in line with their statutory responsibility. The HSE issued the manufacturers with notice of its intention not to reimburse. It is open to the supplier to make a new application for this product, in the context of the previous findings.

Motorised Transport Grant Closure

142. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health when a replacement will be announced for the motorised transport grant and mobility allowance; the reason a replacement has yet to be announced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14592/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): Conscious of the reports of the Ombudsman in 2011 and 2012 regarding the legal status of both the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant Scheme in the context of the Equal Status Acts, the Government decided to close both schemes in February 2013.

The Government is aware of the continuing needs of people with a disability who rely on individual payments that support choice and independence. In this regard, monthly payments of up to €208.50 have continued to be made by the Health Service Executive to 4,700 people who were in receipt of the Mobility Allowance.

The Government decided that the detailed preparatory work required for a new Transport Support Scheme and associated statutory provisions should be progressed by the Minister for Health. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the Programme for Partnership Government acknowledges the ongoing drafting of primary legislation for a new Transport Support Scheme. I can confirm that work on the policy proposals for the new Scheme is at an advanced stage and I anticipate that this will be brought to Government shortly. The proposals seek to ensure that:

- There is a firm statutory basis to the Scheme's operation;
- There is transparency and equity in the eligibility criteria attaching to the Scheme;
- Resources are targeted at those with greatest needs; and
- The Scheme is capable of being costed and is affordable on its introduction and on an ongoing basis.

The Deputy may be interested to note that people who previously benefitted from the now-closed Motorised Transport Grant, may, if they satisfy the criteria under that scheme, be eligible for tax relief under the Drivers and Passengers with Disabilities Tax Relief Scheme. This scheme is the responsibility of my colleague, the Minister for Finance and is operated by the Revenue Commissioners. Details of the scheme can be found on www.revenue.ie .

Mother and Baby Homes Inquiries

143. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health if, further to the recent and unfolding events of the former St. Mary's Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, County Galway and the Government's response to same, including the remarks made by the Taoiseach in Dáil Éireann in response to same, he will confirm that in the course of actions initiated on behalf of clients against the orders and the HSE the State will not rely upon the Statute of Limitations Act 1957 (as amended) in defending these actions nor cite inordinate or inexcusable delay on behalf

of persons bringing these actions as a reason for having same dismissed or struck out, and that the State through the HSE in defence of actions will reference only the substantive issues and will not be relying on the Statute of Limitations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14603/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The sad confirmation that human remains were found on the site of the former Mother and Baby Home in Tuam has disturbed everyone in this House and beyond. As the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs has made clear, the Government is committed to truth recovery and this, of course, is not the domain of any single political party but is owned by all.

In getting to the heart of the matter, we have the crucial ongoing work of the Commission of Investigation (Mother and Baby Homes and certain related Matters) which was established to provide a thorough and objective account of the experiences of women and children who lived in Mother and Baby Homes over the period 1922-1998.

The Deputy has asked about potential legal actions. It would not be appropriate for me to speculate on such matters, particularly as it relates to third parties.

Ambulance Service Staff

144. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding members of the ambulance service who were injured seriously in the line of duty and have been accommodated with their employment and in situations in which an arrangement has been put in place for lighter duties; the number of such instances in place in the health service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14604/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): As this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospital Appointments Status

145. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of a hospital appointment for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14610/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Hospital Staff

146. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the status of a position in a hospital (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14625/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Deputy's question relates to service

delivery matters and accordingly I have asked the HSE to respond directly to him.

Services for People with Disabilities

147. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the status of plans to secure a site for St. Michael's House in Skerries. [14629/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): Plans to secure a site for St Michael's House in Skerries falls under the aegis of the Department for Education and Skills . As such this is a matter for my colleague Richard Bruton, Minister for Education and Skills.

Health Services

148. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14630/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Respite Care Grant Eligibility

149. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE will pay for a respite care stay for a person (details supplied) due to exceptional circumstances; the detail of the rules regarding respite; if respite must relate to a discharge from hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14632/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Appointments Status

150. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if a date for an operation will be arranged as a matter of urgency in the case of a person (details supplied). [14642/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

European Health Insurance Card

151. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Health if an Irish citizen currently working in the UK can use their European health insurance card, EHIC, for medical treatment in the UK; if an Irish citizen's EHIC covers medicines post treatment here and in the UK; if the same criteria and rules will apply under the scheme post Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14660/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under EU Regulations, all persons ordinarily resident in the EU are entitled to apply for a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). The EHIC certifies that the holder has the right to receive emergency healthcare during a temporary stay in any EU country as well as Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Iceland. This right is guaranteed to all persons who are covered by the public healthcare system of these countries. The EHIC holder has the right to receive necessary treatment on the host Member State's public healthcare system on the same terms and at the same cost as nationals of the State concerned.

My Department is currently examining the potential consequences of the UK's decision to leave the EU for healthcare in Ireland and for Irish citizens.

Vaccination Programme

152. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the content of an anti-vaccine propaganda film (details supplied); and the steps his Department will take to counter any inaccurate information regarding vaccinations that feature in this film. [14689/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Immunisation is regarded as one of the safest and most cost-effective of health care interventions. The importance of immunisation is acknowledged by all the major international health organisations, particularly the World Health Organisation (WHO). The immunisation programmes in Ireland are based on the advice of the National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC). NIAC is a committee of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland comprising of experts in a number of specialties including infectious diseases, paediatrics and public health. The committee's recommendations are informed by public health advice and international best practice. The Health Products Regulatory Authority and the European Medicines Agency continually monitor adverse events to vaccination. All relevant and appropriate information is taken into account when deciding to make changes to the State's immunisation programmes.

It is important to counter misinformation in relation to the safety of vaccines, and to increase the uptake rates of all vaccines in the State's immunisation programmes. The safety of vaccines, as with all medicines, will continue to be carefully monitored and any future new evidence of side effects that becomes available will take into account. The benefits of vaccines significantly outweigh any known side effects.

Health Services Provision

153. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health his plans to provide services (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14700/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): As this is a service issue, this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Hospital Services

154. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the status of the proposed refurbishment works due to be carried out to Kanturk Community Hospital, Kanturk, County Cork; the expected timeframe for the completion of these works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14708/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Helen McEntee): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Appointments Status

155. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will have a medical procedure carried out. [14711/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Question No. 156 answered with Question No. 136.

Departmental Expenditure

157. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the details of any payments made by his Department, its agencies or any bodies under his aegis to any broadcasters here in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016; the broadcaster to which the funds were provided; the reason for the payments; and if there are any reasons for payments to broadcasters in 2017. [14725/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Where is it necessary for the Department to place advertisements, generally in relation to health promotion messages, they are done through a media or PR company rather than the broadcaster itself. However, I will survey the Department to ascertain if any payments were made to any broadcasters during the years in question and revert to you in due course.

I have also forwarded your question on to the HSE for direct reply. Details for other bodies under the aegis of the Department are operational matters for the bodies concerned and the Deputy should contact the relevant Director/CEO/Registrar directly.

Question No. 158 answered with Question No. 136.

Hospitals Funding

159. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the stretch targets for private income for each hospital in 2017; and if he will provide further details of these targets that were set for each of the past three years in each case. [14761/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The HSE assigns an income budget, including a private patient income budget, to each hospital as part of the annual budgetary process. The 2016 private patient income budget allocated to the acute hospital system was €649 million.

As regards the overall 2017 private patient income budget and the income budgets allocated to individuals hospitals for 2017 and each of the past three years, I have referred this matter to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Appointments Status

160. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the status of an operation for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14764/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2014*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

Cancer Services Funding

161. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 648 of 7 March 2017, if he will source some level of State funding towards the remuneration of a centre manager and full-time office administrator for a cancer support centre (details supplied) in County Galway in view of the fact that over 140 persons a week use the centre and a range of vital therapies and support is provided on an entirely voluntary basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14774/17]

162. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 649 of 7 March 2017, the reason a cancer support centre (details supplied) in County Galway did not receive funding under the National Lottery grant scheme despite the fact that a full-time service is run on an entirely voluntary basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14775/17]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): I propose to take Questions Nos. 161 and

162 together.

The Department of Health does not provide on-going funding to support centres to cover staff salaries.

The East Galway Cancer Support submitted an application for funding under the National Lottery grant scheme to the Department in 2014. Unfortunately, applications for National Lottery grants far exceed the available resources and the grant was not awarded on that occasion. My Department does not have a record of any other National Lottery grant scheme applications from East Galway and Midlands Cancer Support Centre.

GLAS Data

163. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons in each county that applied for green low carbon agri-environment scheme that have received or are awaiting payments, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14593/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the deputy is set out in the table.

-	GLAS 1	GLAS 1	GLAS 1	GLAS 2	GLAS 2	GLAS 2
County	Number	Number	Number of	Number	Number	Number of
	sent for	with PPV	Unpaid	sent for	with PPV	Unpaid
	Payment	Pass	Cases	Payment	Pass	Cases
Carlow	245	2	32	115	1	12
Cavan	813	16	84	403	2	27
Clare	1,453	26	142	646	2	43
Cork	1,833	40	297	894	4	116
Donegal	1,661	29	265	859	4	148
Dublin	50	1	12	14	1	2
Galway	2,581	52	471	1,099	13	201
Kerry	1,554	32	194	768	4	105
Kildare	213	4	34	69	2	11
Kilkenny	374	12	48	183	0	29
Laois	315	9	48	179	0	18
Leitrim	912	6	108	383	1	36
Limerick	913	14	129	275	0	27
Longford	466	5	46	328	0	21
Louth	120	1	28	73	0	7
Mayo	2,163	9	397	1,100	5	228
Meath	363	3	62	175	0	29
Monaghan	517	2	60	131	0	15
Offaly	422	3	51	248	1	31
Roscommon	1,361	20	154	507	1	46
Sligo	858	4	87	340	1	28
Tipperary	972	12	161	437	3	73

Waterford	289	4	71	106	1	25
Westmeath	586	4	64	243	2	19
Wexford	636	2	138	236	0	34
Wicklow	278	7	47	126	0	29
Totals	21,948	319	3,230	9,937	48	1,360

GLAS Payments

164. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will expedite a green low carbon agri-environment scheme payment for persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14599/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 1 with a contract commencement date of 1 October 2015.

During the 2016 prepayment checking process an issue presented on the computerised crosscheck of Department databases. Department officials are actively working to resolve this issue with a view to further processing the application for the 2016 payment as soon as possible.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Eligibility

165. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason the townlands of Culleenmore, Portnashangan, Ballinagall, part of Taughmon and any land around Mullingar to the north is always excluded when the disadvantaged area or areas of natural constraints scheme review is taking place within his Department. [14652/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Under the Rural Development Regulation each Member State must designate areas eligible for payments under the Areas of Natural Constraints (ANC) scheme. The ANC scheme replaces the previous Disadvantaged Areas Scheme / Less Favoured Areas Scheme. The designation of eligible areas under these schemes to date has been based on a range of socio-economic factors. From 2018 eligible areas must instead be designated using a set list of bio-physical criteria. In cases where a Member State does not introduce this new system for payment, the old scheme remains in place but payments must phase out on a digressive basis.

