

Programme for Government: Annual Report 2014

Government for National Recovery 2011 – 2016

March 2014

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Year 3: After the Bailout

When the Government was elected, three years ago, Ireland faced an enormous economic, financial and social crisis.

The first task facing the Government was to restore financial stability and return the economy to growth, in order for Ireland to successfully exit the EU/IMF bailout. Thanks to the hard work and sacrifice of the Irish people, that central national objective has now been achieved. On 15th December 2013, Ireland left the bailout programme.

At the same time, the unrelenting focus on job creation has begun to bear fruit. Employment is expanding at the fastest rate in the EU, and while unemployment is still unacceptably high, the seasonally adjusted live register has fallen for 20 months in succession.

Exiting the bail-out was not an end in itself. While the country is moving in the right direction, too many people are not yet feeling any improvement in their daily lives.

We must use the restoration of our economic freedom to create a fair and sustainable economic recovery – more jobs and improved living standards across the entire country. The huge sacrifices that people have made over the past three years will not be wasted.

That is why, in the same manner as we implemented our strategy to exit the bailout, we will now, with the same focus and determination, implement our Strategy for Growth. This medium term economic strategy shows how we can rebuild our economy after the bailout. It has two key targets:

- To grow the economy by close to 2% in 2014; 2.5% by 2015 and 3% by 2016; and
- To create more jobs - the strategy aims to reduce unemployment to below eurozone average this year and to below 10% by 2016. By 2020, we aim to return the economy to full employment (2.1 million people) by replacing all the jobs lost during the crisis.

Consistent with our Strategy for Growth and the Programme for Government, we have identified three high-level priorities for the year ahead.

First, we will do more to support the domestic economy

As a small open economy, Ireland's prosperity depends on export-led growth, and our recovery to date has depended on inward investment and exports. To reach our ambitious employment and growth targets, we need to do more to extend the recovery into the domestic economy.

To start, in the coming weeks, we will set out plans to support more jobs in the construction sector, where activity (both commercial and residential) has fallen well below normal and for what is required to provide for our growing population and economy. These plans will be based on enterprise and high standards, not speculation - we are never going back to the culture that nearly destroyed our country.

The tourism sector also offers the potential of tens of thousands of extra jobs across the country. Building on the success of The Gathering, the lower VAT rate and new airline routes established as a result of the abolition of the travel tax, we will publish a new tourism strategy before the summer.

We will also put a stronger emphasis on measures to support indigenous entrepreneurs and manufacturing companies, as set out in the Action Plan for Jobs 2014. Consistent with this plan, the Government will roll out 31 Local Enterprise Offices in every local authority to drive indigenous small business activity throughout the country.

We will ensure that banks also do more to support the domestic economy. More lending to small businesses – at more competitive rates - is needed to allow them to grow and create jobs. Increased restructuring of existing small business debts is also required to create the space for good businesses to invest and expand employment. To underpin these aims, we will set out a new plan for the future of the Irish banking system in the spring.

New sources of non-bank financing will also be required to support more domestic investment and activity. In the coming weeks, we will publish legislation to establish the €6 billion Irish Strategic Investment Fund to make commercial investments in Irish enterprise and infrastructure. The same legislation will also establish NewERA on a statutory footing to support higher investment levels through, and better returns from, our commercial semi-states.

Second, as the recovery gathers pace, we must do more to make sure that it does not bypass those most affected by the crisis.

Our Pathways to Work Strategy, which aims to move 75,000 long-term unemployed people into employment by end 2015, including 22,500 this year, will be updated by mid-year, and will enhance engagement with, and supports for, long-term job seekers.

It will also put a stronger emphasis on removing disincentives to returning to work affecting some long-term job seekers. By replacing Rent Supplement with a new Housing Assistance Payment that will continue to be available to unemployed people returning to work, we will make sure that an additional 34,000 families are better off in work.

We will also publish the first ever five-year strategy for the Further Education and Training system which will prioritise re-training those who are unemployed, to enable them to take up the opportunities arising in the economic recovery.

High levels of personal debt continue to threaten the exclusion of thousands of families from the economic recovery. Banks know that they must propose a sustainable offer to every family in mortgage distress engaging with their bank by the end of this year. Government will monitor implementation of the mortgage arrears targets set for the banks and the operation of the new Insolvency Service to ensure that families, willing to work their way through their debt problems, can see light at the end of the tunnel.

The third and final priority is to continue the political and public service reforms needed to ensure that the recovery is fair, inclusive and sustainable, and in doing so to continue to rebuild trust in our institutions.

We will build on the expanded powers of the Ombudsman to enhance scrutiny of public services, legislate to increase the scope and reach of Freedom of Information, to afford protections and clarity to whistleblowers and to consolidate the Ethics Acts following the publication of the Mahon and Moriarty Tribunals

We will strengthen local government funding, accountability and effectiveness in order to improve the provision of services to local communities. We will establish Irish Water as a means of financing and providing for investment in clean, safe water.

In order to end the current inefficient two-tier health system we will take further steps towards the introduction of Universal Health Insurance. We will prioritise the full establishment of Hospital Groups funded on a “money follows the patient” basis, the roll-out of free GP care to all children aged five and under in the first half of this year and the publication of a White Paper on Universal Health Insurance.

The continued improvement of our education system is key to our long-term prosperity. We will ensure all schools publish a summary of their performance, for the information of parents. We will pass legislation to reform school admissions to make them fairer, more transparent and more inclusive. We will continue to roll out the area based programme to tackle the root causes of child poverty and exclusion.

Underpinning all of our plans will be continued responsible management of the public finances. If we are to retain the strong recovery of international confidence and investment in our economy witnessed over the last year, the Government cannot continue to borrow at current levels. Our Strategy for Growth commits us to cutting the deficit to 3% of GDP by 2015 and to eliminating it by 2018.

While 90% of budgetary correction is already done, difficult decisions still lie ahead. We will conduct a second Comprehensive Review of Expenditure in the first half of 2014 to prioritise expenditure allocations for the coming years. We will also publish a revised Capital Programme for the remainder of the decade.

We present this report to the Irish people as a statement of work progressed and a Government delivering on its commitments. We remain determined to face the challenges ahead and work step by step towards the recovery that Ireland and its people deserve.



Enda Kenny T.D.
Taoiseach



Eamon Gilmore T.D.
Tánaiste

ECONOMY – KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Banking and Fiscal Policy

- Successful exit from EU/IMF Programme
- New deal on EFSF loans worth €20 billion to Ireland over 10 years
- New Medium Term Economic Strategy to manage Ireland's economy to 2020
- Successful re-entry to Bond markets at historic low levels
- Reduced Ireland's budget deficit and on track for 3% target in 2015
- Banks active in the funding markets raising €8.6bn
- Banks meet €4bn target for lending to SMEs
- €2bn disposal of State shareholding in Bank of Ireland
- New probity regime in place for key roles in banks and credit unions
- Provisions in place to facilitate Oireachtas inquiry into the banking crisis

Creating Jobs and Tackling Unemployment

- Employment growing at its fastest rate since 2007 – up 61,000 in year to Q4 2013
- Unemployment levels continue to fall from 15.1% in 2012 to 12%
- IDA and Enterprise Ireland beat last year's success creating 26% more net jobs
- Delivered 90% of the 333 actions in the 2013 Jobs Plan
- New Action Plan for Jobs 2014 focusing on competitiveness, growing SMEs and start-ups
- Pathways to Work oversaw 260,000 training places during 2013 and helped 27,000 long term unemployed back to work
- 24,000 people have taken up JobBridge work placements with 61% progression rate
- New Intreo one-stop-shop employment and support service has led to doubling of caseworkers and 156,000 one-to-one guidance interviews
- Establishment of new national education and training service SOLAS

- 3 new SFI National Research Centres established in the areas of data analytics, bio-energy and marine renewable energy worth a combined €150m creating 476 jobs
- Further two EI Technology Centres established, to generate economic value from public funded research
- Air Travel Tax abolished and new air routes announced for 2014
- Increased of 7.2 % in overseas visitors to Ireland in 2013 with 15.5% increase from long haul markets
- The Gathering was a success and estimated to be worth €170m to local economies
- 209 international conferences held in Ireland in 2013 worth €92m

Growing Businesses

- Launch of new €125m Seed and Venture Capital Scheme
- 28 successful trade missions in 2013 opening up new markets for exports
- New commercial leases database providing transparency for business
- 103 new High Potential Start Up companies supported by EI
- New payment protections for small sub-contractors in place
- New system of less onerous examinership for small businesses
- Retention of the 9% VAT rate for the hospitality sector
- Start Your Own Business Scheme and other Budget measures to help SMEs
- New Social Enterprise initiative underway

Investment

- A new Construction Sector Strategy for Ireland to be published shortly
- National Pension Reserve Fund to invest €6.8bn in Ireland through the new Strategic Investment Fund
- €200m to National Children's Hospital from sale of National Lottery licence
- €200m to fund capital investment projects e.g. Cork Event Centre, City of Culture and 1916 Commemoration projects
- NewERA oversees sale of State interests in Bord Gais and ESB assets
- Irish Water to invest €310m in water services infrastructure in 2014
- 250,000 homes upgraded through Better Energy schemes
- NAMA to invest €1.5 billion in Irish projects including the building of 4,500 houses

Banking and Re-negotiation of the IMF/EU Programme of Support

Enhancing the Sustainability of the Public Finances

In December 2013, Ireland successfully made a clean exit from the EU/IMF Programme. International political and market reaction has been very positive as is reflected in the sale of €3.75 billion of Irish 10 year bonds at historically low rates in the first week of January 2014. All fiscal targets in the Programme were met and exceeded providing further credibility to the State's medium-term budgetary policy.

In June 2013, the Board of Directors of the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) extended the maturities on Ireland's EFSF loans by up to a further seven years. These maturity extensions reduce Ireland's refinancing requirement by some €20 billion over the next decade. Taken with the promissory note deal this will deliver a reduced funding requirement of €40 billion over the next decade.

Medium Term Economic Strategy 2014 - 2020

The recently published MTES sets out the core components of the Government's strategy over the next seven years to continue the work of rebuilding the Irish economy, achieving sustainable economic growth, strong public finances, and enduring job creation. The Government's goal is ensuring a job-rich recovery and the strategy targets full employment by 2020. The strategy aims to set Ireland on the path to sustainable prosperity and will provide opportunities for our people, provide high quality public services, and encourage innovation in business and across society.

Ireland's Reputation

Ireland's reputation has improved dramatically in recent years. As well as the successful Programme Exit, Ireland's stewardship of the EU Presidency was recognised as being well-run and very productive. Our reputation internationally is reflected in positive international sentiment e.g. all rating agencies now recognising Ireland as investment grade, the successful sale of Irish Life, the sale of Bank of Ireland preference shares, and Ireland being named as the "best country in the world to do business" by Forbes Magazine.

Structural Reforms

Further Structural Reforms to accelerate growth, job creation and debt sustainability advanced during 2013 included:

- 44 Intreo Centres fully operational providing practical, tailored employment services and supports for jobseekers
- Tendering for external delivery of a new programme (JobPath) of employment activation aimed specifically at the long-term unemployed
- Restructuring of education and training services under SOLAS
- Establishment of new research centres with private industry to maximise future opportunities from research
- New bankruptcy and insolvency legislation in operation
- New targets for the six main banks to ensure sustainable restructuring offers to people in mortgage arrears
- New integrated licensing application system for businesses
- Programme for sale of State assets was progressed, with the sale of Bord Gáis Éireann Energy and ESB non core assets
- Implementation of Money Follows the Patient in Hospitals
- New framework for generic substitution and reference pricing of medicines
- Legislation to reform the legal profession
- Environment-friendly taxation policies were also expanded
- Major reform of the water sector

Bank Deleveraging

The restructuring of the Irish banking system, including the liquidation of IBRC, will aid in the establishment of a secure financial system for deposits and in the flow of credit to consumers and businesses. Deleveraging of the Irish banking system has progressed well with cumulative deleveraging at AIB, Bol & Permanent TSB of over €71 billion from end 2010 to Sept 2013, comprising almost €47 billion of non-core net loan reduction.

In 2013 AIB had achieved its non-core net loan reduction targets, fulfilling its deleveraging obligations under the Financial Measures Programme. Bol

has announced the completion of its divestment programme with remaining deleveraging to be achieved through planned asset transfers in the UK by end July 2014. This deleveraging will greatly assist the banks as they re-focus their operations to areas which will support our economic recovery.

Reducing Banks Reliance on ECB Funding

Since April 2012 there has been no emergency lending to the main Irish banks and their reliance on monetary authority funding has fallen €28 billion by end 2013, a level last seen in December 2008. Irish banks were active in the funding markets in 2013 and completed funding transactions amounting to €8.6 billion. In addition the cost associated with these transactions has been steadily reducing as the required yield has fallen.

Ensuring Credit Availability for SMEs

Bank of Ireland and AIB have met their targets to provide €4 billion of credit to SMEs in 2013 and their focus is on growing their balance sheets through profitable lending. In this context, the need to increase business lending in the period up to 2016, including lending to the SME sector has been recognised.