The biophysical criteria set out in the legislation to underpin the new system of designation are:

- Low temperature
- Dryness
- Excess soil moisture
- Limited soil drainage
- Unfavourable texture and stoniness
- Shallow rooting depth
- Poor chemical properties

- Steep slope.

My Department has commenced work on this project, and relevant technical experts are currently working on sourcing and analysing the data in relation to the new criteria. Department officials have also been in contact with the Joint Research Centre and DG Agri in the EU Commission in relation to technical issues arising.

Over the coming months this analysis will identify areas deemed to be facing natural constraints, which will in parallel be subjected to a refinement process. The categorisation of designations, such as hill/mountain areas, and linked payment levels will be examined based on the outcome of the technical work I have outlined. It is envisaged that stakeholders will be consulted as this process develops.

Question No. 166 withdrawn.

Departmental Investigations

167. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the investigations which have been undertaken by his Department regarding complaints made by a person (details supplied) relative to various matters concerning alleged fraud and contaminated milk; if correspondence sent to his Department regarding these matters had been processed; if the person has been informed of the outcome of any investigation or the status of their complaints; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14659/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): My Department received correspondence in 2012 from the named individual in which allegations were made against a certain company. At the time the Minister asked officials in the Investigations Division of my Department to examine the situation and meet with the person who submitted the correspondence.

Following their meeting, the investigating officers concluded that there was no evidence available to warrant an investigation under my Department's legislation and advised the complainant in writing of this view. They also advised the person alleging the offences that a number of allegations appear, of their nature, to involve matters for consideration by the Garda Síochána. My understanding is that the Garda Síochána were subsequently contacted.

I am satisfied that my Department examined the allegation to the fullest extent of its remit and that the complainant has been advised of the outcome.

GLAS Applications

168. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment under the GLAS scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; the reason for the delay in issuing this payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14663/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 1 with a contract commencement date of 1 October 2015.

During the 2016 prepayment checking process an issue presented on the computerised crosscheck of Department databases. Department officials are actively working to resolve this issue with a view to further processing the application for the 2016 payment as soon as possible.

GLAS Applications

169. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a GLAS payment will issue to a person (details supplied). [14693/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The person named was approved into GLAS 1 with a contract commencement date of 1 October 2015.

During the 2016 prepayment checking process an issue presented on the computerised crosscheck of Department databases. Department officials are actively working to resolve this issue with a view to further processing the application for the 2016 payment as soon as possible.

GLAS Appeals

170. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal (details supplied) made to his Department regarding the GLAS 1 scheme; when a decision will be expected on same; his Department's position on the particular circumstances in this case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14696/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Agriculture Appeals Office has confirmed that an appeal from the persons named was received on 10 March 2017. Correspondence issued to the persons named on 15 March to which a response is awaited. The file and a statement on the appeal were requested from my Department, on receipt of which the file will immediately be assigned to an Appeals Officer.

Food Labelling

171. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he is taking to establish an island of Ireland food label to address the issue of nomad cattle that have spend time in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and therefore cannot be labelled as origin Ireland or origin UK at present; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14697/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The labelling of food in the European Union is governed by a number of EU regulations which lay down strict requirements including in relation to mandatory country of origin labelling for certain meats.

Under EU rules, labels on meat from cattle born and reared in the Republic of Ireland and exported live to Northern Ireland and subsequently slaughtered there, must include the member state of birth and rearing, and the member state of slaughter.

It is possible to include a voluntary label, but this may not contradict mandatory origin labelling, nor does it obviate the requirement for mandatory labelling. The possibility of a voluntary all Island label has been previously raised with British retailers, who have made clear that they have a longstanding policy to market British and Irish beef separately, with a simple, clear origin label. This means that beef must be sourced from animals originating in one EU Member State i.e. born, reared and slaughtered in Ireland or in the United Kingdom, so that the label can simply indicate "Origin Ireland, or "Origin UK".

While voluntary labelling of this nature has been mooted as a mechanism to encourage a live export trade between the Republic and Northern Ireland, it must be noted that this trade is

determined by a range of factors, including the Sterling exchange rate and the supply of cattle in each market, retailer preferences and production cycles.

I met my counterpart from Northern Ireland, Michelle McIlveen MLA on many occasions to discuss issues of mutual interest and of course the north-south trade in cattle and beef has featured in these discussions. Needless to say the focus now is on minimising the effects of the UK's proposed withdrawal from the EU and on securing arrangements which are best suited to the development of our respective agrifood sectors.

Agriculture Scheme Eligibility

172. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to a report submitted by an organisation (details supplied) to the Directorate General for Competition in the European Commission with regard to the impact of the four movement rule for cattle as a requirement for a bonus payment under the quality payment system and whether this acts as a barrier to the free movement of goods, that is, cattle; if he has been requested for input from the EU Commission in relation to same; his plans to take action to address issues raised in the report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14698/17]

173. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his Department at any stage notified the European Commission of its decision, on the grounds of public policy and public health, to restrict the movement of cattle to a maximum of four movements in advance of slaughter; the reason for same; his views on whether this restriction is still necessary and proportionate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14699/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 172 and 173 together.

My Department has not introduced any restrictions on the movement of cattle in advance of slaughter.

A Quality Payment System (QPS) for the payment of bonuses in respect of certain categories of cattle at slaughter plants was introduced in 2009 by agreement between Meat Industry Ireland (MII) and the Irish Farmers Association (IFA). My understanding is that the conditions attached to qualification for this bonus payment include a limit on the number of movements of cattle in their lifetime prior to slaughter. This is a purely private arrangement between both parties and my Department has no role in its design or implementation.

I understand that the only report that my Department is aware of submitted by the named organisation, was sent to the Directorate General for Competition in the European Commission in 2014. I am not aware of any other report since then and I have not received any request for input from the EU Commission in relation to this report.

Harbours and Piers Funding

174. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an application for funding under the 2017 fishery harbour development scheme was submitted by a local authority for a pier (details supplied) in County Mayo; and if so, the reason his Department did not short-list this application for consideration. [14704/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Rinroe Pier is owned by Mayo County Council and responsibility for its maintenance and development rests with that local authority in the first instance.

My Department, however, provides funding for the development and repair of Local Authority owned piers, harbours and slipways under the annual Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme subject to available Exchequer funding and overall national priorities.

My Department did receive an application from Mayo County Council for a Davit Arm System on Rinroe Pier, under the 2017 Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme. Due to the level of demand, my Department is only considering funding for projects that were deemed high priority by the Local Authorities. The Rinroe project did not meet this criteria and did not meet other necessary criteria, therefore the project was not approved for funding in this round.

The terms and conditions of the Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme require that all projects meet necessary criteria to be deemed eligible for inclusion.

Applications submitted by Mayo County Council under future Local Authority capital programmes will be given consideration in the context of the criteria set out, available Exchequer funding and overall national priorities.

Departmental Expenditure

175. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the details of any payments made by his Department, its agencies or any bodies under his aegis, to any broadcasters here in the years 2014 to 2016, inclusive; the broadcaster to which the funds were provided; the reason for the payments; and if there are any reasons for payments to broadcasters in 2017. [14716/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Payments made by my Department during the period 2014 to 2016 to National TV and Radio broadcasters are outlined in the following table. These payments typically involve advertising Department schemes and services. The payments were made via MediaVest Ltd. who currently hold the central Government contract for the provision of the majority of our advertising needs. There were no payments to these organisations in the years 2014 and 2015.

Station	2016 Cost
RTE Radio 1	€14,268
Newstalk	€4,674

Regarding the agencies under my remit, the information requested is an operational matter for the State Bodies themselves and I will request the relevant agencies to forward the information directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

GLAS Data

176. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the total number of persons in receipt of GLAS 1 and GLAS 2 who have received 85% of their total 2016 payment, by county, in tabular form; the number of persons who have passed

all payment approval checks and are awaiting their 2016 payment; the total number of GLAS recipients who have yet to receive payment, by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14735/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the table.

-	GLAS 1	GLAS 1	GLAS 1	GLAS 2	GLAS 2	GLAS 2
County	Number	Number	Number of	Number	Number	Number of
	sent for	with PPV	Unpaid	sent for	with PPV	Unpaid
	Payment	Pass	Cases	Payment	Pass	Cases
Carlow	245	2	32	115	1	12
Cavan	813	16	84	403	2	27
Clare	1,453	26	142	646	2	43
Cork	1,833	40	297	894	4	116
Donegal	1,661	29	265	859	4	148
Dublin	50	1	12	14	1	2
Galway	2,581	52	471	1,099	13	201
Kerry	1,554	32	194	768	4	105
Kildare	213	4	34	69	2	11
Kilkenny	374	12	48	183	0	29
Laois	315	9	48	179	0	18
Leitrim	912	6	108	383	1	36
Limerick	913	14	129	275	0	27
Longford	466	5	46	328	0	21
Louth	120	1	28	73	0	7
Mayo	2,163	9	397	1,100	5	228
Meath	363	3	62	175	0	29
Monaghan	517	2	60	131	0	15
Offaly	422	3	51	248	1	31
Roscom- mon	1,361	20	154	507	1	46
Sligo	858	4	87	340	1	28
Tipperary	972	12	161	437	3	73
Waterford	289	4	71	106	1	25
Westmeath	586	4	64	243	2	19
Wexford	636	2	138	236	0	34
Wicklow	278	7	47	126	0	29
Totals	21,948	319	3,230	9,937	48	1,360

Written Answers Nos. 177-185

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Data

177. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the total number of persons that applied for AEOS that have received their total 2016 pay-

ment, by county, in tabular form; the number of persons that have passed all payment approval checks and are awaiting their 2016 payment; the total number of AEOS recipients that have yet to receive payment, by county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14736/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): AEOS II participants completed their 5-year contracts on 31 December 2016. Under the EU Regulations governing this Scheme and all other area-based payment schemes, a full check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System must take place before payment can issue. As all AEOS II participants will be receiving their final payments under the scheme, re-checks on payments made for all scheme years must be completed before final payment can be processed. All cases cleared for payment are paid on a weekly basis.

AEOS Table

County	Totals	Paid	Awaiting Payment
Carlow	49	41	8
Cavan	244	198	46
Clare	556	469	87
Cork	428	337	91
Donegal	1360	1133	227
Dublin	9	9	0
Galway	1245	1026	219
Kerry	568	467	101
Kildare	39	29	10
Kilkenny	109	80	29
Laois	80	55	25
Leitrim	430	366	64
Limerick	224	172	52
Longford	89	70	19
Louth	41	30	11
Mayo	1399	1155	244
Meath	83	68	15
Monaghan	151	108	43
Offaly	110	86	24
Roscommon	478	401	77
Sligo	335	285	50
Tipperary	245	173	72
Waterford	82	69	13
Westmeath	122	89	33
Wexford	84	51	33
Wicklow	80	63	17
Totals	8640	7030	1610

Live Exports

178. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the total number of cattle over three months of age exported in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14737/17]

179. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the total number of cattle under three months of age exported in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14738/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): I propose to take Questions Nos. 178 and 179 together.

Data from my Department's Animal Identification and Movement (AIM) system show that last year a total of 145,570 head of live cattle were exported from Ireland. Of these, 72,740 were aged below three months, and 72,830 were aged three months or older.

The continental market for young calves has traditionally been important for dairy farmers, providing an important source of income and underpinning the market for such stock. Thus far, 2017 has been positive in terms of live exports with strong sales of calves, particularly to the Netherlands and Spain, seeing overall live exports up by 10,689 head, or 35%, compared to last year.

Live Exports

180. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the total number of pigs exported in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14739/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The total number of live pigs exported from Ireland in 2016 was 492,129, down 23% on the previous year.

The majority of live pig exports are destined for slaughter in Northern Ireland, which provides a useful alternative outlet for pigmeat processing.

There is also a small proportion of cross border trade in pure bred breeding swine to Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Live Exports

181. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the total number of sheep exported in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14740/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The intra EU and importation of animals is recorded on the European Commissions Trade Control and Expert System (TRACES). Data from the TRACES system shows that in 2016, Ireland exported 46,189 sheep in total. 30,630 of these animals went for fattening, 15,420 went direct for slaughter and a total of 139 were exported for breeding. Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands were the main destinations. This represents an increase of approximately 45% on 2015, with the value of live exports rising to approximately €7 million.

Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme

182. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on whether grazing infrastructure should be included under the TAMS II scheme;

and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14741/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): There are no plans currently to extend the list of investments available in the TAMS II Scheme to include grazing infrastructure investments.

Sheep fencing is already included as an investment item.

Food Safety Standards

183. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps being taken to protect European consumers on foot of reports of Brazilian beef exports containing contaminated meat; the contingencies in place to ensure any such meat does not enter the EU food chain; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14742/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Brazilian police announced on 17 March that, after a two-year probe, they had discovered evidence that a number of beef and poultry plants allegedly bribed inspectors to overlook improper practices. This facilitated the export of meat unfit for human consumption. 21 Brazilian establishments are concerned. Most of them produce for the domestic market and only 4 of them are approved for meat export to the EU.

My Department is closely monitoring this case through our Embassy in Brasilia who are in direct contact with the Brazilian authorities, and through the European Commission.

As soon as the story broke on Friday, the European Commission asked for clarification from the Brazilian authorities. It is the Commission which approves the Third Countries for export of meat into the EU on behalf of MS.

On 19 March the Brazilian authorities (MAPA) confirmed that they had been informed of the Federal Police Operation on 17 March. Based on information received, they suspended certification from the 4 establishments under investigation that were approved for export to the EU.

On 20 March the Commission requested full information on all exports to the EU from the 4 establishments since 1 January 2017, and asked the Brazilian authorities to recall any consignments in transit. The Commission also suggested the suspension of certification from all other establishments approved for export to the EU, pending the outcome of a full investigation.

On 21 March I wrote to Commissioner Andriukaitis, supporting the suggestion to suspend certification from all other establishments approved for export to the EU.

Food safety is a shared responsibility between national and EU authorities. Food business operators in the EU also carry out their own quality and safety checks in line with their responsibilities to ensure that their products are safe.

My Department is in charge of carrying out controls on imports (at Border Inspection Posts – BIPs). The EU imposes strict hygiene and safety controls on food imports, and in particular on animal products for which documentary, identity and physical checks are compulsory for meat products imports. These are implemented here in Ireland by veterinary staff from my Department at the Border Inspection Posts.

The checks on all Brazilian product are now being intensified in light of current developments.

Beef Imports

184. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the annual volume of Brazilian beef imported into the EU over the 2014 to 2016 period based on latest data; the total amount of Brazilian beef imported into the EU as a percentage of total beef consumed in the EU in this period; the current annual quota of Brazilian beef permitted into the EU; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14743/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Using the latest data available from the European Commission, Brazil exported a total of 421,530 tonnes of beef into the EU during the 2014 to 2016 period. Broken down by year, imports of beef from Brazil were 144,259 tonnes in 2014, 136,705 tonnes in 2015 and 140,566 tonnes in 2016. During this same period of 2014 to 2016, the EU as a whole consumed a total 23.5 million tonnes of beef, therefore 1.8% of the total consumed came from Brazil.

Under the “Hilton Quota” which is the informal name given to the country-specific at preferential tariff rate quota regulated by Commission Regulation (EC) No 936/97 of 27 May 1997 for the European Union, Brazil is currently allowed to import 10,000 tonnes of beef per annum tariff free.

Beef Imports

185. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the annual volume of Brazilian beef imported here over the 2014 to 2016 period based on latest data; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14744/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The annual volume of beef imported into Ireland from Brazil is relatively modest. In 2014, 116 tonnes, valued at €578,000, was imported into Ireland. In 2015 these import volumes fell to 70 tonnes, at a value of €377,000. A more substantial reduction in 2016 has brought this figure down to 22 tonnes, or €98,000 in value terms. This information is based on the latest available CSO statistics.

TAMS Eligibility

186. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason the new tillage TAMS scheme sets down criteria that persons must have a minimum of 15 hectares of eligible crops declared under the basic payment scheme or equivalent in the year of application or previous year; if this will prevent small tillage farmers from joining the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14745/17]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The new Tillage Scheme is targeted at farmers who have tillage as their main enterprise in order to ensure the best allocation of resources.

The investments available under the remaining TAMS II suite of measures cater for those farmers who do not meet the 15 hectare eligibility criteria but have other enterprises (e.g. dairy, beef, sheep enterprises) on their farms as well as tillage.

Waste Management Regulations

187. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the obligations refuse companies have regarding collection, segregation and disposal of glass waste from domestic customers; if such companies are required to provide a separate bin service for the collection of glass bottles; the regulation in place or planned to manage this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14685/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): There is no obligation on collectors of household waste under waste management legislation to provide a separate bin service for the collection of glass bottles. In terms of the recycling of glass, recent data (links provided below) indicate that we are at or above an 80% recycling level. There are over 2,200 bring banks and 100 recycling centres across the country, which support these relatively high recycling levels for glass.

www.repak.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Repak_AR_final_for-web1.pdf.

www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/waste/stats/EPA_Progress%20towards%20EU%20targets_Jan17_web.pdf.

Broadcasting Sector Regulation

188. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the way in which his Department monitors any broadcaster's statutory spend requirements; the way in which he assures himself the accounting cost is confined to the year of broadcast; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14575/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The only such statutory expenditure requirement in relation to the public service broadcasters arises under Section 116 of the Broadcasting Act 2009, which obliges RTÉ to spend a predetermined minimum amount every year on independently produced television and radio programmes. This amount is lodged to the Independent Programmes Account, upon which RTÉ must report annually. RTÉ's adherence to the requirements of the Act is verified by independent accountants as part of this report, which must be submitted within three months of the end of each financial year.

RTÉ adheres to formal and clear procedures for sourcing and commissioning independently produced television and radio programmes. These procedures are available to independent producers on the RTÉ website and RTÉ's compliance with them is also verified by the independent accountants as part of the report each year.

In regard to the accounting methodology applied to RTÉ's expenditure on commissioned programming, RTÉ's Annual Report and Group Financial Statements are prepared in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). Under IFRS, RTÉ records the cost of transmitted commissioned programmes rather than the expenditure incurred on commissioning activities. The RTÉ Annual Report records the level of programme inventories held – that is programmes made and for which costs have been incurred during the period, but which have not been transmitted at the period end. A full reconciliation is provided within the Independent Productions Annual Report.

In line with the Act, both the Independent Productions Report and the RTÉ Annual Report and Group Financial Statements are published and laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas.

Departmental Expenditure

189. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the details of any payments made by his Department, its agencies or any bodies under his aegis to any broadcasters here in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016; the broadcaster to which the funds were provided; the reason for the payments; and if there is any reason for payments to broadcasters in 2017. [14719/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): The information requested in relation to my Department is being complied and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

The information regarding the agencies under the aegis of my Department is an operational matter for each Agency. I will request the relevant bodies to reply directly to the Deputy with the information requested in respect of their organisation.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

190. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his views on the fact Ireland is only one of two EU member states that will miss the targets for emission reduction for 2020 with regard to the recently published national mitigation plan; the proposed alternatives that will replace the phasing out of coal and peat-fired electricity generation that are absent from the report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14758/17]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten): I refer to the replies to Question Nos. 34, 41 and 71 on 21 March.

According to the latest projections produced by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (March 2016), projected emissions for 2020 indicate that Ireland's emissions at that stage could be in the range of 6-11% below 2005 levels. The likely outcome is closer to 6%, representing a significant shortfall in terms of reaching the 20% reduction in 2020. This reflects both Ireland's reduced investment capacity over the period of the economic downturn, as well as the fact that the target itself was misinformed and not consistent with what was achievable on an EU wide cost-effective basis.

Notwithstanding this, a key objective of the first statutory National Mitigation Plan is to try and close the gap to Ireland's 2020 EU target. In this context, the Plan sets out the mitigating measures currently in place and also a range of mitigating measures under consideration. It is important to note that the first National Mitigation Plan represents an initial step to set us on a pathway to achieve the level of decarbonisation required by 2050. It does not provide a complete roadmap to achieve the 2050 objective, but rather is a work in progress reflecting the reality of where we are in our decarbonisation transition. When finalised, the Plan will become a living document, accessible on my Department's website, which is continually updated as ongoing analysis, dialogue and technological innovation generate more and more cost-effective sectoral mitigation options. In addition, there will be the formal preparation of successive National Mitigation Plans at least once every five years as provided for in the 2015 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act.

In the context of the development of renewable electricity generation, the White Paper on Energy Policy, "Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030" (December 2015), is a key policy driver in our low carbon transition and in the development of appropriate mitigating measures to achieve that transition.

The overarching objective of the Energy White Paper, published in December 2015, is to

transition to a low carbon energy system which provides secure supplies of competitive and affordable energy to citizens and businesses. This will involve moving away from higher emissions fuel types to lower emissions fuels such as gas, or zero carbon renewable energy technologies. Public Service Obligation (PSO) support for Bord na Móna's Edenderry peat-fired generation station expired in December 2015. PSO support for the ESB owned West Offaly and Lough Ree power stations will expire in 2019. The Edenderry power station is now in receipt of support for biomass co-firing via REFIT3 for up to 30% of the size of the plant. In addition, Bord na Móna has stated that it intends to cease harvesting peat for electricity generation by 2030. The company has committed to replace large-scale peat production with alternative energy sources. This will contribute to the decarbonisation of electricity generation and is in line with the Energy White Paper.

Moneypoint generation plant contributes to Ireland's security of supply by diversifying the fuel mix, provides generation storage capacity and provides competitively priced electricity. However, while Moneypoint is an important element of our power generation mix, before it comes to the end of its operating life in its current configuration in 2025, the most suitable low-carbon generation technology will have to be identified as committed to in the Programme for a Partnership Government. Key decisions on the future of Moneypoint will be taken before 2020, and this is included as mitigating option under consideration (RE8) in the draft National Mitigation Plan.

Rural Transport Programme Funding

191. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the cost of increasing the rural transport programme funding by 5%. [14611/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I refer the Deputy to my answer of 09 March 2017 to her Question (ref no 12495/17, Proof 200). The position remains the same.

Rural Transport Programme

192. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the National Transport Authority has identified areas, be they counties, towns or rural areas, that are not covered by the rural transport programme. [14612/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): My Department provides funding for the Rural Transport Programme (RTP) to the National Transport Authority (NTA) which has national responsibility for integrated local and rural transport, including management of the RTP.