To date 55% of appeals by the Credit Review Office have been found in favour of borrowers resulting in €21 million additional credit being made available to SMEs and farms, helping to protect and create 1,643 jobs.

A new €175m Seed and Venture Capital Scheme 2013-2018 was launched last May to provide additional funding for high-growth Irish companies with the potential to generate large amounts of additional export sales and grow jobs. The Scheme is part of a series of new funding mechanisms put in place by this Government, which will make available a total of more than €2 billion in additional non-bank lending for Irish businesses, including:

- The €250 million SME Equity fund, managed by Carlyle Cardinal Ireland is now active and sourcing investments in healthy businesses seeking to grow. The NPRF has committed €125 million to the fund
- The €100 million SME turnaround fund, managed by Better Capital, is now actively sourcing investments in underperforming businesses that are at or close to the point of insolvency but have the potential for financial and operational

restructuring. The NPRF has committed €50 million to the fund

- The €450 million SME Credit fund has been launched by BlueBay Asset Management LLP to provide loans to larger SMEs and mid-sized businesses in Ireland. After successfully raising the full amount of funding including €200 million from the NPRF it has closed three transactions

The 2014 Action Plan for Jobs has identified SME growth as a key theme and is prioritising further actions to improve access to finance for SMEs and enhance their financial knowledge and education.

Disposal of Public Stakes in Banks

The State has successfully exited from its €1 billion contingent capital investment in Bank of Ireland and its €1.837 billion of preference shares at a small profit from the investments. The State also sold Irish Life in July for €1.3 billion to Great-West LifeCo.

Re-structuring of Bank Boards and Bank Directors

A new Fitness and Probity Regime came into full effect on 1 December 2012 for all regulated financial service providers. 41 senior positions are listed where prior approval of the Central Bank of Ireland is required before an individual can be appointed.

The Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2013 provides:

- for the regulation and supervision of financial service providers and financial services
- to further provide for the enforcement of financial services legislation, and
- to provide for the protection of persons reporting breaches

A panel of potential Non-Executive Directors was created from expressions of interest sought from suitably qualified members of the public to serve on the boards of banks. To date five non-executive directors have been appointed from the panel to the three banks AIB, PTSB and Bank of Ireland.

Operation of NAMA

Some €5.8 billion in cash was generated by NAMA in 2013, including €3.8 billion from asset disposals with the total cash generated in the period of 45 months since inception to end 2013 reaching €16.5 billion.

NAMA has achieved its end-2013 target of redeeming €7.5 billion of the Senior Bonds issued to acquire bank loans in 2010 and 2011 with €2.75 billion of these bonds redeemed in 2013.

NAMA is contributing to the renewal of sustainable activity in the Irish property market through its orderly and phased sale of assets and initiatives to increase transactional activity, and continues to make a direct contribution to reinvigorating the economy.

To date NAMA has:

- Overseen the sale of €10.6 billion worth of loans and assets including the sale of over 10,000 individual properties
- Approved close to €1 billion in development funding for the completion of construction projects
- Advanced €360 million in vendor finance
- Announced plans to invest €1.5 billion in funding for Irish projects over the next three years, including the construction of 4,500 new houses
- Delivered 596 social housing units

NAMA's operating costs at 2.6% of cash generated (2012) compares favourably with comparable international institutions. Administration costs have remained stable despite the significant increase in transactional activity.

Credit Unions

Phase one of a fitness and probity regime by the Central Bank for credit unions was introduced on August 1st and applies to those credit unions with assets over €10 million. The new process aims to improve governance standards at board and management level and involves background checks on people with senior roles evaluating their fitness to practice.

The Central Bank also launched a Credit Union Handbook to assist credit unions by bringing together in one place a number of legal and regulatory requirements and guidance that apply to credit unions, arising from their authorisation as credit unions.

The Credit Union Restructuring Board has been established to facilitate and oversee the restructuring of credit unions on a voluntary, incentivised and time bound basis. To date 164 Expressions of Interest or requests for contact have been received and there are 52 credit unions actively engaging in merger discussions.

Development of the IFSC

During 2013, 30 investments with over 2,400 associated jobs were approved by IDA client companies in the international financial services sector involving some of the world's leading companies such as Deutsche Bank and Northern Trust. A number of Enterprise Ireland clients also reported strong employment growth throughout the year. Other key developments include:

- Ministerial led investment and trade missions which included a financial services focus
- The opening of a new IDA office in Beijing with a dedicated financial services executive
- 'Payments Ireland', an industry led payments group, was re-launched which aims to position Ireland as the leader in payments innovation

A joint public/private sector Strategic Group for Irish Financial Services has been established to help set the strategic objectives for the IFS Clearing House Group and the international financial services sector more broadly with a particular emphasis on the industry's role in the jobs and growth agenda.

The IFSC Clearing House Group met on five occasions in 2013 with the minutes published on the Department of the Taoiseach website within three months of each meeting.

Investigating Failures in the Banking System

The Houses of the Oireachtas (Inquiries, Privileges and Procedures) Act 2013 enacted last July provides the legal basis for establishing Oireachtas inquiries. New Standing Orders were passed in February which provides the framework for an inquiry to be established, to operate and to report. The Committee on Procedure and Privileges will have responsibility for evaluating inquiry proposals and making recommendations on them to the House.

Review of Remuneration Schemes at Banks

Following the Mercer Review of Remuneration Practices and Frameworks at the Covered Institutions, the Government directed the banks to come up with plans to deliver savings of 6% – 10% of total remuneration costs, through reductions in payroll and pension benefits, new working arrangements and structures that deliver efficiency gains. All three pillar banks are on track to hit their targets.

Jobs Programme

The Action Plan for Jobs 2013 continued to drive Government's number one objective to create jobs and get as many people as possible back into employment. There has once again been a very high implementation rate with circa 90% of the 333 actions delivered in full.

A significant development of Action Plan for Jobs 2013 was the inclusion of 7 "Disruptive Reforms", or key initiatives which were chosen for their potential to make a significant contribution to job creation and/or economic growth in the medium-term. Some of the key areas of progress on these initiatives include the launch of the new JobsPlus scheme, the development of a new Integrated Licensing Application System for businesses, the development of proposals for a National Health Innovation Hub and the establishment of the Centre for Applied Data Analytics Research.

Unemployment is down from a peak of 15.1% in 2012 to 12% and employment is growing at its fastest rate since 2007 – up 61,000 year-on-year at end 2013. Last year, IDA client companies created over 7,000 net new jobs, while Enterprise Ireland companies created 5,400 net new jobs which taken together is up 26% on 2012 figures.

Forbes annual ranking of the Best Countries for Business announced in December put Ireland in first place worldwide.

The new Action Plan for Jobs for 2014 contains actions to further support employment creation. In 2014 the focus will be on measures to improve Ireland's competitiveness particularly through productivity, grow the number of entrepreneurs and start-ups, help SMEs to grow and access new markets, and increase awareness of the extensive range of programmes and initiatives available.

Labour Market Policy

Pathways to Work 2013

There has been good progress on the implementation of the Government's 50-point action plan to fight long-term unemployment:

- In excess of 27,000 long-term unemployed have moved into employment

- Over 156,000 one-to-one guidance interviews held with jobseekers
- An additional 10,000 activation training places provided in Budget 2013
- 44 Intreo 'one-stop shop' offices now in place
- Publication of the NESC Report on State training programmes
- The number of caseworkers has been doubled
- RFT published for the provision of employment services to implement JobPath, a new programme of employment activation aimed specifically at the long-term unemployed

As part of the Pathways to Work initiative, targets were set for Long Unemployed Participation in activation schemes and Further Education and Training. Taken together 82,821 places out of 260,195 were provided for the long term unemployed in 2013.

Government will spend over €500 million in 2014 on employment, education and training opportunities for young people. This will support the gradual implementation of the new Youth Guarantee which will seek to offer young people employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed. As part of the Intreo process young people will be prioritised for case-officer support and personal progression planning.

Persons who refuse to engage with the employment support services offered by Intreo face reductions in social welfare payments. Over 3,000 penalties were applied during 2013 in such cases.

Work Activation Initiatives

By end 2013, 24,000 JobBridge placements had commenced across 11,000 companies. The places available on JobBridge have been increased from 6,000 to 8,500. An evaluation of the scheme found that 61% of all interns progressed into paid employment within 5 months. Over 3,000 monitoring visits were conducted in 2013 to ensure the scheme was being implemented correctly.

The number of places available on Tús work placements was increased last year to 7,500.

The new Gateway County and City Council work placement scheme set up to provide 3,000 places

nationally in 2014 started in December 2013.

Under the new JobsPlus initiative, targeting people out of work for long periods, 1,114 people were supported back into employment during the period July to December 2013.

A recent review of the system of apprenticeships has recommended an expansion of apprenticeships to new business and industrial sectors with suitable occupations to be identified by employers. The Department of Education and Science will now engage with stakeholders to begin implementation of the wide ranging recommendations to ensure a modern effective apprenticeship system.

Additional Education and Training Places

To-date over 40,800 additional training and education places have been provided exceeding the 30,000 target set out:

- 5,800 places on the FAS Specific Skills Training programme
- Over 15,000 places under the three rounds of the Springboard programme
- 1,500 places under two rounds of the ICT graduate skills conversion programmes
- 9,000 places on the Back to Education Initiative
- 3,000 Post Leaving Certificate places
- 6,500 Momentum places (Labour Market Education and Training Fund)

Incorporate Literacy Training into Further Education and Training

SOLAS was formally established in October 2013 as the new body for funding, planning and co-ordinating the effective delivery of further education and training programmes. This involves the formation of 16 new Education and Training Boards (ETBs) formed from the aggregation of Ireland's 33 VECs and 16 FÁS Training Centres. Seven of these FÁS Training Centres, including 400 staff and their related training activity, transferred from SOLAS to four ETBs at the start of 2014. A new national five year strategy for further education and training is being finalised for publication by SOLAS shortly.

A report reviewing adult literacy provisions was published in September 2013 setting out a series of recommendations on how to meet current and future literacy needs including more intensive options, group

tuition, numeracy tuition, family literacy and alternative learning options including distance learning. Revised Adult Literacy Operational Guidelines for providers were published in December 2013 to address some of the recommendations and others will be incorporated in the forthcoming five year strategy for SOLAS.

Annual funding for adult literacy continues to be protected and maintained at €30 million, supporting over 57,000 participants in vital literacy programmes per annum.

One Stop Shop Employment Service

44 Intreo Centres were fully operational by the end of February 2014 providing practical, tailored employment services and supports for jobseekers. By end 2013, over 130,000 people had attended group engagements, 156,700 had initial one-to-one interviews and the entire Live Register has been profiled to help prioritise supports. By end 2014 the establishment of 60 Intreo centres throughout the country will be completed.

A strategy for employer engagement has been developed and rolled-out through a series of road shows to brief employers on the State's employment services and to increase the number of job vacancies filled by candidates from the live register.

Increasing Exports

The goods export figures of €87 billion for 2013 show a remarkably robust performance given everything that is happening in the pharma/chem sector, and the very positive figures for December 2013 give some reasons to believe that the trend is going in the right direction again. Employment in exporting companies increased by over 12,000 during 2013 which bears out a very strong underlying performance by exporting companies despite the difficulties, and the services sector continues to perform particularly strongly.

The recently published review of the Government Trade, Tourism and Investment Strategy sets out a 'new market approach' for Ireland's priority markets and updates targets for growth in exports, investment, tourism and jobs.

The Review's key recommendations are:

- The establishment of a 'new market approach' of Ireland's 27 priority markets to ensure

engagement with high-growth markets in Asia, South America and Africa

- A 2015 target of €900 million for the international education sector
- The maintenance of existing targets for the creation of 150,000 new jobs directly associated with exporting enterprises, a 33% increase in exports by State agency-assisted companies and 780 new inward investment projects through IDA Ireland

Promoting Ireland Abroad

In 2013, Enterprise Ireland organised 28 Ministerial led Missions and Trade Events in conjunction with the Embassy network, Government Departments, and other State Agencies with a focus on key emerging markets. A further 117 high-level visits with a significant economic or promotional dimension were also supported reaching 52 countries in total.

Among the major initiatives taken to promote Irish trade, tourism and investment in 2013 were:

- Significant trade missions to Japan, the USA and the Gulf led by An Taoiseach
- A major trade mission to Turkey led by the Tánaiste during which deals were secured expected to reach well over €30 million in value
- An investment-focussed trade mission to India
- 6 high level visits to China as well as the largest ever tourism sales mission to the country
- A major push to attract international scholarship students from Brazil
- A Presidential visit to Mexico
- A major trade mission to South Africa and Nigeria
- Senior Ministerial visits to the Philippines and Indonesia as part of the St Patrick's Day programme for the first time

Co-ordinated efforts have led to renewed access for Irish products in 9 international markets with a combined population of 1.5 billion, including the opening of the prestigious Japanese market to Irish beef, potentially worth €15 million annually.

Five new embassies and three new consulates general will be opened across key emerging markets in South East Asia, Europe, Africa and the Americas to provide a platform for further promotion of Irish exports,

investment, tourism and education. In another move aimed at increasing exports by Irish companies to high-growth emerging markets, Enterprise Ireland has secured an increase of over 20 additional overseas staff in key target markets including Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. EI analysis concludes that recruitment of these staff can directly support the creation of 1,200 additional jobs in Ireland and €250 million in additional annual exports.