In light of the NTA's responsibilities in this matter, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

Greenways Development

193. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation provided each year since 2011 for the identification and development of greenway projects. [14613/17]

194. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the greenway projects that have been developed by his Department since 2011. [14614/17]

195. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the allocation provided, each year since 2011, for the development and maintenance of cycle lanes and cycle tracks. [14615/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): I propose to take Questions Nos. 193 to 195, inclusive, together.

While there was no dedicated funding stream in place in 2011 for the development of greenways €10 million was allocated by my Department under the Special Jobs Initiative Programme to County Councils for the improvement of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and other sustainable transport measures in towns and rural areas outside the Greater Dublin Area (GDA). A small number of projects delivered under this programme could be classed as greenways and are included in the attached table.

Under the National Cycle Network (NCN) Funding Programme approximately €23.5 million was allocated over the period 2012 to 2016 to advance cycle routes that provided valuable transport and recreational infrastructure, with the added potential to enhance tourist activity for the areas concerned. This includes €10 million allocated under the Government Stimulus package 2014.

The first tranche for the years 2012/2013 funded fifteen cycling projects across the country with €7 million in funding provided. Under the second tranche for the years 2014-2016, a further three projects shared in funding of €6.3 million. Of these three projects only one (in Waterford) has been completed. In May 2014, a €10 million investment package for greenway development was announced by Government as part of the €200 million national stimulus package. Eleven cycling projects were selected to share in this funding and eight of these projects have now been completed.

In July 2016, €3.5 million was reallocated from the second tranche of NCN funding to projects in Kildare, Meath, Westmeath and Longford as two of the original projects selected (Kerry and Galway) were not in a position to draw down their full allocation for 2016.

It is a condition of any funding award that local authorities are responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the infrastructure once the project has been completed.

Separately, under the Sustainable Transport Measures Grants (STMG) Programme, my Department provides funding to the National Transport Authority (NTA) for the seven local authorities in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) for the implementation of sustainable transport measures which includes cycling and walking infrastructure. The NTA also manages a similar sustainable transport grants programme - the Regional Cities Programme - in the four regional cities of Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford. I have forwarded your request to the NTA for consideration and response to you within 10 working days in relation to greenway projects funded. If you have not received a response within 10 working days please contact my office.

Greenway/Cycling projects funded			
All projects completed unless otherwise stated			
Projects 2011			
Year	Local Authority	Project	Status
	Limerick	Great Southern Trail extension	
	Longford Town	Royal canal cycle and walkway	
	Westmeath	Mullingar cycle network extension - Ballinagh to Shandonagh	
	Waterford	The Track walking and cycling route	
	Leitrim	Shannon Erne cycle/walkway	
	Limerick	Nenagh Loop cycle/walkway	
National Cycle Network Funding Programme 2012-2013 - Projects funded			
2012	Carlow/Kilkenny	44.5km cycleway linking Carlow to Paulstown to Kilkenny.	
	Clare	4km cycleway linking Ennistymon to Lahinch	
	Donegal	195.5km cycle route between Donegal Town and Newtowncunningham	
	Fingal	3km cycle link from Ashtown to Blanchardstown	
	Kerry	1.2km extension to existing cycle/pedestrian route from Killarney to Fossa	
	Limerick	3km extension to the Great Southern Trail (GST) from Abbeyfeale Town to Rathoran.	

Questions - Written Answers

Greenway/Cycling projects funded			
All projects completed unless otherwise stated			
Projects 2011			
Year	Local Authority	Project	Status
	Louth	6.3km greenway from Omeath and Carlingford	
	Mayo	8.8km greenway from Castlebar to Turlough Park	
	Meath	3km cycle/walkway from Drogheda Ramparts to the Oldbridge Estate entrance.	
	Monaghan	4.5km cycle route through Monaghan Town	
	North Tipperary	2.8km extension to the existing N52 walkway/cycleway	
	Offaly	16.8km of dedicated cycle lanes along the R420 from Tullamore to Moate	
	Roscommon	20km of dedicated cycle lanes along the former N6 between Athlone and Ballinasloe (funding withdrawn due to inability to deliver project)	
	Waterford City	3.2km cycleway between Tramore and Waterford City	
	Waterford Co	6.4km cycleway between the City Outer Ring Road to Tramore	
	Westmeath	11.3km upgrading of canal tow path from Boardstown Bridge to county Boundary	

Greenway/Cycling projects funded			
All projects completed unless otherwise stated			
Projects 2011			
Year	Local Authority	Project	Status
*Outside of the NCN Programme Kerry Co Council received funding of €200,000 in 2012, approved in 2010, to complete the Tralee/Spa/Fenit 1.8km cycleway.			
National Cycle Network Funding Programme 2014-2016 - Projects funded			
2014	Kerry	Phases 2 & 3 of the Glenbeigh to Reenard Trail from Glenbeigh to Cahirciveen (26km)	ongoing
	Galway	Galway to Moycullen Greenway (12.4km)	ongoing
	Waterford	Clonea to Durrow Greenway (7.2km) (completed)	
Reallocation of NCN Funding from current programme - July, 2016			
2014	Kildare	Kildare section of Dublin to Galway Greenway	ongoing
	Meath	Meath section of Dublin to Galway Greenway	ongoing
	Longford	Abbeyshrule to Longford Bridge, Ballymahon (15.2km) (extension to Mullingar to Abbeyshrule Greenway)	

Questions - Written Answers

Greenway/Cycling projects funded			
All projects completed unless otherwise stated			
Projects 2011			
Year	Local Authority	Project	Status
	Westmeath	Garrycastle to White Gates (2.2km) (extension to the Mullingar to Athlone Greenway)	
Stimulus Funding 2014 - Projects funded			
2014	Clare	Phase 1 of the West Clare greenway from Ennis to Ballymacquiggan (5km)	
	Kerry	Phase 1 of the Glenbeigh to Reenard Trail from Cahirciveen to Reenard Point (Fertha Greenway) (5.7km)	ongoing
	Kerry	Tralee Fenit Trail - Phase 1 Rock Street to Casement Station (.42km)	
	Kildare	Arthur's Way Greenway - Leixlip to Oughterard via Celbridge/Castletown (25km)	
	Limerick	Patrickswell to Limerick City cycleway (4.14km) #	
	Mayo	Monasteries of the Moy (14km) - part funding of overall project	
	Roscommon	Boyle to Lough Key Forest Park (24km) - part funding of overall project	ongoing
	Tipperary	Clonmel to Carrickon-Suir Greenway (20km)	ongoing

Greenway/Cycling projects funded			
All projects completed unless otherwise stated			
Projects 2011			
Year	Local Authority	Project	Status
	Waterford	Kilmeaden to Bilberry Greenway (20km)	
	Westmeath	Athlone to Mullingar Greenway (40km)#	
	Westmeath	Coolnahay to the County Boundary (14.4)#	
#additional funding awarded to Kildare (104k); Limerick (155k); and Westmeath (3.2m)			

Road Tolls

196. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the detail of the road tolls currently located on slip roads. [14620/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy in relation to roads. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects on national roads are a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (formerly known as the NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the relevant local authority. More specifically, the statutory powers to levy tolls on national roads, to make toll bye-laws and to enter into toll agreements with private investors are vested in TII under Part V of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended by the Planning and Development Act 2000 and the Roads Act 2007).

Noting the above position, I have referred the matter for national roads to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Public Service Vehicles

197. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of public service vehicles which are currently wheelchair accessible; and the percentage of the entire fleet that number represents. [14621/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As part of the public transport investment programme, my Department provides funding to the National Transport Authority (NTA) for a rolling programme of bus replacement and refurbishment of the PSO fleet and a grant scheme to increase the number of wheelchair accessible taxis and hackneys in the small public service vehicle (SPSV) fleet. This has enabled 100% of the Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann city fleets to be wheelchair accessible, as well as approximately 80% of the Bus

Éireann coach fleet and this will increase as the coach fleet is replaced. The number of wheelchair accessible taxis and hackneys currently stands at 1,263 which represents over 6% of the total SPSV fleet. As regards commercial bus operators, the NTA is the regulator of licensed bus services and all commercial operators must apply for a licence under the Public Transport Regulation Act 2009. The NTA does not currently require commercial bus operators to use wheelchair accessible vehicles in order to qualify for a licence for the provision of public bus services.

In light of the NTA's responsibility in this area, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for a more detailed reply on the number of wheelchair accessible public service vehicles. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Departmental Expenditure

198. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the details of any payments made by his Department, its agencies or any bodies under his aegis to any broadcasters here in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016; the broadcaster to which the funds were provided; the reason for the payments; and if there are any reasons for payments to broadcasters in 2017. [14730/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): Details of payments made to external service providers are published by my Department and are available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.dttas.ie/corporate/english/expenditure-external-services-2015>.

Bus Éireann Services

199. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will ensure that there will be no reduction in bus services by Bus Éireann in areas such as counties Cavan and Monaghan which have no rail services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14762/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): As the Deputy is aware, bus services in counties Cavan and Monaghan, and indeed rural Ireland generally, comprise two distinct types of services. There are PSO services, which are socially necessary but financially unviable services, provided by operators under contract with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and which receive taxpayer funding. And then there are commercial bus services, which are commercial services provided by operators under licence from the NTA and which receive no taxpayer funding.

Counties Cavan and Monaghan are served by both types of bus services.

The PSO network in the counties comprises approximately 17 routes operated primarily by Bus Éireann but also one PSO route operated by Whartons Travel Limited. The Deputy will be aware that funding for PSO services has increased in recent Budgets with Budget 2017 providing an additional 11% in taxpayer funding for the PSO programme generally. PSO services generally are improving and expanding as reflected in the strong passenger growth figures recorded for 2016 when almost 32 million passenger journeys were made on Bus Éireann PSO network nationwide, which represented a 5.5% increase as compared with 2015's figures.

Commercial bus services in the counties are provided by a mix of private operators and

also Expressway, which is operated by Bus Éireann. Bus Éireann has recently announced its intention to withdraw one of its three Expressway routes in the region, namely route 33 Dublin/Derry.

As I have stated on numerous occasions, in cases where a commercial operator, such as Expressway, decides to alter or withdraw a route, the National Transport Authority (NTA) has the statutory powers available to it to respond as appropriate to ensure continued transport connectivity. In response to Bus Éireann's recent announcement, the NTA published an assessment of the proposed changes and indicated what action it believes is necessary to ensure continued public transport connectivity. As indicated in that published assessment, the NTA does not believe that connectivity issues arise on the route 33 corridor following the proposed withdrawal of Expressway's route 33. In publishing its assessment the NTA has invited feedback on its proposals. A copy of their assessment is available on www.nationaltransport.ie.

Taxi Regulations

200. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding taxis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14763/17]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The regulation of the small public service vehicle industry, including issues pertaining to vehicle standards, is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the provisions of the Taxi Regulation Act 2013. I have therefore referred your question to the NTA for direct reply to you. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.

Proposed Legislation

201. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation when the Companies (Accounting) Bill 2016 will be enacted; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14583/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): The Companies (Accounting) Bill 2016 completed Report and Final Stages in Dáil Éireann on the 22nd March 2017. Second Stage in Seanad Éireann is scheduled for the 4th April. The timing of enactment thereafter will depend on the availability of parliamentary time.