Sharing of Export Expertise

Enterprise Ireland's Potential Exports Division held 21 Export Awareness events and Exploring Exporting workshops last year with an attendance of over 545 companies. Other combined supports including a UK specific event, one-to-one engagement and mentoring assisted a further 580 companies.

The Access Silicon Valley Programme, which is designed to fast-track early-stage Irish tech companies who are targeting Silicon Valley and San Francisco, is one of a suite of initiatives aimed at increasing the number of indigenous exporting firms. The first 3 day Access Silicone Valley boot camp commenced in September 2013 with 27 companies participating. The Programme involved mentoring from a US based mentor and meeting with prospective customers, partners and investors to further validate their business model and test the market.

Scholarship Schemes

The HEA's International Scholarship Programme was formally launched last April when the 2012/13 group of 20 students (from India, China and Brazil) received their scholarships. The 2013/14 round of 21 scholarships targeted China, India, Brazil and the US.

The Ireland Scholarships, managed by Fáilte Ireland, awarded 15 scholarships in 2013 which were targeted at English language teachers in priority markets including Japan, South Korea, Russia, China and Turkey.

Innovation and Commercialisation

Supporting our Digital Game Industry

A number of education initiatives were progressed during 2013 including internships and a pilot Hothouse initiative for undergraduates/post leaving cert courses

- an industry professional programme. A Fullbright Scholar was secured for a Curriculum Review in 2014 where a world leading International games designer and academic will meet with industry representatives in Ireland and will then visit a number of educational institutions to assess and advise on course content. Educational programmes will be advised on how to meet future industry needs via this review.

In relation to other recommendations in the Forfás Games Sector Report, the Clustering Development Team also continued to heighten awareness of the R&D Tax Credit using seminars and social media and worked towards identifying a suitable financial instrument / relief to incentivise the games industry. The Team is due to report to the Minister by the end of Q1 2014.

eGovernment

A new Office of the Government Chief Information Officer was launched last year with responsibility for developing and implementing an ICT Strategy for Government that ensures an integrated approach to ICT and accelerates the delivery of digital services. Progress during 2013 include publication of an eHealth Strategy for Ireland and legislation advanced to provide the legal basis for Individual Health Identifiers and the increase in use by public bodies of a wide range of new and emerging technologies and media to engage with the public.

New or enhanced eGovernment services introduced include:

- The online student grant application system
- Local Property Tax online system
- Passport Office Appointments Service
- Ongoing enhancements to Revenue's Online Services, including electronic filing of share option data
- Ongoing enhancements to the online Animal Identification and Movement system
- The Building Control Regulations Online Portal

A Public Service ICT Strategy is being developed for 2014 which will build on the existing achievements of eGovernment and address the evolving area of Digital Government.

Making Ireland a Leader in Cloud Computing

Arising from the Cloud Computing Strategy the

Office of the Government Information Officer is in the process of establishing the Government Cloud Services Catalogue (GCSC) which will contain a list of services under various categories for which vendors will be able to procure services. A supplier day was held in mid-October that was open to all cloud computing service providers and was well attended. This event outlined the approach that was being taken by the Irish public service and feedback from industry has been positive. Work on the Tender process is very advanced and it is intended to have the GCSC ready for use by the public sector in the first half of 2014.

Vodafone Ireland has been selected to manage a high bandwidth fixed data network to Government departments and public sector agencies which will enable the public sector to realise its vision of improved and more efficient services based on a 'Cloud First' approach.

Promoting Investment in Technology Research, Development and Commercialisation

The enactment of the Industrial Development (Science Foundation Ireland) (Amendment) Act 2013 extended the legislative remit of SFI to include applied research which will further assist in the exploration of areas of strategic opportunity for Ireland.

Funding provision of €152.3 million to SFI in 2013 enabled the Foundation to service existing commitments and invest strategically in various new research programmes. Highlights for 2013 included:

- Pre-commercial outputs for 2013 included 17 spin out companies, 30 licensed technologies, 25 patents awarded, 80 patents filed, and 147 invention disclosures
- SFI funded researchers have 1,067 collaborations with 702 companies
- SFI researchers have 1,821 international collaborations in over 60 countries
- Significant investment (€9.1 million) was made in 81 applied research projects focusing on the early stages of commercialisation of new research findings through SFI's Technology Innovation Development Award programme - which also trained approximately 100 researchers in entrepreneurship.
- Establishment of 7 world class SFI national Research Centres including:

- INSIGHT, an €88 million Centre for Data Analytics uniting 4 universities, 30 industry partners, and 200 researchers and creating 300 direct jobs through 12 funded spin out companies.
- AMBER, a €35 million Advanced Materials and Bio-Engineering Research Centre supporting 99 jobs.
- The €29.5 million MaREI Centre which aims to position Ireland at the forefront of Marine Renewable Energy Industry supporting 77 jobs.

A central Technology Transfer Office has been established to provide a 'one-stop-shop' for entrepreneurs and industry, signposting them towards the relevant sources of knowledge and capability within Ireland's Research Performing Organisations.

Promote Ireland's Engagement with Innovation Union

Horizon 2020, the European Union's new €79 billion programme for research and development was launched in December. Ireland has set an ambitious target of €1.25 billion to be won by Irish researchers and companies in funding from the programme. Building on the increased levels of collaborations with researchers and companies in Northern Ireland under the last programme, the National Support Network for Horizon 2020 will operate on an all-island basis.

Establishment of Technology Centres

Building on the already established 12 Technology Centres to generate economic value from publicly-funded research, two further centres were established in 2013 - CeADAR, the Centre for Applied Data Analytics Research and the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Technology Centre.

A Centre for Connected Health (ARCH) is currently being established with industry partners while work continues on the establishment of centres in relation to dairy technology and medical devices.

27 spin-out companies were created from higher education research and EI research commercialisation activities facilitated the transfer of 89 pieces of commercially valuable technology to companies in 2013.

Supporting SMEs

A range of measures were announced in Budget 2014 aimed at supporting SMEs:

- New Start Your Own Business Scheme targeting long term unemployed who start their own business giving them two year exemption from income tax
- Number of taxation measures – upping VAT threshold, CGT relief, R&D tax credit changes
- Removal of the Employment and Investment Incentive from the high earners restriction for a period of 3 years
- Increasing the threshold to €3 million for loan refusals for referral to the Credit Review Office
- New comprehensive communication strategy and training supports to build capacity

Reforming Public Procurement

A new Office of Government Procurement has been established to centralise the procurement of common goods and services for the entire public service and achieve targeted savings of up to €500 million over a three year period. A procurement reform plan which encompasses Central Government, Health, Local Government, Education, Justice and Defence expects to achieve €127 million savings in 2014.

One of the key priorities of the Office is improving the capacity of SMEs to tender for public sector contracts through a number of ways, such as simplifying tender documentation, subdividing larger contracts, improving information and ensuring engaging with government procurement is easy and low cost. Two 'Meet the Buyer' events were held in 2013 to provide opportunities for public service buyers to meet with potential suppliers, mainly SME's and were attended by approx. 2,000 businesses and 200 buyers.

The procurement reform programme will centralise data collection in procurement activity which will ensure that the level of SMEs participation can be accurately measured.

Reform our Bankruptcy Legislation

The new bankruptcy laws which came into effect on 3 December 2013 substantially reduces the duration of bankruptcy from 12 years to 3 years and aims to make bankruptcy less punitive and costly.

Reforming the Joint Labour Committee Structure

Following the recommendations in the Report of the Labour Court's Review of the Joint Labour Committee (JLC) system, Ministerial Orders were signed in January 2014 to give effect to the review recommendations which will result in 8 JLCs remaining in existence and independent chairmen being appointed to each JLC by the summer.

Commercial Leases and Rent Reviews

A new Commercial Leases Database administered by the Property Services Regulatory Authority now provides for greater transparency by making publically available, for the first time, the relevant details of letting agreements and rent reviews in the commercial property market.

Reducing Government Red-Tape on Business

A new integrated licensing application system is on course to be launched in 2014. The system will streamline the licensing application process through the provision of a single portal or website through which businesses will be able to apply for, and renew, a multiplicity of licences. The new licensing system will be developed for the retail sector in the first instance and rolled out to other sectors of the economy thereafter.

Engagement by Civil Society in the Legislative Process

Heads of Bills are now regularly published and referred to Oireachtas Committees, where the Committee itself and civil society can discuss them before a Bill is drafted. In addition, under the latest Dáil reform package, a pre-legislative stage will in general be required for all non-emergency legislation, allowing for unprecedented and extensive engagement by the public in law-making and enabling Committees to consult with citizens who have relevant expertise, and with civil society groups and other interested groups.

Examinership Light for SMEs

The Companies (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2013 amends existing examinership provisions to provide the option for small private companies to apply directly to the Circuit Court to have an examiner appointed instead of having to apply to the High Court. This should lower costs and provide greater accessibility for small private companies to the examinership process.

Protect Small Building Subcontractors

The Construction Contracts Act 2013 provides protection to small sub-contractors in the area of payments, including enforcement and adjudication of disputes.

Financial Services and Credit to Business

Credit Schemes for Businesses

Credit Guarantee Scheme

An independent review of the SME Credit Guarantee was carried out last year and work is ongoing to determine the changes that can be made to the Credit Guarantee Act 2012, and the contents of a new Credit Guarantee Scheme to encourage uptake. Implementation of the review recommendations will be progressed through the Action Plan for Jobs 2014. As of February 2014 the SME Credit Guarantee Scheme has eighty-one live facilities resulting in €11.5 million being sanctioned through the scheme by the participating lenders resulting in 424 new jobs being created and 247 jobs being maintained.

Microfinance Loan Fund

As of February 2014, loans totalling €2.6 million have been approved through the microfinance scheme, supporting 166 micro-enterprises and 377 jobs. Over 430 applications have been received and this represents an approval rate of 49% of applications fully processed.

€10 million International Start-Up Fund

To date 24 overseas entrepreneurs have been supported under the fund to establish their start-ups businesses in Ireland.

High Potential Start Ups

In 2013, Enterprise Ireland invested in 103 new High Potential Start Up businesses in areas including software, cleantech, engineering, medical devices and pharmaceuticals.

Developing a Dynamic Venture Capital Industry

Ireland has been ranked as the "most entrepreneurial country" in Europe by the Wall Street Journal, attracting four times as much venture capital funding for tech start-up companies than the European

average. This success is attributed to Ireland's favourable corporate tax rate, educated workforce and the presence of large tech companies in Ireland.

Enterprise Ireland and the NPRF have made investments that have resulted in 4 international venture capital firms establishing a presence in Ireland. These firms have to date made investments in the region of over \$40 million in seven companies to help support them to develop products, international markets and increase employment.

Enterprise Ireland is responsible for the Government's €225 million Development Capital Scheme which is comprised of €75 million Exchequer funding with the remainder being sourced from the private sector. The first fund launched under the scheme is the €125 million MML Ireland Fund which will focus on investing in Irish SMEs. Enterprise Ireland has made a €25 million commitment to the fund, which will be managed by MML Growth Capital Partners with the balance of funding provided by private investors.

The Silicon Valley Bank has formally established a presence in Ireland and has to date completed eight deals with funding of \$29.5 million committed to support Ireland's technology and innovation sector.

Sectoral Strategies

Growing the Agri-Food Sector

Securing Common Agricultural Policy Funding

Final agreement was reached on the CAP reform package on 26 June 2013 under the Irish Presidency, with the outstanding elements of the Multi-annual Financial Framework agreed in September guaranteeing €1.5 billion per year for Ireland. The priority for Ireland in the negotiations was to ensure that the redistribution of direct payments did not undermine the contribution that productive farmers can make to the development of the agriculture sector. Ireland secured agreement to implement partial convergence which involves moving part of the way towards a national average rather than to the uniform payment. This will help ensure the direct payments system is fairer and more equitable.

A further €1.9 billion in national funding will be made available for expenditure on rural development over the seven year period. A new draft Rural Development Programme has been developed which aims to ensure an effective contribution to the achievement of the Food Harvest 2020 objectives. Measures include:

- A substantial new agri-environment/climate scheme (GLAS)
- Continued strong support for disadvantaged areas
- Incentives for on-farm capital investment
- Knowledge transfer and innovation measures
- A new beef data and genomics measures

Dairy and Meat Sectors

In 2013, Ministerial led food and drink trade promotion and inward investment visits to the Gulf States, Japan, the United States and Switzerland, achieved significant outcomes for agri- food including:

- A process to open the US market to EU beef
- The opening of the prestigious Japanese market, potentially worth €15m annually, to Irish beef
- Canada and UAE opened for sheep-meat
- Libya opened for livestock
- Australia opened for pig meat
- Iran opened for beef
- Gulf ban lifted for beef and sheep-meat
- China opened for Salmon
- Access permitted to the Russian market for meat products previously excluded

Other food industry specific innovative/expansionary ventures include:

- Participation of 6,200 farmers in the beef enterprise improvement programme
- A new €23 million Beef Genomics Scheme and a €10 million Beef Data Programme
- Kerry Foods strategic Partnership with Chinese partner BeingMate, which will invest €20 million in building a subsidiary in Ireland
- Glanbia committed to €150 million capital investment in new major dairy processing centre in the South East
- The Irish Dairy Board announced a €20 million investment in a Saudi Dairy company which will lead to the importation of Irish milk powders to Saudi.
- €33 million expansion plan by Dairygold for Mitchelstown facility

- Substantial investment of the order of €250 million is planned for the whiskey sector

Promote Land Mobility

Following a series of successful public information meetings Teagasc embarked on an action plan in 2013 to encourage farmers to enter into formal collaborative arrangements with one another. During the year, 173 new collaborative farming initiatives were started, comprising 61 new partnerships and 112 share farming arrangements.

Further retirement relief changes were introduced in Budget 2014 to encourage older farmers who have no children to lease out their farmland to younger farmers

Supporting Young Farmers under CAP

The new CAP reform agreement contains provision for mandatory top-ups of direct payments for young farmers as well as targeted options to address the needs of young farmers:

- The full 2% of the national ceiling will be allocated to young farmers, providing for a 25% 'top-up' on direct payments on up to 50 hectares
- Additional educational criteria will ensure payments are made to genuine young farmers
- Young farmers will be prioritised in the allocation of payment entitlements from the national reserve

These direct payments measures will be complemented by further support under the Rural Development Programme, where a separate strand of the support for on-farm capital investment will be ring-fenced for young farmers at a higher rate of aid intensity of 60%.

Banning Unfair Trading Practices in the Retail Sector

The Consumer and Competition Bill 2014, which is at an advanced stage of drafting, will provide for regulation of certain trading practices in the grocery goods sector. It will also provide for the amalgamation of the Competition Authority and the National Consumer Agency which will then be the independent body assigned responsibility for overseeing and enforcing these regulations.

Developing New Food Businesses

A number of new measures were progressed during 2013 aimed at developing new food businesses:

- In its first year of operation, FoodWorks, an entrepreneurship programme for ambitious high potential start up food companies, helped 11 new companies complete investor-ready plans
- A specific all-island HBAN Investment Network has been established for Food, Beverage & Nutraceuticals and has announced its first investment in an Irish sports nutrition company
- 72 participants are involved in 3 Bord Bia industry focused graduate education programmes

A Single Brand for Irish Agri-Food

Origin Green is designed to help Ireland to become a world leader in high quality sustainably produced food and drink and is aligned at both farm and industry level. By end 2013, 60% of food and drink exports were supplied by companies who are verified members of Origin Green and adhere to a Sustainability Charter. Plans for 2014 include the placement of 10 Origin Green ambassadors in global food and drink companies and the launch of a trade directed publicity campaign on Origin Green.

At farm level, Origin Green is underpinned by more than 50,000 sustainability assessments undertaken as part of the Bord Bia Beef and Lamb Quality Assurance Scheme. These 'Carbon Trust' accredited footprinting methodologies and models for beef/lamb farms will be replicated and rolled out for the pig, poultry, grain and horticulture sectors by end 2014. A Carbon Navigator tool was launched in 2013 to help individual farmers improve their environmental and economic performance.

Irish Seafood Strategy

Ireland is well placed to become a hub for seafood processing with up to 1.2 million tonnes of fish caught in the waters around Ireland per annum with plenty of scope to increase the 200,000 tonnes of this catch landed annually into Ireland particularly from among the French and Norwegian fleets.

In July, Bord Iascaigh Mara (BIM) published a new 5 year strategy 'Capturing Ireland's Share of the Global Seafood Opportunity' which aims to deliver €1 billion in seafood sales and create 1,000 jobs over the Strategy's lifetime.

Following four years of intensive negotiations, Ireland has secured full market access to China for salmon

exports. Irish seafood exports to China recorded a 75% increase in recent years, growing from €5.7 million in 2010 to €10 million in 2012.

Improving our Tourism Product

Reduction of the €3 Travel Tax €3

As part of Budget 2014, the €3 air travel tax will be reduced to zero with effect from 1 April 2014. Following this, several airlines have announced a number of new routes to commence in 2014.

Tourism Marketing

In 2013, Tourism Ireland estimates that its promotional activities generated exposure worth an estimated €262 million in equivalent advertising value.

The number of overseas visitors to Ireland last year increased by 7.2 % to almost 7 million people, which is the best since 2008. All of Ireland's main overseas markets grew in 2013, with North America up 13.9% and Britain up 5.6%.

The promotion of the Gathering throughout 2013 to the 70 million people across the world connected to Ireland, coupled with specific strategies targeting long haul markets in Brazil, Russia, India and China has yielded a 15.5% increase in visit numbers from long haul markets.

A public consultation has been completed in relation to the development of a new tourism policy for Ireland to be finalised in 2014.

New Arrangements for Visitor Visas

Tourism Ireland has reported that some 55 new tour operator programmes to Ireland have been developed as a result of the introduction of the waiver programme directly contributing to over 13,000 additional visitors to Ireland from India and China.

Building on the success of the Irish Visa Waiver Programme, plans are currently being developed in co-operation with the UK for a reciprocal Common Travel Area visa to commence in 2014. This new visa has the potential to attract tens of thousands of additional visitors to Ireland every year

Improving the eCapability of our Tourism Product

In excess of 3,600 tourism businesses availed of web supports in 2013 which included

- Engaging with Fáilte Ireland's Sales Connect initiative, designed to help businesses sell to Ireland's four key overseas markets – the US, Germany, France and UK
- A Web Internationalisation Programme to enhance domestic practitioners' presence and performance in key overseas markets
- Webinars and web tutorials to keep industry up to speed on topical developments in the online world (e.g. use of social media)
- WebCheck supports to ensure individual businesses received tailored action plans from independent mentors to help improve their online performance

Ireland.com is live in 22 markets in seven language versions with a further three languages to be rolled out in early 2014. It attracted 13 million unique visits in 2013 – a 21% increase on 2012. Tourism Ireland also topped a European league table in 2013 for the use of digital marketing by national tourism organisations with over 2 million fans worldwide on Facebook, more than 10 million video views at its YouTube channel and over 113,000 Twitter followers.

Event Tourism

The Gathering

A successful year of the Gathering with some 5,000 "Gatherings" taking place all over Ireland which saw half a million extra tourists visiting Ireland. Independent research is indicating that at least half of this number travelled specifically because of the Gathering and is estimated to have spent up to €170 million.

St Patrick's Festival

The St. Patrick's Day Festival continues as a strong cultural tourism draw and the country's calling card to the world. The week long event in 2013 brought overseas visitor numbers to 140,000 generating an estimated €121 million for the economy. The parade in Dublin was attended by 483,000 people and had a TV viewership of 558,000.

Other Events

Other major events supported in 2013 included the European Team Championships in athletics, the European and World Laser Sailing Championships, the FlightFest Airshow, the New Year's Eve Festival in Dublin and the Cork International Choral Festival.

Over 209 conferences were held in Ireland last year which attracted in excess of 68,000 overseas delegates worth an estimated €92 million to the economy.

International Education

Strategy for International Education

A public consultation was launched last year as part of a review of Ireland's International Education Strategy which targets the six priority markets of USA, China, India, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia along with new scholarship opportunities in emerging markets. This will form the basis for a new Government Action Plan for International Education highlighting measures to be taken over the period 2014-2016 to enhance our educational relationships with priority and emerging markets and enhance the economic return to Ireland in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

Attracting More International Students

Ministerial-led Education missions took place in Brazil, China and the Gulf in 2013 to deepen education links and attract more students from new and growing countries. As part of the Ministerial mission to China, 13 agreements between Irish and Chinese education institutions were signed and the Minister officially opened the Beijing-Dublin International College, a joint venture of UCD and Beijing University of Technology.

Already 5,000 Chinese students and 1,200 Brazilian students attend Irish higher education institutes and the number of 3rd level Indian students studying in Ireland is set to double by 2015.

Interactions with the Education in Ireland brand through its website and the various social media channels supported was over 856,000 in 2013, up from around 30,000 this time last year.

Green Jobs

Home Energy Financing

250,000 homes having been upgraded through the Better Energy schemes with additional funding of €30 million secured for 2014. Almost 12,500 Social Housing units were retrofitted by the end of 2013 as part of the €50 million capital funding launched to retrofit Local Authority houses. A public consultation on a Better Energy Financing initiative (pay-as-you-save) scheme was launched last year and recommendations on a design for the scheme are currently under consideration.

Insulating Public Buildings

Funding of €9 million is to be spent over three years on an energy conservation programme in the public sector. An existing programme, Optimising Power@Work, has been running since 2008 in over 270 large buildings in the Central Government portfolio. Average energy savings of over 18% have been achieved and this equates to approximately €4.3 million per annum in cost savings. The new programme aims to replicate this success more widely and will initially target 500 large building units in the wider Public Sector.

Establish Ireland as a Renewable Manufacturing Hub

A Progress Report on Growth and Employment in the Green Economy published in December outlines some of the key developments in the Green Economy in Ireland including examples of enterprises and projects which are creating jobs, driving exports and improving competitiveness through their activities.

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland is currently undertaking a detailed analysis of the supply chain markets for renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies and services in Ireland. The focus is on how to maximise the local job creation dimensions of energy policy goals.

Green IFSC

Initial proposals on positioning Ireland as a leading player in the global carbon market were considered in detail by an expert review group, which has recommended that Government should focus its support on developing Ireland as a global centre for Green Finance activities, while recommending against funding for proposals to develop Ireland's role in the global carbon market. The Green IFSC initiative

focuses on developing Ireland's capacity and reputation in Green Finance activities.

During 2013, Green IFSC cluster companies won an estimated €3 billion of green funds, and created an estimated 90 new jobs. The Green IFSC continues to implement a number of initiatives including supporting the internationally accredited Graduate Certificate and MSC in Sustainable Energy Finance, in DCU; ongoing implementation of the 'Greening the IFSC' initiative; and enhancement of Ireland's profile as a location for green funds.

In 2013, Ireland was ranked in a KPMG international survey as the 7th most-attractive location globally for green finance-enabling legislation.

Development of Energy Co-Operatives

Ireland's first community owned wind farm was opened in Templederry, Co. Tipperary. The group is now producing green electricity and selling it to the grid, producing approximately 15GWh per annum. This is enough to power 3,500 houses.

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland along with the National Economic and Social Council has undertaken research exploring community ownership of wind farms in Ireland to develop guidance on financial models for community wind farms and resourcing communities to develop their own wind farms.

Social Enterprise

Development of the Social Enterprise Sector

The Social Enterprise sector employs more than 25,000 people in over 1,400 social enterprises in Ireland, with a combined total income of around €1.4 billion. Following the publication of a Forfás report on the sector, Minister of State Sherlock has been tasked with leading efforts across Government to double employment in the sector by 2020. An Interdepartmental Committee has been convened to consider the recommendations of the Forfás report, has met with the Social Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Taskforce to gain the views of the sector and will agree a firm set of actions early in 2014.

Investment Strategy

Ireland Strategic Investment Fund

The forthcoming National Treasury Management Agency (Amendment) Bill will provide for the establishment of the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund and put NewERA on a statutory footing.

The Fund will absorb the resources of the National Pensions Reserve Fund (NPRF) making the €6.8 billion in the Fund's discretionary portfolio available for commercial investment in Ireland. In anticipation of the establishment of the Fund, the NPRF Commission has been working to develop a pipeline of potential investments. A number of these have been concluded and the NPRF has now invested or committed €1.26 billion, with a further €1.52 billion leveraged from third capital, in areas including infrastructure, venture capital and long term financing for SMEs.

Capital Investment

Following the awarding of the National Lottery licence to a preferred bidder for €405 million, €200 million of this money has been ring-fenced for the National Children's Hospital while the remaining €200 million will help to fund:

- Road maintenance and repair works
- A new round of Sports Capital Grants
- The building of a new National Indoor Training Arena at the National Sports Campus
- The Better Energy Programme
- Housing adaptation grants for older people and people with a disability
- The National City of Culture Initiative
- The development of a large scale multi-functional events centre in Cork
- The Wild Atlantic Way Driving Route tourism project, and
- A number of 1916 Commemoration Projects

An additional investment of €150 million in Exchequer capital funding was made available for 2013 to 2014 to fund 28 school projects, local road maintenance and repairs, and a Local Authority Energy Efficiency Scheme.

Government will shortly publish a Construction Sector Strategy as outlined in the Medium Term Economic Strategy to address the remaining challenges in

the construction sector, including developing an overall strategic approach to housing supply, identifying and implementing further improvements in the planning process to facilitate appropriate development, and seeking to improve financing options for development and mortgage provision. The strategy will have a strong focus on implementation, specifically on actions to remove unnecessary obstacles to ensure that crucial and sensible development can take place and also on actions ensuring the long term stability of the sector.

NewERA

NewERA and Sale of State Assets

NewERA manages the shareholder function in relation to ESB, Bord Gáis, EirGrid, Bord na Mona, and Coillte and provides specialist investment and financial advisory services in relation to the corporate governance of these commercial State companies. NewERA also provides advice in relation to the State Assets Disposal Programme as well as working with Departments to develop and implement proposals for investment projects in the NewERA sectors of energy, forestry, water and telecommunications.