In light of the benefits for many companies provided for in the Bill, it remains a legislative priority for the Government.

Brexit Issues

202. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the degree to which her Department continues to make contact with prospective investors inside and outside the European Union with a view to ensuring a strong and vibrant economy after Brexit with particular reference to the need to establish alternative investment and markets; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14671/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): In our collective efforts to address the challenges posed by Brexit, we should not overlook what-

ever opportunities may emerge for Ireland on account of the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

One such opportunity is the possibility for attracting increased foreign direct investment – particularly from the Financial Services sector. That is why I have directed IDA Ireland to explore the potential for winning more FDI on account of Brexit and the Agency and its staff are already working hard with this goal in mind.

In our efforts to win more FDI, we can continue to rely on the selling points that make investing in Ireland so attractive in the first place. Ireland will also, of course, be remaining as a member of the EU and Eurozone.

All of this means Ireland will remain an appealing destination for overseas investors in both the pre and post Brexit context.

Our challenge is to make sure these messages are communicated to the international business audience. It is for this reason that additional funding was provided to the IDA to strengthen its communication capacity.

These additional resources will help the Agency target key markets and hopefully secure investment that will lead to future jobs and opportunities for the people of this country.

IDA has also been provided with additional Capital supports for 2017 which will be used to provide grant assistance to FDI companies seeking to expand or to locate here and to support the IDA regional property programme.

IDAs enhanced property capacity is also important to retain and grow the existing client base in Ireland. In 2017, the IDA will further progress its Regional Property portfolio by investing in 3 new Advance facilities in:

- Galway;
- Limerick; and
- Dundalk.

IDA believes there are potential FDI opportunities for Ireland from BREXIT. These opportunities are likely to be found along differing timelines, partially influenced by sector. The potential sources of FDI are likely to come from:

- existing IDA Clients with a presence in Ireland who also have a presence in the UK;
- overseas clients (US, European and Asian) who have a presence in the UK but not in Ireland;
- UK companies operating in the UK who now need certain access to the European Market; and
- International clients without a presence in Europe seeking a European home.

Looking at the opportunities for our indigenous enterprises, Enterprise Ireland's strategy for the period 2017-2020 developed following the UK vote to leave the EU focuses on:

- Consolidating and growing exports into the UK market
- Expanding the Irish export global footprint, re-orienting towards N America, Canada, Asia and the Middle-East

- Expanding the EI Export Platform

I have previously announced 39 extra staff for EI's overseas offices and in the Irish based team to support exporting companies in the context of Brexit. Staff will be assigned to:

- Markets that are growing and have scale (including China, India, Latin America, Africa);
- Markets where we are already well established but with potential for further growth (including UK, France, Benelux, Germany, USA, the Nordics).

There is immediate potential to diversify exports to third markets. Last year sales to North America grew by 27%, Northern Europe by 8% and Asia-Pacific region by 11%.

In line with the recently published Trade & Investment Strategy, EI will undertake an enhanced programme of trade and investment missions and other trade promotional events in 2017. These are all at the planning stage at the moment, but will cover various sector specific markets in the US, Canada, United Arab Emirates, Spain, China, Australia, France, Germany, Nordics, to name but a few.

The UK is and will remain a key market for EI clients who recorded over €7.5bn in exports last year. EI will continue to actively help exporters deepen and strengthen their presence there by helping them become as competitive and innovative as possible.

Job Creation

203. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which her Department continues to encourage and avail of job creation opportunities based on innovation and technology; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14672/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): My Department recognises the key role that innovation has played in Ireland's economic recovery to date. It contributes significantly to job creation, exports and investment, and the competitiveness of the indigenous enterprise base, and also to embedding the foreign direct investment base in Ireland.

It is clear that a strong interdependence exists therefore between science, technology and innovation policy and enterprise policy. My Department has developed its Innovation 2020 strategy for Research and Development, Science and Technology and its Enterprise 2025 policy side by side. A critical objective for my Department is delivering on the actions and commitments set out in Innovation 2020.

A report published by my Department in October 2016, Economic and Enterprise Impacts from Public Investment in R and D in Ireland, focuses on the public R and D investments that are aimed at achieving enterprise impacts. These relate to investments by this Department, through Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland, and also through the Irish Research Council and the Higher Education Authority.

This study has shown that investment in R and D translates into improved job creation and enterprise performance. Among the findings are:

- Firms that invested in R and D grew employment by 14% between 2000 and 2014 while those that did not invest in R and D saw employment decline by 40%
- Similarly, R and D performing companies grew exports by 181% between 2003 and 2014

compared to a loss of 42% in exports for non-R and D performing companies over the same period

- R and D activity was identified as being one characteristic of Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland client firms that has driven growth in sales and exports since 2003. During the recession these firms exhibited greater resilience than non-R and D active firms and have increased their contributions to sales, exports and employment

- For Enterprise Ireland client firms funded through its R and D scheme, there was an 8% growth in net employment (22,003 jobs to 23,739 jobs) between 2002 and 2012. In comparison there was a 6.2% decline in employment in the total Enterprise Ireland client base over the 2002 to 2012 period (131,144 jobs to 119,935 jobs).

Enterprise Ireland (EI) has played a particularly important role in supporting job creation in Ireland. Between 2014 and 2016 employment in EI backed companies reached 200,000. In its new strategy 2017 - 2020, Building Scale, Expanding Reach, EI is aiming to increase this further with a new target to create an additional 60,000 new jobs by 2020.

Enterprise Ireland's Strategy for 2017 – 2020 also aims to drive innovation in Irish enterprise to unprecedented levels through new supports to reach the target of €1.25bn in R and D expenditure by its client companies per annum by 2020.

In addition, Enterprise Ireland operates a range of supports to help companies engage with third level researchers to undertake collaborative research for the benefit of companies. Again, evidence shows that R and D active firms who collaborate with the Higher Education sector do significantly better in terms of job creation and exports than those that do not collaborate. Through supports such as Innovation Vouchers; Innovation Partnerships, and its network of Technology Centres and Gateways, Enterprise Ireland is striving to ensure optimum industry collaboration with our Higher Education sector. In 2016 alone, a record number of 1,036 collaborative projects were supported by EI.

A major aspect of Enterprise Ireland's work is to extract maximum value from Ireland's investment in the research system – the objective is to secure commercial purpose, leading to jobs and sales by transferring technologies and ideas developed in Irish research institutions out into firms.

EI will continue funding its critical existing innovation supports while also developing a number of new supports which include:

- A new programme for Business Innovation to drive innovation beyond selling products based on technical innovations providing more customer focussed process and service solutions;

- A Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Initiative, a mechanism which enables public sector bodies to connect with innovative ideas and technologies and aimed at providing novel solutions for specific public sector challenges and needs.

- New initiatives to equip graduates and researchers in the higher education system with the key skills required by the enterprise base;

IDA Ireland's main objective is to encourage investment into Ireland by foreign-owned companies. The Agency reported a second, consecutive record year in 2016. 199,877 people are now employed in IDA Ireland supported client companies, up from 188,035 in 2015. This is the highest level of employment in the Agency's history.

The area of research, development and innovation (RDI) is of strategic importance to IDA Ireland. A company decision to invest in RDI may be to support improvement in productivity; to develop a strengthened reputation for quality or to develop new products and services.

IDA Ireland's strategy Winning FDI 2015-2019 outlines a plan to support clients in creating 80,000 new jobs and increase employment in the client portfolio to 209,000 by 2019. Support for RDI will be key to achieving these targets. Research, development and innovation investments not only embed existing FDI operations and employment but pave the way for future investment, job creation and export growth. As the global battle for FDI intensifies, our investment in research and development will become even more critical to attracting and retaining FDI companies.

The increase in RDI investment since 2000 has improved our attractiveness as an FDI location. 60% (just under €60m in 2015) of IDA's total grant-aid budget is allocated to RDI projects each year. This investment leverages RDI expenditure of €600m by IDA clients for these approved projects and an overall annual spend by IDA supported companies of €1.53bn per annum on RDI. This has the effect of anchoring FDI clients and securing sustainable employment and related benefits to the Irish economy.

The National Support System for Horizon 2020, the EU Framework Programme for research and innovation, is coordinated by Enterprise Ireland. Horizon 2020 is part of the drive to create new growth and jobs in Europe, has a budget of almost €75 billion and runs over the period 2014-2020. Irish companies that compete successfully for funding from Horizon 2020 will boost their innovative capability and competitiveness which in turn will deliver strong national economic impacts, including job creation.

Demand for the Framework Programme from Irish companies has been high. In the first 33 months Ireland's draw down was €336.6 million, placing Ireland on target to meet its goal of securing €1.25bn from Horizon 2020 by 2020. Of this funding, over €104 million went to companies and €73.6 million of this went to SMEs. Ireland has the highest success rate in Europe for the Horizon 2020 SME Instrument with a 16% success rate, compared to a European average of 6%. Innovative Irish SMEs have secured €26.5 million.

70% of the Horizon 2020 budget (€52 billion) is to be allocated between 2017 and 2020, which gives Irish companies the opportunity to continue availing of these supports.

The recent national ex-post evaluation of the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7) estimated that the European Commission contribution of €625M to Ireland from 2007 to 2013 would lead to an estimated 2,000 jobs created per year. It is expected that such figures will grow considerably in the context of Ireland's current target to double participation in the period 2014-2020.

My Department is currently analysing more recent data in relation to Horizon 2020 and will publish updated results in due course.

Foreign Direct Investment

204. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which she and her Department continue to compete for foreign direct investment with particular reference to job relocation arising from Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14673/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): My

responsibility, as Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, is on ensuring that Ireland as a whole is best placed to capitalise on whatever foreign direct investment (FDI) opportunities may emerge on account of Brexit. That is why I secured significant additional funding for IDA Ireland to help the Agency better respond to the challenges and opportunities Brexit may present for each and every county of Ireland. I also regularly engage with the IDA about its Brexit-related requirements and other issues in connection with securing new investment for Ireland.

Our focus now is converting the interest shown to date by new investors into new projects here. Both the IDA and the Government will continue to work hard with that goal in mind. The IDA has also recently launched a new global communications campaign, called “Right Place, Right Time”, which will help target decision-makers in key locations.

While I am confident about the potential to secure new investment in Ireland, we do need to be realistic about what is achievable. Competition for all new such investment remains intense and we should not expect tens of thousands of jobs to be created here by default.

Job Creation

205. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which she and her Department continue to support encourage and foster the creation of jobs through the indigenous sector both in terms of traditional industry and innovative proposals; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14674/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): My Department, through Enterprise Ireland and the LEOs provides a range of supports to help Irish companies start, grow and export. There are now over 201,000 people employed by EI supported companies across the country. The fact that over 130,000 of those 201,000 jobs are outside of Dublin is significant.

The objective of Enterprise Ireland’s new ‘Global Ambition’ strategy 2017-2020 is to support enterprises across the economy, to grow into strong Irish international companies, developing world-leading products and services and exporting them all around the world.

There is a vast range of programmes and supports offered to companies to drive this strategy. These include management capability, leadership and marketing/sales skills as well as promoting innovation and R&D. Investment in these areas is becoming more important as the demands of the marketplace evolve and become tougher.