Some of the main areas of recent progress include:

- Approval of the preferred bidder for the acquisition of Bord Gáis Energy for €1.12 billion
- ESB completed the sale of its 50% stake in the Marchwood power station in England and progressing sales of its 50% stake in a power plant in Spain and of two Irish peat stations
- Completed an evaluation on a beneficial merger of Coillte and Bord na Móna
- Supporting the establishment of the €70 million Energy Efficiency Fund to provide project lending for energy efficiency works in the public and commercial sectors

New Water Network

On 1 January, Irish Water became the national water service authority with responsibility for delivering water and wastewater services to homes and businesses. The establishment of Irish Water, and related reforms, will help ensure security of quality water supply and ensure consistent service levels to customers across Ireland. One of the immediate priorities is finding and fixing leaks to meet the immediate water supply capacity needs in areas of deficit. In 2014, Irish Water will invest some €310 million in core water services infrastructure. The national roll-out of water meters is underway with some 870 people

currently employed through Regional Contractors.

Next Generation Broadband

A Nationwide Broadband Mapping Project has commenced to identify areas that will need to be targeted in the State-led intervention to deliver high speed broadband to areas of the country where the commercial market will not invest. It is expected that this phase will be concluded towards the end of 2014. The ESB (Electronic Communications Networks) Bill 2013 will provide a legal basis to allow ESB to leverage its extensive distribution infrastructure to provide high speed broadband infrastructure in Ireland.

Bioenergy and Forestry

Following the decision in 2013 not to proceed with the sale of harvesting rights in Coillte, an evaluation is being undertaken on the merits of a merger of Coillte and Bord na Móna to create a streamlined and refocused commercial state company operating in the bio-energy and forestry sectors.

Fiscal Policy

Achieving 3% of GDP Deficit Target

As public finances continue to improve, the Department of Finance has forecast that the excessive deficit target of 7.8% in 2013 will not only be achieved, but bettered. Budget 2014 represents our most recent step toward achieving the deficit target of 3% of GDP or less by 2015, and targets a general government deficit of 4.8% of GDP in 2014. While all the targets under the excessive deficit procedure have been met to date, 2014 will be the first year we will be actively seeking to overachieve the target.

Tax and Social Welfare Commission

The Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare has completed and reported on three modules of its work to date:

- Child and family income supports
- Budget 2012 proposals relating to Disability Allowance and Domiciliary Care Allowance
- Extending Social Insurance coverage for the self-employed

The Advisory Group is currently progressing its final module of work on the issue of working age income supports to determine how the social welfare system can best achieve its goals of supporting persons through periods of involuntary unemployment while incentivising work and disincentivising welfare dependency.

REFORM – KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Political and Constitutional

- New proposals for Seanad reform following the Referendum
- Referendum approved establishment of a Court of Appeal
- Constitutional Convention has considered 10 topics
- Referenda to be held in 2015 on voting age, role of women in the home and same sex marriage
- Number of constituencies and TDs reduced for future elections
- All TD expenses now vouched and reduced by 20%
- New protections for information communicated in confidence to Oireachtas members

Dáil Reform

- New arrangements for annual statements and debate in the Dáil on Government achievements and future priorities
- New wave of reforms introduced to reduce use of guillotine
- Dáil sitting time increased - 5 hours per week and doubling of Friday sittings
- Increased time for private members bills
- All non-emergency legislation to be discussed in advance by Committees and opened up for public input
- Earlier Dáil starting times has increased the time spent on Oral questions

Transparency and Accountability

- Commitment to new National Risk Assessment
- New Code of Practice to ensure effective implementation of new Freedom of Information provisions
- Ireland set to join Open Government Partnership
- 51 new bills enacted in the past twelve months
- New laws to clarify and strengthen corporate governance in the private sector

Public Sector

- Haddington Road Agreement will yield €1 billion in further savings
- Delivered pay reductions, freeze on increments, increased hours and further reforms
- New Public Service Reform plan published with new set of actions
- New Procurement Office set up to deliver €500m savings
- Shared Services progressing on payroll, banking and financial management services
- Rollout of most radical Local Government reforms in 100 years
- Reducing number of local councils by 83 and elected members by 678
- New initiative on Civil Service renewal and accountability underway
- Public service redeployments passes 11,000 mark
- 500,000 new Public Services Cards issued to date
- New Local Enterprise Offices providing a First-Stop-Shop for SMEs

The Context of Reform

Abolition of the Seanad

The referendum to abolish the Seanad was held on 4 October 2013. Following its rejection, the Government has agreed proposals to reform the operation of the Seanad. These are being submitted by the Leader of the Seanad, on behalf of the Government, to the Seanad Committee for Procedures and Privileges for its consideration.

The Government has also approved the general scheme of a Bill to implement the 1979 decision of the people to extend the franchise for the university panel. The general scheme is now being referred to the relevant Oireachtas Committee and being circulated to other stakeholders, including the Seanad, for their consideration. Any feedback received will inform the further development and preparation of the Bill

Court of Appeal

A new Court of Appeal will be established following the passing of the Referendum on 4 October 2013.

Constitutional Convention

The Convention has considered and reported on the eight specific topics set out in its terms of reference:

- Reducing the Voting Age
- Presidential term of office
- Removing the Article from the Constitution on the role of women in the home
- Women in politics and public life
- Same-sex marriage
- Dáil electoral system
- Votes for citizens abroad, and
- Blasphemy

The Convention considered a further two topics in February which it will report on by the end of March: Dáil Reform and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Government has formally responded to the recommendations on the first five topics and has so far committed to holding three referendums in 2015 i.e. to reduce the voting age to 16, to remove the Article on the role of women in the home, and legislating for same sex marriage.

A list setting out the Convention's recommendations on each topic considered and the Government's responses is set out at Appendix 1.

Political Reform

Reduce the Number of TDs

The Electoral (Amendment) (Dáil Constituencies) Act 2013 was signed into law during 2013 reducing the number of constituencies to 40 and the number of TDs to 158 for future Dáil elections.

Reform of Political Expenses & Abolition of Severance Payments

From 1 January 2013 all expenses paid under the Public Representational Allowance are now vouched and the overall limit reduced by an average of 20%.

The Oireachtas (Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices) (Amendment) Bill currently before the Oireachtas will abolish severance payments for current and future holders of certain Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices upon cessation of Office. The substantial overhaul of the system of allowances paid to office holders has already led to a reduction of 80% in costs since 2008. The Bill also provides for a 10% reduction in the Party Leaders Allowance and expands the role of Standards in Public Office Commission to ensure that such money is spent in an appropriate manner.

Oireachtas Inquiries

The Houses of the Oireachtas (Inquiries, Privileges and Procedures) Act 2013 was signed into law in July 2013. The Act provides for Oireachtas inquiries, consistent with the Supreme Court's judgment in the *Abbeylara* case. There is a very broad scope of legitimate parliamentary inquiries that can now be carried out under this legislation including a banking inquiry.

The new legislation also makes provisions to expand the scope of evidence that civil servants may give to provide the committee with a full narrative on events for the purpose of establishing facts. This may include evidence as to anything said or communicated by any person during the course of events but will exclude their own opinions on the merits of decisions made or policies pursued or the objectives thereof.

Heads of State Bodies Appearing Before Oireachtas Committees

Revised procedures were introduced in 2011 for the appointments to boards of State bodies whereby expressions of interest are invited from the public to apply for such vacancies. Any proposed appointees to the position of chairperson are required to make themselves available to appear before the relevant

Oireachtas committee prior to their appointment. To the end of December 2013 in excess of 50 chairpersons designate have appeared before Oireachtas Committees prior to their appointment.

Overhauling Politics and the Government

Restore the Freedom of Information Act

The new Freedom of Information Bill 2013 currently before the Oireachtas will restore Ireland's FOI provisions to the pre-2003 position and provide for its extension to all public bodies and bodies significantly funded by the State. The main reforms include:

- reducing the ten year rule prohibiting release of Government records to five years
- restoring the strict definition of what constitutes a Cabinet record
- communications between Government members is no longer exempt
- making some of the other exemptions less restrictive
- promoting the proactive publication of routine information by public bodies
- reducing the appeal fees by almost two thirds
- providing for a general right of access to records held by public bodies

Development of a new Code of Practice is well advanced to support the effective and consistent implementation of the new FOI regime across all public bodies with a strengthening of supports at central level to assist in this.

Whistleblowers Legislation

The Protected Disclosure Bill 2013 currently before the Oireachtas will provide a robust statutory framework within which workers can finally raise concerns regarding potential wrongdoing in the workplace without fear of being punished for it.

Regulation of Lobbying

The forthcoming Regulation of Lobbying Bill will provide for a statutory web-based register of lobbying activity and the appointment of a regulator to investigate potential breaches. This will help to ensure greater transparency in the formulation and development of public policy and decision making.

The Bill will also provide for a cooling off period of 1 year, during which, designated former public officials seeking to lobby their former colleagues will be obliged to apply to the regulator. In considering such requests and the circumstances involved, the regulator rather than imposing a blanket ban may permit an employment offer to proceed but impose restrictions in relation to certain activities.

Protecting Confidential Communication

The Houses of the Oireachtas (Inquiries, Privileges and Procedures) Act 2013 provides for protection for confidential communication from members of the public who wish to draw wrongdoing to the attention of Oireachtas members without having their identities disclosed.

The Public Service and Petitions Committee

To date, the Committee met on 7 occasions to discuss Annual Reports, Special Reports and issues with the offices under its remit including the Ombudsman, Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission and An Coimisinéir Teanga. Since the launch of the public petitions system in September 2012, the Committee has received a total of 87 petitions across a range of issues. Some 75 of these have been brought before the Committee with 54 now closed.

Good Corporate Governance

The Companies Bill 2012, which is expected to be enacted during 2014, will consolidate and modernise the Companies Acts 1963-2013 into a single Act. One of the main provisions in the Bill is a consolidation and clarification of the duties of directors of companies, making it clearer and easier for directors to know their obligations. Other aspects of corporate governance will also be provided for.

Legal Services to the State

To date, the cost of legal fees to the State have been substantially reduced through a critical review of legal work to ensure that payments reflect the value of work completed, the use of junior counsel rather than senior counsel wherever practical and the reduction of numbers in the size of legal teams representing the State in court. The level of expenditure on counsel fees by the Chief State Solicitor's Office and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, for example, has declined by about 30%, or €9 million, since 2009. Procurement of legal work at the Bar is on a fair and equitable basis and from the widest possible

pool of relevant talent available. The new Office of Government Procurement is working on centralising the procurement of common goods and services for the entire public service and will review legal service requirements in that context.

Showing Leadership

Cap Tax Payers' Subsidies for all Future Pension Schemes

The measures included in Budget 2013, aimed at capping taxpayers' subsidies for pension schemes that deliver retirement income of more than €60,000, came into effect on 1 January 2014.

Dáil Reform

The Government published its second set of Dáil Reforms in September which are designed to:

- Increase the working week of the Dáil to provide more time for legislative debate
- Improve the public access to law making
- Enhance Oireachtas oversight of the law making and budgetary process
- Enhance the level of debate in the Oireachtas on legislation and important issues

Increased Dáil Sitting Time

In its first two and half years since March 2011 this Dáil has sat for 303 days which is an increase of 74 days or 32% on the same period for the previous Dáil. Building on the significantly increased number of Dáil sitting days, the latest reforms has increased the weekly Dáil sitting time by five hours through earlier starts on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and a doubling of the Friday sittings. During the past 12 months a total of 51 bills were enacted a list of which is set out in Appendix 2.

Friday Sittings for Committee Reports and Private Members Bills

The number of Private Members Bills has increased significantly following the introduction in 2011 of special sittings on the first Friday of every month from 16 in 2011 to 58 in 2013.

The second phase of Dáil Reforms announced in September aims to build on this by:

- Increasing the Dáil Friday sittings to every second Friday
- Increasing the frequency of and extending the Friday sittings to debate a Private Members Bill and a Committee Report or two Private Members Bills selected using a lottery system
- Provide speaking time for any Deputy proposing a Private Member's Bill to outline to the Dáil the purpose of the legislation
- Increases the number of Private Member's Bills taken on Friday sittings from one a month to three to four a month

Opening up the Pre-legislative Process

Opening up the law making process to the public is central to the Dáil reforms introduced last year. Under the new reforms, the pre-legislative stage of all non-emergency legislation is now required to come before the relevant Oireachtas committees to allow for consultation with experts and civic society groups prior to the drafting of the legislation. Where Bills do not go to Committee for a Pre-Legislative stage the Minister will have to explain both to the Cabinet and the Dáil why this did not take place.

Ministers will also report to the relevant Committee within 12 months of enactment to review the functioning of new legislation which will be opened up for public input.

Restricting the Use of the Guillotine

The new Dáil reforms aim to reduce the need for the guillotine in the Dáil through:

- A reduction of the number of Legislative Programmes approved by Cabinet each year from three to two
- Increased time available to debate legislation in the standard sitting week by increasing the length of the sitting day and increasing the number of Dáil sitting days each year
- New arrangements on speaking times to improve the legislative debate, and
- New structures in the drafting and enactment of legislation to allow for more detailed benchmarking and timetabling of the workload

Enhancing Debate of Topical Issues

The relevant Minister or a Minister of State is to be present in the chamber for a Topical Issue debate.

Where that is not possible, debate on the topic can be deferred at the Deputy's request until the relevant Minister is available, at which time it will be given priority.

More Effective Oral PQ Process

The time allocated to oral questions has been increased and standardised to 75 minutes each day Tuesday to Thursday. This is in addition to the 60 minutes allocated each week for questions to the Taoiseach and 63 minutes allocated for Leaders' Questions.

Other reforms introduced to improve the effectiveness of the Parliamentary Question system include:

- An oral question will only be answered if the Deputy tabling the question is present who will be given a brief period to outline the question
- Opposition spokespeople can ask five ordinary oral questions in their own name, an increase from two previously
- Grouping of replies will be notified to members in advance

More Effective Financial Scrutiny

New arrangements being implemented as part of the Dáil Reforms will see the Government publish on an annual basis for debate in the Dáil:

- An economic update and projections for the next three years
- A new National Risk Assessment, setting out the risks facing Ireland in the year ahead
- A National Progress Report, produced independently by the CSO

The Taoiseach and Tánaiste will address the Dáil and set out Government priorities.

Each Government Minister will address the Dáil setting out their Departments achievements to date and their plans for the future.

Opening up the Budget Process

Macroeconomic forecasts underpinning Budget 2014 were presented to the Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform Committee before the Budget and were

endorsed by the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council in line with new EU reforms.

Further elements of the same EU reforms required the Budget to be presented by 15 October and this meant that the Dáil and the Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform Committee were able, for the first time, to scrutinise the Finance Bill proposals before the commencement of the relevant financial year.

Publishing Purchase Orders Over €20,000

All Departments and Office are now publishing details of purchase orders over €20,000 on a quarterly basis.

State Agency Rationalisation

Further agency rationalisation measures completed during 2013 include the replacement of 33 VECs by 16 new Education and Training Boards and the merger of the Family Support Agency into the new Child and Family Agency.

Following the completion of a critical review process to consider further proposals, Government has decided to implement an additional 25 agency rationalisation measures and has already delivered 10 of these measures during 2013.

Annual Estimates, Performance Reports and Oireachtas Scrutiny

In 2013, a new model of financial scrutiny was piloted by five Select Committees and their respective Government Departments to achieve more meaningful financial scrutiny through consideration of major programmes of expenditure along with associated outputs. The objective is to implement the new model across all Oireachtas Committees by 2015.

The inclusion of the Public Service performance information in the Estimates since 2013 supports the Oireachtas' examination of the Estimates by providing members of Select Committees with key relevant information about what services are being purchased with public money and the impacts of these services for Irish citizens and for Irish society in general. This information also contributed to Select Committees ex ante discussions of resource allocations as part of the 'whole of year' budgetary process.

New Appointments to Department of Finance

The Department of Finance has completed its restructuring to realign and strengthen the functioning

of all elements of the Department with three new senior management appointments made in 2013 following open competitions - Chief Economist, Chief Financial and Operations Officer and Head of the Shareholding Management Unit.

The National Parliament and the European Union

Ireland's Presidency of the EU

Ireland's successful Presidency of the Council was a busy and productive six months. The theme of the Irish Presidency, 1 January to 30 June, 2013, was stability, jobs and growth. A jobs and growth focus was applied across every single policy area and Council formation during the six month period, which delivered up to 200 policy commitments, including more than 80 legislative instruments. A number of significant decisions were taken during the period, many of them crucially supported by the €960 billion Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the EU for 2014 to 2020.

Dáil Debates on EU Matters

There are now two Dáil sitting weeks a year tailored to deal with EU related business. In May, the Dáil focuses on a Government statement on key EU priorities for Ireland while from this November each sectoral Committee will look at EU issues relevant to their own area.

Enhanced Role for Oireachtas Committees in EU Scrutiny

Oireachtas Committees now play an expanded role in relation to EU matters concerning the Departments they cover with EU scrutiny an ongoing core activity. Each Oireachtas Committee is assisted by an EU Policy Clerk to advise on relevant EU draft legislative proposals and Committees respond to items they have concerns about by providing "Reasoned Opinions". Issues raised to date include maritime spatial planning & integrated coastal management; the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office and the European single market for electronic communications.

Communicating EU to the Irish People

A weeklong series of activities and events was held in 5th to 12th May marking the European Year of Citizens 2013, the 40th anniversary of Ireland in the EU and

Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Over 100 events and activities were held throughout Ireland with a focus on European music, dance, song, food, poetry, art exhibitions and film. Business networking events and conferences were held in Dublin, Cork, and Clare focusing on Ireland in Europe.

In 2013 the Communicating Europe Initiative provided funding of €159,000 to over 40 groups in respect of projects aimed at deepening public awareness of the role that the European Union plays in our daily lives. The second year of the Blue Star Programme saw a significant jump from 32 to 94 in the number of participating primary schools involving 5,000 pupils from across Ireland learning about the European Union.

Ministerial Appearance before Committees prior to EU Council Meetings

In the past year, there have been over 20 appearances by Ministers before relevant Committees in relation to EU related matters.

Reforming Local Government

Reforming Local Government

The Action Programme for Effective Local Government published in October 2012 sets out Government policy decisions in relation to a range of local government reform measures. The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides the legislative basis for these reforms and introduces the most radical change to the structure of local government in over a century. This involves the merger of city/county councils in Limerick, Tipperary and Waterford and the introduction of a comprehensive system of sub-county governance, with municipal districts in lieu of the 80 town councils. This change will take effect from 1 June 2014, following the local elections on 23 May.

This system of municipal districts is designed to enhance democratic governance, subsidiarity and accountability. A range of statutory functions are being devolved to council members at municipal district level, bringing decision making on significant matters such as local area plans, local bye-laws, local charges and programmes of works such as roads, housing and amenities, closer to local communities.

The Act will enable local authorities to take all appropriate steps to consult with and promote effective participation of local communities in local government. One of the principal implementing provisions will be the adoption by each local authority of a framework for public participation, which will set out the mechanism by which citizens and communities will be encouraged and supported to participate in the decision-making processes of the local authority.

The new arrangements are also intended to improve operational efficiency and value for money, with a single county-wide executive and operational structure.

Appointing Chief Executives

The new legislation provides for the establishment of a new post of chief executive to replace the former city and county managers. The role of the chief executive will be more clearly defined to advise and support the elected Councillors in their policy making role and there will be enhanced management reporting arrangements to the Council. The Act also provides for the elected Council to accept or reject the person recommended by the Public Appointment Service for appointment as chief executive.

Regional Planning

On the foot of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, reconfigured Regional Assemblies will be tasked with preparing Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs) to ensure the co-ordination of economic and spatial development across the regions and enable local government to play a stronger role in economic development in general. These new RSEs will be adopted in 2016 to replace the Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2020.

Holding Service Providers to Account

The powers of councillors are being significantly extended in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, including the provision for local authority Strategic Policy Committees (SPC) to request the attendance of public authorities at meetings of the SPC in order to advise policy development, and the reporting of any failure to attend a meeting to the relevant Minister of Government for the policy area concerned.

Accountability to Oireachtas Committees

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides for the establishment of a National Oversight and Audit Commission to provide an independent high quality scrutiny of local government performance in fulfilling

mandates, scrutinise value for money and support the development of best practice and enhanced efficiency. The Commission which is to be established in 2014 will report publicly to relevant Ministers, Oireachtas Committees, regional assemblies and local authorities. It will have the power to require local authorities to address issues raised and report back within a specified period on action taken.

Shared Services for Local Government

A Shared Payroll and Superannuation Centre has been established in Portlaoise which will see the transition of all local authorities to this service, over the next two years. This service went live in January 2014 with its first successful payment run. In the area of Procurement, efficiency savings of over €6m were achieved in 2013 by the shared service provided by the Local Authority National Procurement Office

A new Building Control Management System will go live on 1 March 2014. The move to regional/shared services approaches to building control administration and the adoption of common IT and administrative procedures are necessary first steps towards the development of a unified national building and inspectorate.

Local Enterprise Offices

The 31 new Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) will be rolled out during 2014 following the enactment of the County Enterprise Boards (Dissolution) Bill 2013. The LEOs will be the First-Stop-Shop through which all information on State supports for small and micro businesses can be accessed.

Public Sector Reform

Haddington Road Agreement

The Haddington Road Agreement negotiated and agreed in 2013, will deliver a further reduction of €1 billion in the cost of the Public Service and provides an extra 15 million work hours across all sectors.

Measures agreed include:

- Increased working hours
- Reductions in pay for those earning over €65,000
- Reductions in overtime pay
- Increment pauses
- Reduction in use of external consultants

Public Service Reform Plan

A new Public Service Reform Plan 2014-2016 has been published which builds on the progress made on implementing the first Reform Plan and sets out an ambitious new phase of reform. While continuing to address the emphasis on reducing costs and increasing efficiency, this plan contains a series of cross-cutting strategic reforms with the objective of delivering better outcomes through a focus on service users, a focus on efficiency and a focus on openness, transparency and accountability. This will be underpinned by enhancing leadership, capability and delivery. Many of these outcomes will be delivered across the main sectoral areas of Civil Service, Health, Education, Local Government and Justice. Each Department / Office has completed an Integrated Reform Delivery Plan setting out the various actions and milestones in relation to priority areas of reform for their organisations and the wider sectors for which they have responsibility. These Integrated Reform Delivery Plans also include actions to realise the targeted savings under the Haddington Road Agreement.

A second progress report on the original Public Service Reform Plan has also been published setting out significant progress across the 200 actions over 14 main areas of reform since its publication in November 2011 including:

- Staff numbers have been reduced by over 30,000 since 2008
- The cost of Public Service pay has fallen by €3.4 billion since 2009
- New working arrangements including longer working hours and new rosters
- Standardised arrangements for annual leave and sick leave
- Rolling out of Shared Services across a range of areas to yield savings
- Establishment of the new Office of Government Procurement targeting €500 million in savings over the next three years
- Advancing the programme of political and legislative reform including Freedom of Information, Lobbying, Whistleblowers and Inquiries

A Strategic Centre

Transforming the Department of the Taoiseach

The Department of the Taoiseach has been reduced in size. Staff numbers are down by 17% and the overall budget down by 57%, when compared with 2008. Its role has been transformed to focus on strategic policy issues and the delivery of the Programme for Government. This is achieved principally through the provision of support for the Taoiseach as the Head of Government and as a member of the European Council and North/South Ministerial Council, as well as through the Government Secretariat, the Cabinet Committee system, and small teams supporting implementation of the Programme for Government and the Action Plan for Jobs.

Open Recruitment of Principal Officers

Preparations are under way for open recruitment to the Civil Service at Principal Officer level with a competition expected to take place in early 2014. This will be based on the identified competencies for the post and will provide a valuable opportunity to bring senior managers from a wide variety of backgrounds into the system and to support mobility of internal talent across the Civil Service.

Open Government

Government has embarked upon an extensive reform programme to facilitate more open, transparent responsible and responsive public governance. This is taking place in tandem with a major programme of Public Service Reform aimed at delivering a more efficient public service which will deliver public services in an integrated, transparent and cost-efficient manner. Significant progress has been achieved in advancing legislative proposals in the following areas:

- Regulation of Lobbying
- Protecting Whistleblowers
- Restoring and Extending Freedom of Information
- Ethics Reform
- Civil Service Accountability
- Providing for Oireachtas Inquiries
- Extending the remit of the Ombudsman
- Limiting Corporate and Political Donations

Transparency

In May 2013, Ireland submitted a letter of intent to participate in the Open Government Partnership (OGP) which is a global initiative aimed at opening up Government procedures and decision-making to public scrutiny. Work to formulate a draft National Action Plan is now well underway involving collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders. This consultative process will inform the Government's OGP commitments. It will also identify a multi-stakeholder forum for regular public consultation on its implementation. Ireland is expected to become a full member in April 2014 and will host a European-level Open Government Partnership conference in May.

Protecting Whistleblowers and Restoring FOI

New legislation protecting whistleblowers in all sectors of the economy, and new legislation to restore Freedom of Information provisions and extend it to all public bodies have been published and are proceeding through the Oireachtas and will be enacted during 2014.

Top Level Appointments in the Civil Service

All appointments to senior positions in the Civil Service are overseen by the reformed Top Level Appointments Committee which has a majority of private sector membership and is headed by an independent chairperson. All positions at Secretary General and Assistant Secretary levels are subject to open competition including external candidates.

Waste

Establish Shared Services

PeoplePoint, the new Human Resources Shared Services opened in 2013, is currently providing services to 24,000 employees from 19 Departments with all remaining Departments expected to be fully transitioned by the end of 2014.

The Civil Service Payroll Shared Service Centre commenced in December 2013 with the first wave payrolls transitioned over. The remaining payroll processes for 53 Government Departments and Offices will transition over on a phased basis by the end of 2015 expected to yield savings of €5.6 million per annum.

Further work is ongoing to progress shared services projects in the areas of Banking and Financial Management and Learning and Development within the Civil Service and in each of the health, education and local government sectors.