In terms of supporting traditional industry, my view is that manufacturing in Ireland is still, and will always be, an essential part of a well-balanced economy. Our manufacturers have innovated and moved with the times – and they will continue to do so. Advances in ICT, new materials, biotechnology, fuels, and nanotechnology offer scope for continuous innovation in manufacturing. Together with the opening up of world markets, these advances offer great opportunities for Irish manufacturers.

Manufacturing today is not just about making things anymore. It is about finding solutions for a more sophisticated and demanding range of customers. It includes research, design, maintenance, sales and marketing, logistics and distribution too.

The best way to protect and increase manufacturing jobs is to compete with excellent products and services, using high technology, drawing on design, innovation and our strong science base.

We are placing a particular focus on encouraging startups and small businesses to embrace the culture of innovation that now exists and maximise the benefits of technology.

My Department also ensures that companies can access the right type of funding, appropriate to their stage of development. This ranges from microfinance right through to seed and venture capital, development capital and risk-sharing credit guarantees through the banks.

Enterprise Ireland's activity across all sectors of the economy is supporting a total of 400,000 directly and indirectly supported jobs.

Furthermore, our 8 Regional Action Plans for Jobs are building on the jobs potential of each region. At local level, the Local Enterprise Offices, supported by EI, are supporting indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs in every county.

I am currently finalising plans for a regional initiative of up to €60m to support collaborative approaches to grow and sustain indigenous enterprise and jobs across the regions. This will be administered by Enterprise Ireland.

Job Creation

206. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the degree to which she continues to promote and support job creation through the small business sector with particular reference to the need to ensure the minimisation of practices likely to impede small businesses; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14675/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): As Minister for Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation, I am consistently focused on supporting job creation. Since 2012, the annual Action Plan for Jobs has delivered actions to support job retention and creation. The unemployment rate has dropped from a high of 15.1% in February 2012 to 6.6% in February 2017. The figure for the number of people in work has risen from 1,836,000 in Q3 2012 to 2,048,000 in Q4 2016.

We hold structured dialogue with key stakeholders and we advocate across Government to ensure the needs of SMEs are taken into account in the execution of national policy. In 2017, my Department will be developing an SME Test to ensure that policy makers "Think Small First."

My Department listens to the concerns of the small business sector and actively engages with small businesses and their representative organisations. We have the Advisory Group for Small Business (AGSB) which is chaired by the Minister for Small Business and Employment, Pat Breen TD. This forum and others such as the Retail Consultation Forum and the inter-departmental High Level Group on SME Access to Procurement are there to assist small businesses and show that this Government is willing, and wants to, engage with small business.

The two Departmental developmental agencies dealing with micro, small and medium companies, Enterprise Ireland (EI) and the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), are targeted with assisting and developing small businesses through the start-up phase and beyond. EI has approximately 5000 clients supporting over 201,000 jobs. The LEOs support over 6,500 companies which employ 32,500 people.

In total, there are over 170 different Government supports for Irish start-ups and small businesses, from a wide variety of Departments and Agencies. All of these supports are included the cross Governmental www.supportingsmes.com portal. By answering the eight quick ques-

tions in the Online Tool, a small business will, in one location be able to: find out which of the over 170 Government business supports from 27 different Government Departments, Agencies and Initiatives are available to them; and obtain information on the range of Government supports for accessing credit with small business.

Job Creation

207. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which she continues to compete for job creation opportunities inside and outside the EU, particularly in anticipation of Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14676/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): The Government has already taken a number of important initiatives, including in bolstering the capacity of our enterprise agencies to maximise job creation opportunities inside and outside the EU.

The recently published Action Plan for Jobs 2017 builds on this with specific measures to:

- support enterprises, particularly those most dependent on UK markets
- identify and target new markets
- assist Irish businesses expand and scale and
- help position Ireland to benefit from new opportunities that arise.

The Government has just published a new trade and investment strategy which is supported by an extensive programme of Ministerial-led trade missions, as part of a major drive towards market diversification.

Enterprise 2025 continues to provide a solid roadmap for longer-term enterprise development with a focus on building the resilience of the enterprise base, export-led growth and job creation. In anticipation of the type of strategic exercise that may be needed to restate or reposition our global offering, I have asked my officials to undertake an urgent review of progress under Enterprise 2025.

At the Agency level I have directed IDA Ireland to explore the potential for winning more FDI on account of Brexit and the Agency and its staff are already working hard with this goal in mind.

In our efforts to win more FDI, we can continue to rely on the selling points that make investing in Ireland so attractive in the first place including our continued membership of the European Union and Eurozone.

I secured additional funding for IDA in 2017 to strengthen its capacity to communicate Ireland's unique selling points to the international business audience and to help target key markets to secure investment and jobs.

The potential sources of FDI are likely to come from:

- existing IDA Clients with a presence in Ireland who also have a presence in the UK;
- overseas clients (US, European and Asian) who have a presence in the UK but not in Ireland;

- UK companies operating in the UK who now need certain access to the European Market; and

- International clients without a presence in Europe seeking a European home.

From an indigenous enterprise perspective, Enterprise Ireland's strategy for the period 2017-2020 focuses on:

- Consolidating and growing exports into the UK market

- Expanding the Irish export global footprint, re-orienting towards N America, Canada, Asia and the Middle-East

- Expanding the EI Export Platform

I have already announced 39 extra staff for EI's overseas offices and in the Irish based team to support exporting companies in the context of Brexit. Staff will be assigned to:

- Markets that are growing and have scale (including China, India, Latin America, Africa);

- Markets where we are already well established but with potential for further growth (including UK, France, Benelux, Germany, US, the Nordics).

Trade Promotion

208. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which she expects Ireland to be in a position to increase trade with the US, Canada and other EU and non-EU locations post-Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14677/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): The UK's exit negotiations from the EU will not commence until Article 50 has been triggered, which the UK Government have indicated they intend to do on 29 March 2017. These negotiations could take the maximum allowed period of two years to complete.

It is hard to predict at this stage the full impact of Brexit. Much will depend on the nature of the future trade deal that will be negotiated between the EU and the UK. These negotiations are likely to be complex and multifaceted.

The Government has just published a new Trade Strategy, Ireland Connected: Trading and Investing in a Dynamic World which supports an extensive programme of Ministerial-led trade missions, as part of a major drive towards market diversification - promoting diversified export markets in light of the potential impacts of Brexit is a key priority for my Department. This includes markets that are growing and have scale as well as markets where we are already well established but with potential for further growth. The programme of trade missions and trade events for 2017 includes a substantive focus on the EU and third country markets. In 2017 we have 42 Minister led trade missions to existing and emerging markets. These have been reorientated to reflect an increased focus on EU markets. Enterprise Ireland is consistently working with client companies focussing on enhancing their competitiveness, capability and levels of innovation to assist them to diversify into new markets.

The EU's suite of Free Trade Agreements with third Countries help to open new markets, break down barriers and provide new opportunities for Irish firms. These existing EU Agreements and new trade deals will continue to be important for Ireland. With a small domestic

market, further expansion in other markets is essential to our continued economic growth.

Ireland will continue to support the EU's ambitious programme of negotiating new Free Trade Agreements giving Irish firms expanded market access and a predictable trading environment in third countries. The EU-Canada Free Trade Agreement will create sizeable new market access opportunities in services and investment in many sectors for Irish firms. My Department is already working with our agencies and Business Groups to ensure that Irish firms take early advantage of the terms of the Agreement. I will be leading a trade mission to Canada in the first half of this year to promote the opportunities provided by the Agreement.

The EU-South Korea Free Trade Agreement has led to a sizeable increase in Irish exports since it came into effect in 2011. This is the real evidence that Trade Agreements work for Irish exporters and Irish jobs.

Skills Development

209. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which upskilling is being provided in circumstances whereby recent job losses have occurred such as in a company (details supplied); the extent to which alternatives continue to be pursued in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14678/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): In cases where significant job losses arise due to a company closing or downsizing, the local Education and Training Board (ETB) can engage with the company and the impacted staff to undertake an assessment of training needs. If retraining or upskilling is deemed to be required, the ETB can then organise appropriate courses.

In the case of the company referred to, this Department has contacted the ETB for Kildare/Wicklow. That Board will be undertaking, in respect of the employees, an assessment of current skills and training needs.

Knowledge Development Box

210. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which she expects the knowledge development box to protect Irish interest in the international jobs investment market; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14679/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): As set out in the Action Plan for Jobs 2017, which was co-ordinated across Government by my Department, protecting our interests in the international jobs investment market continues to be a priority. Ireland will continue to provide a competitive offering for mobile investment, including tax offering, and to ensure that our innovative entrepreneurs establish and scale in Ireland so as to provide jobs for our citizens and contributes to funding the provision of services.

Ireland is the first country world-wide to introduce an OECD compliant Knowledge Development Box (KDB) offering. The certainty, predictability and clear signal that this sends to enterprise – including both Irish owned and foreign owned entities establishing and doing business from here - remains essential. This certainty has become even more important in the current dynamic and uncertain geopolitical landscape.

The KDB, introduced in Budget 2016 forms part of Ireland's competitive offering to continue to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and to support Irish owned companies to innovate

and to compete effectively on international markets. The Government and I are satisfied that the Knowledge Development Box will protect Irish interest in the international jobs investment market and will continue to benefit the Irish economy.

The continuing imperative to establish Ireland as the best place in which to succeed in business is reinforced in our national Enterprise and Innovation strategies. Our aim is that Ireland will be recognised as the place where businesses are innovative, competitive and productive – leading to growth that is sustainable and results in employment opportunities and a higher standard of living for all. These strategies set out the framework for investment over the coming decade to ensure that Ireland remains equally attractive to foreign direct investment and to Irish entrepreneurs and growth businesses in the context of an intensely competitive international environment.

The Knowledge Development Box provides an effective 6.25% rate of corporation tax on profits from certain qualifying assets that are earned by a company, chargeable to corporation tax in the State, to the extent that the assets relate to R&D undertaken by that company. The OECD nexus approach sets out the principles and guidelines under which income arising from IP assets can qualify for a lower rate of tax under a KDB initiative. Ireland's KDB effective rate is 6.25 percent (half of the corporation tax rate of 12.5 percent) and is internationally competitive.

The KDB complements the existing suite of initiatives and supports available to companies that undertake R&D activities in Ireland across the lifecycle of research and development – including R&D tax credits, RD&I grant supports, support for technology acquisition (S291A), significant state investments in National Research Centres and knowledge transfer infrastructures, and advisory supports for accessing Horizon 2020 funding – providing a competitive proposition for business investment.

It is important to highlight that the Knowledge Development Box will benefit companies of all sizes. To ensure maximum access the Knowledge Development Box (Certification of Inventions) Bill 2016 will apply to certain small and medium sized companies to avail of the Knowledge Development Box without the need for public disclosure of their innovative concept. Under the new scheme, the Patents Office will be the body certifying applications for inventions under the new certification scheme to check that they meet the criteria of being novel, useful and non-obvious. The Bill is intended to open up the opportunity for companies across a broad spectrum to pay lower taxes on profits from Irish-based research and development activities. This includes companies in incubation units right through to high-potential start-ups in all industry sectors once they are generating income resulting from research and development activities. The scheme should serve to significantly boost Irish innovation and investment in research and development.