Local Government Efficiency Review

The second report of the independently chaired Local Government Efficiency Review Implementation Group, published in 2013, sets out progress towards delivering efficiencies in the local government sector, mainly through shared services savings in procurement, and ICT. The sector has reported a 26% headcount reduction since the peak with efficiency measures delivering savings of €229.6 million from 2010 to 2012 specifically attributed to the implementation of LGER measures.

Future monitoring and reviews of the Local Government Efficiency Review is expected to be incorporated into the work programme of the independent National Oversight and Audit Commission which is anticipated to be established in Quarter 2 of 2014.

“Choice and Voice” for Service Users

Fixyourstreet.ie

The Fixyourstreet.ie website is now accessible in all local authority areas. The facility is available as Gaeilge at www.deisighdoshraid.ie and there is also a mobile phone app available. In 2013, a total of 9,796 reports were submitted with Litter and Illegal Dumping being the most common (46%), Roads and Path Defects (24%), Street Lighting (15%), Tree and Grass Maintenance (8%), Graffiti (3%), and Leaks and Drainage (4%).

Social Impact Investing

Social Impact Investing is a new method to finance public projects which can yield both a social and financial return for the State. The risk associated with funding the interventions and the achievement of the social outcomes is transferred from the State to the private investors with the State repaying the investors only if agreed outcomes are achieved. Following a public call for proposals, two projects have been selected for a pilot phase:

- Homelessness project aims to move 136 family households out of Private Emergency Accommodation into suitable long-term accommodation. Clann Credo has been appointed to secure suitable private sector investment and to oversee the project while Focus Ireland has been appointed to provide suitable accommodation
- Reduce recidivism in young offenders project aims to target 125 children remanded to detention by Dublin Courts over a five-year period and demonstrate that with a new bail supervision service, they can be released by the court and safely managed on bail in the community

Empowering the Civil Service

Civil Service Accountability and Renewal

A consultation paper 'Strengthening Civil Service Accountability and Performance' was published in January to seek people's views on and to bring about change and reform to the current accountability arrangements. The focus of the paper is on:

- Supporting performance improvement
- Fostering a culture of accountability
- Providing more clarity between the roles of Ministers and senior civil servants
- Providing clearer assignment and devolution of responsibility, and
- Enabling greater assessment of delivery against targets

An Independent Panel on Strengthening Civil Service Accountability and Performance has been established, to oversee the consultation process, review submissions received, and develop recommendations.

In parallel, the Civil Service Renewal Programme is developing a clear vision for the Civil Service of the future, and setting out practical and specific actions to make the vision a reality. This includes looking at a range of areas where capacity and capability needs to be developed to meet the challenges that the Civil Service will face in the future. A series of "Town Hall" meetings across the country have commenced to seek their input and ideas into the renewal process.

The outcome of both of these processes will lead to a Civil Service Renewal Plan by autumn 2014.

Public Service Mobility

The Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) (Amendment) Act 2013 removes the legislative barriers to redeployment and overall mobility within the public service, thereby facilitating a greater movement of staff across the broader public service. As part of the Senior Public Service (SPS) Initiative a mobility protocol enables the talent across the public service system at senior levels to be deployed more effectively, matching the skills and experience of SPS members with the organisations requirements. A total of 11,000 staff are recorded as redeployed to December 2013.

Performance Management Development System

Further changes have been introduced to improve the design of PMDS system and to strengthen its operation and consistency across the Public Service including:

- New grade-based Competency Framework
- Revised rating scale with improved descriptions of performance levels
- A rating of "Fully Achieved Expectations" is required for the award of an increment
- Introduction of a formal system of calibration for the review of performance
- The introduction of an electronic PMDS system from 2014

Data Sharing

The new Public Services Card includes customer photo identification and will introduce a number of significant improvements including the incorporation of contactless ticketing chips for travel entitlement and new smart card technology. By end 2013, over 500,000 cards had issued and a further 900,000 are due to issue in 2014. A cumulative target of three million cards is to be issued by the end of 2016.

Progress in 2013 to facilitate greater use and sharing of data included:

- Government approved the drafting of a Data Sharing and Governance Bill to mandate greater data-sharing and data-linking in the public service
- A Health Identifiers Bill was published which will enable the introduction of universal and unique health identifiers for patients and service providers, an essential requirement for effective use of health information

- Government approved the roll-out of a new National Postcode System by 2015
- Agreement for Ireland to participate in the Open Government Partnership (OPG) which is aimed at securing commitments from Governments to share information, fight corruption and harness new technologies to strengthen governance
- The development by Ordnance Survey Ireland of PRIME2 – a spatial data storage model to ensure consistent and unique referencing of topological state information
- Enhanced systems and data exchanges between the Department of Social Protection and other state bodies, including employment information, prisoner data and births, deaths and marriages information.

FAIRNESS – KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Health Services

- New Hospital groups established
- New Money Follows the Patient system of funding hospitals being implemented
- White Paper on Universal Health Insurance advanced
- New laws to provide for cheaper generic drugs
- Free GP care to under 6s to commence in 2014 with €37m funding in place
- Special Delivery Unit overseeing progress on reducing patients waiting times
- New legislation to make HSE directorate accountable to Minister for Health
- Preparations for new Patient Safety Agency
- Increased numbers of Primary Care centres, primary care staff and GMS doctors
- New Single Assessment Tool to better target services for older people
- Annual savings of €70m from reductions in fees paid to GPs and Pharmacists
- New Lourdes Hospital Redress Scheme for those excluded on age grounds alone
- Proposals advanced to clarify the law on surrogacy and assisted human reproduction
- Protection of Life during Pregnancy Act enacted

Mental Health and Disability

- €758 million budget for mental health services including 9,000 staff
- 678 new mental health posts filled/offered with further recruitment progressing
- Suicide prevention training delivered to 42,000 people
- National Disability Strategy Implementation plan published
- Work underway on Comprehensive Employment Strategy for people with disabilities
- Inspection of Residential services for people with disabilities commenced in 2013

Social Infrastructure

- €1.7billion Capital Programme upgrading health and hospital infrastructure
- National Children's Hospital design phase underway

- €150m for relocation of National Maternity Hospital to St Vincent's Campus
- Continued roll-out of high speed broadband to 516 post-primary schools
- 13,767 permanent school places delivered in 2013 across 44 major school projects
- 3,220 primary schools benefit from €28m minor works grants
- Construction of new prison in Cork with capacity for 250

Education

- New measures to assure higher standards in pre-school services
- New disciplinary powers for Teaching Council
- Additional 1,400 teachers to be recruited in 2014
- New legislation to regulate schools admission policies
- Diverse range of patrons chosen for nine new post primary schools
- Significant improvement in PISA student assessment scores with Ireland ranking 4th for reading, 9th for science and 13th for maths out of 34 countries
- New Junior Cycle reforms to commence with English in 2014
- Project Maths exams rolled out to all schools
- Improved performance in DEIS schools, reduced absences and early school leavers
- Extra 390 Special Needs assistants approved in 2013 brings total to 11,000
- Implementation of new Action Plan on Bullying across all schools
- Plans for re-configuration of Third Level to create three regional clusters

Debt Distress, Housing and Social Solidarity

- Mortgage arrears stabilised and over 50,000 permanent mortgage restructures achieved
- New laws overhauling Ireland's bankruptcy rules
- New insolvency service established and processing applications
- Solution advanced for former residents of Priory Hall

- 553 unfinished housing developments resolved in 2013
- €10m fund to help resolve remaining unfinished developments in 2014
- €79m for regeneration projects in 2014 including Limerick, Cork and Dublin
- New implementation team to tackle long term homelessness
- New building regulations in place to ensure proper building standards met
- New laws to protect tenancy deposits and address anti-social tenants
- Extensive set of measures to address alcohol misuse approved
- Penalties for persons who refuse to engage with employment support services
- €632m Social Welfare fraud savings achieved in 2013
- New legislation advanced to support legal recognition of transgender people
- Social Impact investing pilot projects announced

Justice

- New Court of Appeal will be in place in 2014
- New law to establish DNA database
- Legislation to overhaul system of community sanctions by the courts
- Garda recruitment underway for the first time since 2009
- New laws to strengthen the post-imprisonment monitoring of sex offenders
- Review of the judicial appointments process underway
- New provisions to allow reporting of family law and childcare proceedings
- New legislation to provide for the regulation of Legal Services

Health Service Reform

Key areas of progress over the past year in the area of Health Reform include:

- Launch of Healthy Ireland, a new government framework for action to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland over the coming generation
- As part of the Healthy Ireland framework, Tobacco Free Ireland was published – a strategy for making Ireland tobacco free by 2025
- Seven new Hospital Groups for Ireland have been established as the first step to Independent Hospital Trusts
- Publication of the smaller hospitals framework underpinning the future of small hospitals
- The Health Service Executive (Governance) Act 2013 was enacted in July establishing a Directorate as the new governing body for the HSE and accountable to the Minister for Health for the performance of the HSE's functions
- Significant work took place in 2013 putting in place new structures and key appointments to progress the development of the new National Children's Hospital
- Significant preparations have been completed to allow a new approach to hospital financing called Money Follows the Patient to be phased in from January 2014
- New legislation commenced in June to require pharmacists to offer cheaper generic alternatives to branded drugs
- The first step to free universal GP care has been announced with all children aged five and under being eligible by mid 2014
- Drafting of a White Paper on Universal Health Insurance is close to completion and will be published shortly

Continuing Reforms on the Pathway to Universal Health Insurance

A number of key elements of the Health Reform programme are built into the 2014 HSE Service Plan, including:

- Rollout of the implementation of a Money Follows the Patient funding system across 38 public hospitals with payments made on the basis of the level of inpatient and day case activity completed

- Progressing the transition to hospital groups including the development of Memorandum of Understanding between the HSE and each Group
- The establishment of new Community Areas with associated governance and organisational arrangements following the completion of the review of Integrated Service Areas
- Establishment of an interim Patient Safety Agency, initially on an administrative basis, within the HSE structure
- The development of Commissioning Functions with the aim of achieving the greatest progress possible on a commissioner / provider split, prior to the introduction of statutory functions
- Formation of a cross-divisional working group for Health and Wellbeing aimed at identifying the most effective model for the delivery of real health improvement gains for the population

Reducing Costs

A number of new saving measures were implemented during 2013 including

- €120 million on drugs from new agreement with drug companies
- €42 million from changes in managing the medical card scheme, including measures to remove ineligible and invalid cards and revisions of the income thresholds for over 70s medical cards
- €30 million from reduction in the fees paid to general practitioners and pharmacists

New legislation was enacted during 2013 to ensure that the appropriate charging for the use of public hospital services by private patients is recouped from private health insurance companies. In 2013, a health forum of health insurance companies was established with an independent chair to identify effective cost management strategies in response to rising cost of private health insurance. The first report, containing 32 recommendations to drive down costs, was published in December with a second report expected within 3 months.

The Special Delivery Unit

The Special Delivery Unit continued to work with Hospitals to reduce patient waiting times for both scheduled and unscheduled care during 2013.

- A 33% reduction in patients waiting on trolleys from 2011 and 2013 with a 13.4% reduction

between 2012 and 2013

- At the end of 2013 only four adult patients were waiting more than 8 months for an in-patient or day case procedure – representing a 70% reduction
- There was a 25% reduction in total numbers waiting for an outpatient appointment between 28 March 2013 and 31 December 2013 with over 100,000 additional outpatient appointments provided in 2013 versus 2012 (a 4% increase)
- However the number of patients waiting more than 13 weeks for routine endoscopy procedures, and children waiting more than 20 weeks for inpatient or day case surgery did increase during 2013, by 60 and 81 respectively

Patient Safety Agency

Preparations are underway for the establishment of a new Patient Safety Agency (PSA) initially on an administrative basis within the HSE structures in 2014. This represents a major step in improving safety and quality for patients and its initial focus will be to provide national leadership for patient advocacy services. The PSA will support patients in securing an appropriate response to issues or complaints they raise about safety. The PSA will also promote and disseminate learning from complaints nationally. The health and social service regulatory and monitoring function will continue to be maintained separately and enhanced within the Health Information and Quality Authority.

Oversight of Health Reform

A new governance structure for driving the programme of reform has been put in place. The New Health Reform Board is supported by a Programme Management Office in the Department of Health and a Systems Reform Unit in the HSE overseeing progress of a detailed set of actions underpinned by an electronic reporting system.

Primary Care

Free GP Care

Government is introducing free GP access for children aged five and under, as a first step towards universal access to primary care. Funding of €37 million has been provided in 2014 to meet the cost of extending free GP to the remaining 240,000 children in this age group not already covered under existing schemes.

Work is well advanced on the drafting of the required legislation and the development of an associated GP Contract to ensure this service commences by mid 2014.

Increase Number of Primary Care Professionals

Funding of €20 million was allocated in 2013, to enable the recruitment of over 250 new primary care staff. To date, over 210 of the new posts have either been filled or are awaiting new staff to start following a job offer, including 70 Nurses, 52 Occupational Therapists, 45 Physiotherapists, and 45 Speech and Language Therapists.

Increase GP Training Places

Following the increase in GP vocational training places from 120 to 157 per annum in 2010, the Irish College of General Practitioners established an Alternative Route to GP recognition in 2013 which resulted in an extra 70 doctors deemed eligible to go forward to the assessment process for qualification as GPs. Further applications for this alternative route will be accepted in 2014 and 2015.