This Bill will be in the Dáil for Reporting and Final Stage next week.

Foreign Direct Investment

211. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which her plans to encourage an even dispersal of investment throughout rural Ireland are on target in view of the necessity to achieve an evenly based balanced economy with equal opportunities throughout; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14680/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): IDA Ireland is making good progress towards its target of increasing the level of investment in each

region by 30% to 40% by 2019. In 2016, 52% of all Agency supported jobs created were based outside of Dublin.

While IDA Ireland does everything in its power to ensure an even spread of investments, it is important to realise that the ultimate decision on location rests solely with the company. There is a global trend to base foreign direct investment around large urban areas. Quite often, companies also want to be located near competitors or clusters of other similar enterprises. As a result, some businesses are only interested in investing in our larger cities.

The Government remains committed to achieving balanced regional development and this ambition is reflected in our eight Regional Action Plans for Jobs (RAPJs). The aim of the RAPJs is to ensure that the unemployment rate of each region is within one percentage point of the State average by 2020. These plans are delivering clear results with an implementation rate of over 90% for each region. This improvement is also reflected in the increase in regional employment in 2016, with 70% of all new jobs created last year located outside Dublin.

Departmental Expenditure

212. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the details of any payments made by her Department, its agencies or any bodies under her aegis to broadcasters here in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016; the broadcaster to which the funds were provided; the reason for the payments; and if there are any reasons for payments to broadcasters in 2017. [14726/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): My Department did not make any payment to broadcasters in the years 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 to date.

In 2015, my Department paid €250,000 to Atomic Advertising Ltd in respect of an advertising campaign to raise awareness of a range of government supports for enterprise. These advertisements were carried by a number of broadcasters

Any payments to broadcasters from agencies under the aegis of my Department are a day to day operational matter for the agencies concerned. I have asked the agencies to supply me with details and I will provide these to the Deputy once received.

Job Creation Data

213. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if any of the companies verified by the IDA as creating 527 jobs under the Succeed in Ireland initiative have received any other support from the IDA or other State agency; and if so, the details of such support. [14733/17]

214. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if any of the companies verified by the IDA as creating 527 jobs under the Succeed in Ireland initiative are or have been client companies of the IDA or EI or any other State agency; and if so, the details of any supports provided by these agencies to these companies. [14734/17]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor): I propose to take Questions Nos. 213 and 214 together.

I understand, from IDA Ireland, that the Succeed-in-Ireland initiative has created 535 jobs

on the ground to date. These verified jobs are associated with 85 projects, 25 of which are being delivered by client companies of other State Agencies. Of these 25 companies, 18 are IDA Ireland clients, six are Enterprise Ireland clients and one is a client of Údarás na Gaeltachta.

IDA Ireland does not disclose information on grant approvals, as this is commercially sensitive information.

Child Care Services Provision

215. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs her plans to extend the early child care scheme for families than cannot find a place in their local school and require an extra year for a place to become available; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14710/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): As the Deputy will be aware an expansion of ECCE, the free pre-school programme, took place following Budget 2016. This expansion was given significant consideration by the Inter-Departmental Group on Future Investment in Childcare which reported in July 2015. Senior officials from the Department of Education and Skills contributed to the discussions on an upper age limit for the scheme, taking a child centred approach and considering the delivery of better outcomes for all children. As with any scheme, there must be entry and cut off points. Prior to Budget 2016 the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme had one entry point (September) from when children could begin pre-school, and children had to be aged between 3 years and 2 months and 4 years and 7 months by the September to avail of the free pre-school year (i.e. 38 weeks). The programme was then expanded by reducing the age of eligibility to 3 years and by increasing the number of entry points to three throughout the programme year (September, January and April). This means that children can begin to avail of their free place on the pre-school programme as soon as possible after they reach the age of 3 and participate in the programme once they will not be older than 5 years and 6 months by the end of the programme year (i.e. end of June). These rules for ECCE reflect evidence based policy and are necessary from an administrative and budgetary management perspective. Regrettably, it is the nature of such rules that they benefit some more than others and it will therefore not be possible to provide an extension of ECCE in circumstances where a family may be unable to find a place for a child in their local school.

The Department of Education and Skills main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking school places in the area. Parents can choose which school to apply to and where the school has places available the pupil should be admitted. However, in schools where there are more applicants than places available, a selection process may be necessary. This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants. However, this may result in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice. In a circumstance where a child has been refused a place by a Board of Management of a school, or a person acting on behalf of the Board, a parent or guardian can choose to take an appeal under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills, or in the case of an Educational Training Board (ETB) school to the ETB in the first instance. Further information on the Section 29 appeals process is available on the Department of Education and Skills website www.education.ie.

The Educational Welfare Service (EWS) of Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, is the statutory agency which can assist some parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place for their child. The EWS can be contacted at 01-7718500. The Deputy will be aware

that, in legislation, the legal school starting age is 6. Prior to a child reaching the age of 6, the Educational Welfare Services of Tusla cannot do anything in terms of representing/advocating for parents to access school places. However, after the age of 6, Tusla's Educational Welfare Service would engage with, advise and support parents in accessing school places, including advising on the writing of appeals, with the Educational Welfare Officers acting as advocates at appeal hearings.

I would also note to the Deputy that plans are currently in train to provide for a new national scheme of financial support for parents towards the cost of their childcare entitled the Affordable Childcare Scheme, which will replace the existing targeted childcare subsidisation schemes with a single, streamlined and more user-friendly scheme. This scheme may be of benefit to some families in the circumstances outlined. Further information on the scheme will be available from my Department shortly

Departmental Expenditure

216. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the details of any payments made by her Department, its agencies or any bodies under her aegis to any broadcasters here in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016; the broadcaster to which the funds were provided; the reason for the payments; and if there are any reasons for payments to broadcasters in 2017. [14718/17]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): I assume that the Deputy is referring to payments to organisations, networks or stations involved in the broadcast of radio and television programmes. In this regard the Deputy might note that my Department, the Adoption Authority of Ireland and Túsla, the Child and Family Agency did not incur any such payments and that the Office of the Ombudsman for Children will respond directly to him in the matter.

Particulars relating to payments made by the Oberstown Children Detention Campus are set out in the following table:

Year	Payment to	Amount of payment	Reason for Payment
2014	N/A	N/A	N/A
2015	N/A	N/A	N/A
2016	BEAT 102-103	€615	Ad campaign for staff recruitment
2017	BEAT 102-103	€399.75	Ad campaign for staff recruitment
2017	RTE	€7,749	Ad campaign for staff recruitment

Coast Guard Services

217. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the reason the Air Corps could not provide top cover for the Coast Guard in north County Mayo on 15 March 2017 but was able to provide two helicopters covering a large cash in transit on the M50 towards the mint in Sandyford two days later. [14628/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Deputy will appreciate that the operational details in relation to any aspect of cash movement missions can-

not be disclosed for security reasons. However, in general terms, specific requests for Air Corps involvement in operations results in differing responses depending on the type of operation, the availability of aircraft, the availability of aircrew, weather conditions etc.

On the night of the tragic incident, it was not possible to undertake the Coast Guard request for the Air Corps to provide 'Top Cover' because the Air Corps is not providing fixed wing aircraft for routine operations, on an ongoing basis, outside normal hours due to the loss of experienced personnel.

Defence Forces Recruitment

218. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the civilian staff positions he expects to become available within the service in the coming months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14580/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My Department has in place an ongoing recruitment programme to fill civilian vacancies at various military installations. These vacancies have been identified by military management as key to providing continuing support for the upkeep and maintenance of military infrastructure and equipment. It is expected that as resources permit a wide range of posts will be filled in 2017 including those of Quantity Surveyor, General Operative, Craftworker as well as a number of internal supervisory posts.

The recruitment of civilian staff is kept under ongoing review based on the requirements of the Defence Forces and taking into account natural wastage.

Coast Guard Services

219. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the reason the Air Corps was unable to respond to a request to provide top cover for Rescue 116; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14647/17]

223. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if he has satisfied himself that the Air Corps current staffing level is sufficient to meet the needs in terms of defence, rescue services and security; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14651/17]

230. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his views on reports that the Air Corps were initially called to provide cover for the medical evacuation off the Mayo coast, that resulted in the loss of Coast Guard personnel crewing Rescue 116, but were unable to do so due to a loss of experienced personnel. [14771/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 219, 223 and 230 together.

While there are some restrictions on their availability, the Air Corps continues to provide a broad range of services on a daily basis for a diverse series of activities such as Army and Naval Service support, the Emergency Aeromedical Service, maritime patrols and fishery protection, the Ministerial Air Transport Service, inter-hospital transfers and Aid to the Civil Power duties including the Garda Air Support Unit and cash escorts.

Having regard to the Irish Coast Guard, the Coast Guard provides a nationwide maritime emergency organisation as well as a variety of services to shipping and other government agen-

cies. The Coast Guard helicopters contribute across the roles of the Coast Guard, including the provision of maritime search and rescue services within the Irish search and rescue region.

In the past, the Air Corps provided search and rescue services but was withdrawn from this role in 2004 following a handover to CHC Ireland, a private operator. This decision was taken on account of what has always been the overriding concern of the Government: the safety of mariners and indeed anyone who gets into difficulty where Search and Rescue can respond.

The Irish Coast Guard search and rescue services can draw on the support of the Air Corps on an ‘as available’ basis under a Service Level Agreement between the Department of Defence and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, the most recent of which has been in place since 2013.

If requested, and if available, the Air Corps provide “top-cover” for the Coast Guard using a CASA fixed-wing maritime patrol aircraft. Coast Guard helicopters also provide their own “top-cover” during Search and Rescue missions.

On the night of the tragic incident, the Coast Guard requested the assistance of the Air Corps to provide “top cover”. It was not possible to undertake this task. The Air Corps is not providing fixed wing aircraft for routine operations, on an ongoing basis, outside normal hours. This is because of a loss of experienced personnel both Air Crew and Air Traffic Control. All agencies for which the Air Corps provides support in accordance with their Service Level Agreements were notified of this reduced availability last summer. However, it is normal practice for agencies to check for Air Corps availability as relevant missions arise. In exceptional circumstances outside of normal hours the Air Corps can recall personnel, as happened when Rescue 116 went missing.

I want to assure the Deputy that, while there has been a loss of experienced personnel in the Air Corps, there is significant work under way in the Defence Organisation, both civil and military, aimed at improving the capacity of the Air Corps.

Air Corps Strength

220. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of soldiers currently serving in the Air Corps; and the rank or position they hold. [14648/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The following table shows the numbers of Defence Forces personnel at all ranks serving with the Air Corps as at 28 February 2017, the latest date for which figures are available:

RANK	No. PERSONNEL
Brigadier General	1
Colonel	3
Lieutenant Colonel	12
Commandant	33
Captain	48
Lieutenant	22
Regimental Sergeant Major	7
Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant	3
Flight Sergeant	55
Flight Quartermaster Sergeant	11

RANK	No. PERSONNEL
Sergeant	109
Corporal	152
Private	220
Cadet	28
TOTAL	704

Air Corps Strength

221. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of vacancies currently in the Air Corps; and the length of time these positions have been vacant, in tabular form. [14649/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The following table shows the distribution of personnel across all ranks of the Air Corps compared with the “Establishment” strength figure for equivalent ranks and the resulting numbers of vacancies per rank as at 28 February 2017, the latest date for which figures are available:

RANK	ESTABLISHMENT FIGURE	Number of PERSONNEL	Vacancies
Brigadier General	1	1	0
Colonel	3	3	0
Lieutenant Colonel	14	12	2
Commandant	36	33	3
Captain	65	48	17
Lieutenant	48	22	26
Regimental Sergeant Major	8	7	1
Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant	4	3	1
Flight Sergeant	56	55	1
Flight Quartermaster Sergeant	14	11	3
Sergeant	131	109	22
Corporal	183	152	31
Private	324	220	104
TOTAL	887	676	211

Following agreement with PDFORRA, a competition was recently launched for promotions for enlisted personnel across all ranks and vacancies will be filled from panels established following completion of these competitions.

The Military Personnel Management system does not record the length of time any particular position has been vacant. Due to the complexity of the task and the resources required, it is not possible to provide a complete breakdown of vacancies for all roles in the Air Corps for a specific given period of time.

Air Corps Strength

222. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence his plans to address the severe staff shortages in the Air Corps and the lack of experienced personnel available. [14650/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Government is committed to maintaining the stabilised strength of the Permanent Defence Force at 9,500 personnel, comprising of 7,520 Army, 886 Air Corps and 1,094 Naval Service as stated in the 2015 White Paper on Defence. The manpower requirement is monitored on an ongoing basis in accordance with the operational requirements of each of the three services. As there is significant turnover of personnel in the Permanent Defence Force, targeted recruitment has been and is currently taking place so as to maintain the agreed strength levels.

Given the improvement in the domestic economy and demand for experienced pilots, the retention of experienced Pilot Officers in the Air Corps has been a significant challenge for the Defence Organisation in recent years, and there has been an outflow of experienced Air Corps Pilot Officers, both rotary and fixed wing. A Working Group comprised of Civil and Military personnel was established to look at ways of addressing the issue of how to retain sufficiently experienced Pilot Officers within the Air Corps. The Working Group's report contained a number of recommendations ranging from increasing recruitment levels to examining the current terms and conditions of pilots. Work on the implementation of the Working Group's recommendations is currently ongoing by both Civil and Military staff of the Defence Organisation. While there are a number of initiatives underway, realistically it will take time for a return to previous levels of capability in the Air Corps as pilots within the system progress to become aircraft commanders and newly qualified cadets become co-pilots.

There are currently three Cadet classes totalling 27 personnel at various stages of the Wings Course (this is reduced from the 28 previously reported, where one person has been unable to continue their pilot training) with 7 currently undergoing flight training, and four Apprentice Technician classes totalling 41 personnel in training with 5 due to qualify this summer.

The 2017 Cadetship competition was launched yesterday Wednesday 22 March with a planned intake of up to 12 Cadets in Quarter 3 of 2017. The Defence Forces also plan to launch an Air Corps Trainee Military Aircraft Technician competition in early Summer this year, from which it is planned to induct up to 25 Apprentice Technicians in Autumn 2017.

Question No. 223 answered with Question No. 219.

Air Corps

224. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the details of the budget for the Air Corps for each year since 2007, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14713/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Vote 36 Defence is managed through a single programme with all operational outputs delivered from a single set of forces encompassing the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service. Pay and allowances and other support costs for Air Corps personnel are not identified separately, but are included in the overall programme costs in the appropriate subheads of the Vote.

Subhead A.9 (Air Corps: Equipment and Support) provides for specific Air Corps expenditure, including the maintenance of Air Corps equipment, the provision of specialised Air Corps training, the purchase of aviation fuel and aviation support services.

Subhead A.9 annual budget provisions from 2007 to 2017 are outlined in the table below.

A.9 (Air Corps: Equipment and Support) 2007 to 2017

Year	2007*	2008*	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
€m	39.13	39.95	21.2 0	18.6 0	16.4 0	14.5 0	14.1 0	14.1 0	15.45	18.81	16.86

*The budget provision in the years 2007 and 2008 included additional funds to meet the costs of procuring new helicopters.

The White Paper on Defence has identified the need for the replacement of a number of aircraft in the Air Corps fleet over the coming years and an additional €5 million has been allocated for aircraft replacement in 2017. (These funds are now included in Subhead A8: Defence Forces Capability Development.)

Departmental Expenditure

225. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the details of any payments made by his Department, its agencies or any bodies under his aegis to any broadcasters here in the years 2014, 2015 and 2016; the broadcaster to which the funds were provided; the reason for the payments; and if there are any reasons for payments to broadcasters in 2017. [14720/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The total amount of payments exclusive of VAT to broadcasters in Ireland for the years 2014, 2015 and 2016 are set out in the table.

“Be Winter Ready” Annual Radio Public Information Campaigns 2014 - 2016

Radio Station	Amount 2014	Amount 2015	Amount 2016
Dublin Q102	€864.00	€864.00	€648.00
Newstalk	€2,383.56	€2,383.56	€2,383.56
KFM Radio	€350.25	€350.25	€262.69
Highland Radio	€308.32	€308.32	€231.24
Ocean FM	€306.83	€306.83	€230.12
MWR	€378.01	€378.01	€283.51
Tipp FM	€352.14	€352.14	€264.11
Radio Kerry	€442.10	€442.10	€331.58
Red FM	€559.92	€559.92	€572.40
South East Radio	€337.27	€337.27	€252.95
KCLR	€350.25	€350.25	€262.69
East Coast Radio	€327.96	€327.96	€245.97
Midlands 103	€361.02	€361.02	€270.77
Shannonside/Northside Sound	€529.02	€529.03	€396.77
Spin South West	€367.26	€367.26	€275.45
TXFM	€375.77	€375.77	€0.00
96 FM	€2,204.30	€2,204.30	€1,653.23
98 FM	€1,568.00	€1,591.04	€1,193.28
Clare FM	€311.33	€311.33	€233.50

Radio Station	Amount 2014	Amount 2015	Amount 2016
Galway Bay FM	€633.60	€633.60	€475.20
Limerick's Live 95 FM	€691.20	€691.20	€518.40
LMFM	€557.60	€557.60	€418.20
RTE Radio 1	€7,520.00	€7,548.00	€7,548.00
TODAY FM	€4,371.00	€4,544.00	€0.00
WLR FM	€391.20	€391.20	€293.40
Radio Nova	€307.20	€307.20	€230.40

In addition to costs paid to broadcasters there were also production costs associated with the campaign that were not paid to broadcasters. The total figures for this were as follows:-

Costs	€	€	€
Production Costs	1,771.00	600.00	600.00

My Department intends to run the Be Winter Ready campaign in 2017.

Defence Forces Reorganisation

226. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if measures implemented in the reorganisation of the Permanent Defence Forces in 2013 will be reversed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14767/17]

227. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if a third brigade will be re-established in the Army; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14768/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 226 and 227 together.

As part of a major re-organisation of the Defence Forces in 2012, a decision was taken to consolidate the three under-strength Army brigades into two full strength brigades. The decision to move to a two brigade structure involved full consultation with the Defence Forces, and final proposals approved by the then Minister for Defence were agreed between the Chief of Staff and the Secretary General.

The decision was taken because it was clear that the previous three brigade structure was no longer viable, particularly when compared to international norms. Key aspects of the re-organisation included the consolidation of under-strength units into a smaller number of full strength units, a reduction in the number of headquarters and the associated re-deployment of personnel from administrative and support functions to operational units.

The White Paper on Defence, which was published in 2015, resulted from a comprehensive examination of Defence requirements over a ten year planning horizon and it specifically provides for the retention of the Army's two Brigade structure.

There are no plans to return to a three brigade structure which would cause a range of unnecessary inefficiencies, such as an increased administrative burden arising from the need to re-introduce a layer of non-operational middle management, and a return to under-strength units.

Defence Forces Strength

228. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of personnel serving at present in the Permanent Defence Forces; the projected enrolment by the end of 2017; the proposals for retention and recruitment of members in 2018-2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [14769/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The 2015 White Paper on Defence commits to maintaining the strength of the Permanent Defence Forces at 9,500 personnel, comprising of 7,520 Army, 886 Air Corps and 1,094 Naval Service as stated in the 2015 White Paper on Defence. The strength of the Permanent Defence Forces on 28 Feb 2017 stands at 9,070 (Whole Time Equivalent): Army 7,293, Air Corps 701, Naval Service 1,076.

The Defence Forces has a policy of ongoing recruitment with the objective of returning to and maintaining its stated Establishment figure of 9,500. In total 590 General Service Recruits (501 Army, 89 Naval Service) were inducted in 2016, along with 100 Cadets between all services. Recruitment Campaigns for the Defence Forces will continue in 2017 with the following competitions scheduled to be launched in the early part of the year: Army Cadetship, Army Equitation Cadetship, Army Engineer Cadetship, Air Corps Cadetship, Naval Service Operations Cadetship, Naval Service Marine Engineer Cadetship, Naval Service Electrical Engineer Cadetship, Air Corps Trainee Military Aircraft Technician, Army General Service Recruits, and Naval Service General Service Recruits.

The Defence Forces are planning for the induction of 850 – 900 new entrants in 2017.

To date in 2017, 106 General Service Recruits (103 Army and 3 Navy) and 10 Air Corps Trainee Military Aircraft Technicians have been inducted. Details for recruitment in 2018 and 2019 are yet to be confirmed and the extent of these campaigns will naturally be subject to Defence Forces strength and operational requirements at that time.

A key policy in supporting retention of military personnel is the provision of opportunities for extensive personal and professional development offered by the Defence Forces through accredited courses, and the unique features of the military environment. Additionally, in terms of remuneration, the new Public Service Pay Commission has been tasked with providing objective analysis and advice on the most appropriate pay levels for the public service, including the Defence Forces.

Air Corps Operations

229. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the dates when the Air Corps was unavailable or unable to provide top cover air support for the Coast Guard when performing search and rescue missions between 2014 and to date in 2017. [14770/17]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): The Irish Coast Guard provides a nationwide maritime emergency organisation as well as a variety of services to shipping and other government agencies. The Irish Coast Guard search and rescue services can draw on the support of the Air Corps on an ‘as available’ basis under a Service Level Agreement between the Department of Defence and the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport, the most recent of which has been in place since 2013.

If requested, and if available, the Air Corps provide Top Cover for the Coast Guard using a CASA fixed-wing maritime patrol aircraft. Coast Guard helicopters also provide their own Top Cover during Search & Rescue missions.

Questions - Written Answers

Information in respect of requests to the Air Corps for Search and Rescue Top Cover in the period 2015 to date in 2017 is set out in the table. For operational and security reasons, the dates for missions are not included. I am also advised by the Air Corps that corresponding data in relation to 2014 is not readily available. The reasons why particular requests for Top Cover over this period were declined were for a variety of reason including that the aircraft was undergoing maintenance, no crews were available, crew exceeding permitted flying hours, weather conditions, the aircraft was on another mission or no air traffic control services were available.

Year	Search and Rescue Top Cover requests accepted by the Air Corps	Search and Rescue Top Cover requests declined by the Air Corps
2017 (to-date)	3	3*
2016	2	3
2015	7	4

Question No. 230 answered with Question No. 219.

23 March 2017