Increase GPs Practicing

The number of medical practitioners registered and entitled to practice as GPs stands at 2,840 at the end of 2013 up from 2,270 at the end of 2010. GPs who hold a contract under the GMS Scheme can continue to hold their contract past the age of 65 until their 70th birthday.

Following the enactment of new legislation opening up access to GMS contracts to all qualified GPs, an additional 269 GPs have obtained a full GMS contract under the new provisions by the end of 2013.

Universal Hospital Care

White Paper on Universal Health Insurance

The White Paper outlines the Government's plans for the introduction of Universal Health Insurance (UHI). Drafting of the White Paper is at an advanced stage and it is planned to publish it shortly.

The White Paper outlines the model of UHI proposed by the Government. Citizens will be required to purchase health insurance for an agreed basic package of services, and can choose which insurer to contract

with. Government will subsidise the cost of health insurance for those who qualify on income grounds.

A Commission will, following consultation with the public and healthcare stakeholders, advise Government on the package of health services to be provided under UHI. The package will include at a minimum - GP care, Acute Hospital Care, Acute Mental Health Care and limited Rehabilitative Care.

UHI will be funded by insurance premiums paid by citizens (with subsidies from the Exchequer for those who cannot afford them) to the health insurer of their choice. The health insurers will contract with providers (hospital groups, private hospitals, GPs, etc) to provide health services to their customers. The Exchequer will separately fund services such as ambulance, Emergency Department, etc, which will be excluded from UHI policies. It also proposed that services such as Health and Wellbeing and Social and Continuing Care would remain outside UHI and continue to be funded by the Exchequer.

Hospitals

Hospital Groups and Smaller Hospitals

Following the publication of *The Establishment of Hospital Groups as a Transition to Independent Hospital Trusts* in 2013, seven hospital groups have been established as the first step to independent Hospital Trusts. Chairpersons have been appointed in each of the groups and the recruitment process to appoint Chief Executive Officers is underway.

Initially the Hospital groups are being established on a non-statutory administrative basis. Following a rigorous evaluation of each group to ensure it is fit for purpose to function as a Hospital Trust, legislation will be required to enable Independent Hospital Trusts to be established, taking account of any changes to groups which may emerge from the review process.

The Framework for Development – Securing the Future of Smaller Hospitals was also published in 2013 underlining the commitment of Government to securing and further developing the role of our smaller hospitals. The inclusion of smaller hospitals in Hospital Groups provides greater security and flexibility for smaller hospitals allowing services to be exchanged

across sites.

Money Follows the Patient

This new model of funding health services is being implemented on a phased basis from January 2014 with payments to be made to participating public hospitals on the basis of the level of inpatient and day case activity that they complete. This follows the completion of stakeholder consultation and a shadow funding exercise in a selection of hospitals from across the hospital groups in 2013. Budgetary discipline will be delivered under the new system through the use of fixed budgets for Money Follows the Patient activity.

Pathway to Universal Hospital Care Insurance

Hospital Care Purchasing

The Money Follows the Patient policy paper sets out the requirement for an interim purchaser of care and a robust commissioning process which should be independent from one another. A Healthcare Pricing Office has been established on an administrative basis in the HSE to set the prices on which the Money Follows the Patient system is based. A separate purchasing entity, the Healthcare Commissioning Agency is to be grown from within the HSE during 2014 to conclude annual performance contracts with each public Hospital Group.

Older People and Community Care

Care for older people

A review of home care and community support services will be undertaken in conjunction with key stakeholders early in 2014. The review will look at activity and resourcing, the scope for ensuring the quality and consistency of services and various models of service delivery. Following this a home care service improvement team will be established to identify and validate effective measures in respect of home support delivery.

The HSE is progressing the development of a Single Assessment Tool for older people, which will allow resources to be targeted towards those with the greatest needs. Implementation will proceed in 2014, with a minimum of 50% of all new entries to the main

schemes to be assessed by the SAT in the last quarter of 2014, with full implementation by end 2015.

In 2013, €185 million was spent on delivering 10.3million home help hours and €130 million to provide over 15,000 home care packages to support older people living in their own homes. In 2014 an extra €23 million will be transferred into community services from Fair Deal providing additional capacity for home supports and short term beds for respite, transitional or rehabilitation services as a suitable alternative to long term care. Local authority funding of €34.2 million for housing adaptation grants assisted 7011 households in 2013.

Fair Deal

In 2013, €974 million was provided under the Nursing Homes Support Scheme supporting 22,761 people in long term residential care. The review of the scheme will be completed in the first quarter of 2014.

Cost Control

Reference Pricing and Greater use of Generics

The Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013 provides a robust statutory framework for the introduction of generic substitution and reference pricing. This legislation will provide much greater access to generic medicines in Ireland and will reduce medicine costs for patients and for the State (€50 million in 2014). Generic Substitution will be introduced incrementally, starting with those medicines which will achieve the greatest savings. By end 2013, 10 lists of interchangeable medicines were published by the Irish Medicines Board.

The prices of relevant generic products are reduced by 20% once published on the List of Interchangeable Medicines. Under the legislation, the HSE may also set a reference price for each group of interchangeable medicines. The HSE has already set the reference price for certain cholesterol and stomach medicines resulting in price reductions of up to 70% below May 2013 prices.

GP Remuneration

Fees and allowances payable to GPs and pharmacists have been reduced by over 7% since last July resulting in combined savings of €70 million in a full year.

Hospital Consultants

Changes in Consultant work patterns have been made to ensure maximum delivery of Consultant led health services and the roll-out of the clinical care programmes. This ensures Consultants' availability for rostering for any five days out of seven and rostering of consultants on a 16/7 (8 a.m. to midnight) or 24/7 basis in services where this is required.

Savings in Procurement

The total procurement savings achieved by the HSE in 2013 amounted to €44.7 million, including €14.4 million from Medical, Surgical & Pharmaceuticals and €12 million from Equipment, Laboratory & Diagnostics.

Health Administration

Abolition of the HSE

The new Health Service Executive (Governance) Act 2013 strengthens the accountability arrangements between the HSE and the Government providing for the Minister for Health to issue directions to the HSE on the implementation of Ministerial and Government policies and objectives relating to HSE functions. Following its enactment in July 2013, the new Health Service Directorate was formally established and the existing Board of the HSE dissolved.

The Health Service Executive (Financial Matters) Bill provides for the disestablishment of the HSE Vote and the funding of the HSE through the Vote of the Office of the Minister for Health, and the establishment of a new statutory financial accountability framework for the HSE, with effect from 1 January 2015.

National Purchase Treatment Fund

The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) has been realigned to support the work of the Special Delivery Unit to target waiting lists strategically and assist in the performance management of hospitals to reduce waiting times for patients. The NTPF capability is a core part of the SDU's performance improvement role in holding public hospitals to account. It publishes monthly reports of patient waiting lists data on its website www.ntpf.ie.

Capital Developments in Health

Health Capital Spending

The HSE's multi-annual capital programme of €1.7 billion for the period 2014-2018 will deliver numerous construction projects across the country. The plan includes five key national priority projects with expenditure estimated at just over €1 billion:

- New children's hospital
- Replacement of the Central Mental Hospital at Portrane
- National Programme for Radiation Oncology
- Development of the primary care infrastructure, and
- Relocation of the National Maternity Hospital to the St Vincent's campus

Significant funding will also be used to deliver a range of other key projects including:

- Paediatric care services at Temple Street, Crumlin and Cork University Hospital
- Maternity care services at the Coombe, the Rotunda, the National Maternity Hospital, Wexford and Letterkenny General Hospitals
- Cancer care services at Limerick MWRH, Mater and across the 8 designated centres
- Emergency care services nationwide including the ambulance service
- 16 Mental Health Service facilities

In 2013, €291 million was spent enhancing, building and replacing several hundred health capital projects all over the country. Of this €190 million was expended on projects on hospital related projects; €28 million for primary care; €31 million for mental health; €31 million for services for Older People and €11 million supported health care facilities for Disability Services and Children and Family Services.

This funding together with additional expenditure of €381 million in 2014 will facilitate the opening of a range of new health facilities during 2014/2015 including:

- 21 new primary care centres
- 9 refurbished facilities for Older People with 348 beds
- 16 new and refurbished mental health facilities of

which eight will provide 212 beds

- 18 high support residential places for Disability Services

Primary and Community Care

Since March 2011, thirty four primary care centres have been opened. Since 2012, primary care infrastructure has been approved for funding and is underway at 15 locations. Significant progress has also been achieved under the operational lease mechanism with 17 such primary care centres expected to open over the coming 12 months. With regard to the Primary Care Centre PPP Project, fifteen planning applications have been lodged with another to be lodged shortly.

Relocation of National Maternity Hospital

€150 million has been provided in the capital plan to relocate the National Maternity Hospital (NMH), Holles Street, to the St. Vincent's University Hospital Campus at Elm Park. A project team appointed in 2013 is overseeing the tender process for the selection of a design team for the design of a state of the art facility located alongside the adult acute hospital.

National Children's Hospital

Following key appointments and new governance structures overseeing this priority national project, good progress is being made across a range of key areas to ensure construction starts in 2015.

- The development board overseeing the capital project is in place with stakeholder and clinical involvement and required technical expertise
- A new Children's Hospital Group board involving the three existing paediatric hospitals is in place with a CEO appointed to plan for the transfer of paediatric services to the NCH
- Significant work towards finalising a design brief and procuring a design team by April 2014
- Following a review, two new satellite centres of the new children's hospital providing urgent care will be established in advance of the NCH and located at Tallaght Hospital and Connolly Hospital in Dublin
- A high level decant plan is in place to progress the site preparation and discussions with Dublin City Council are underway in preparation for the planning application process
- Government announced that up to €200 million would be made available from the sale of the

National Lottery licence adding to the existing €450 million in Exchequer funding for the new hospital.

Mental Health

Vision for Change

Progress continues on the implementation of *A Vision for Change* to develop a more flexible and community based mental health service with in-patient care provided as required. €758 million was provided in 2013 for mental health services involving over 9,000 staff across 863 centres providing community based services. 891 additional posts (mainly health professionals) have been approved for the mental health service of which 678 have now been filled or offered.

The establishment last year of the HSE Mental Health Services Division and the appointment of the National Director for Mental Health delivers on a key recommendation of *A Vision for Change*, and will accelerate the pace of change in the development of our mental health services.

Community Mental Health Services

90% of mental health problems are dealt with in a primary care setting. There are 123 General Adult Community Mental Health Teams throughout the country, led by a Consultant psychiatrist and staffed by a multidisciplinary team. There are 61 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Teams in place providing community, hospital liaison and day hospital services.

As part of the recent 678 posts filled, 88 are Clinical Psychologist posts to enhance community mental health teams. A further €20 million has been allocated in 2014 for the development of community mental health teams through recruitment of additional staff.

€7.5 million was provided for the provision of psychological and counselling services in primary care which will, at full capacity, deliver short term counselling to 13,000 people with mild to moderate psychological difficulties.

Reach Out – National Suicide Prevention Strategy

The National Office for Suicide Prevention is

progressing all the recommendations in the Reach Out strategy supporting people who are suicidal and their families and friends:

- Delivering suicide prevention training programmes with over 52,000 participants completing the ASSIT and safeTALK programmes
- 8 adult and child mental health teams received intensive training in 2013 to deliver Dialectical Behavioural Therapy services to people with self harm behaviours and suicidal thoughts
- By December 2013, 174 GPs had registered for the Irish College of General Practitioners training programme on suicide prevention for GPs and general practice staff
- The development of the National Clinical Care Programme for Self Harm in Emergency Departments and the SCAN (Suicide Crisis Assessment Nurse) service
- The delivery of two effective social marketing campaigns on mental health that have changed public attitudes and behaviours related to help seeking and mental health
- New guidelines on how post-primary schools can promote mental health and well-being have been distributed to schools and health services on a nationwide basis

Recruit Additional Staff for Mental Health Teams

Of the 891 posts approved in 2012/2013 to strengthen the mental health service, 678 have been filled or offered. All posts are either professional or nursing staff including 88 Clinical Psychologists. 143 of these new staff are working in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Teams to ensure early intervention. The additional €20 million ring fenced for further development of services in 2014 will allow for the recruitment of between 250 and 280 additional staff to further enhance mental health services.

End Practice of Placing Children in Adult Psychiatric Wards

A Vision for Change recommends the provision of 80 child and adolescent psychiatric in-patient beds. There are currently 51 child and adolescent beds in total up from 36 two years ago. The number of children admitted to adult units continues to fall with 90 admissions in 2013.

Other Health Priorities

Lourdes Hospital Redress Scheme

Government approved the establishment of a scheme to provide redress to women who were excluded on age grounds alone from the Lourdes Hospital Redress Scheme in 2006. The Scheme, which has received 100 applications, will provide ex gratia awards of between €60,000 and €100,000 to eligible applicants as quickly as possible.

Bioethics

Clarify the Law on Assisted Human Reproduction

The general scheme of the Family Relationships and Children Bill has been published which aims to create a legal architecture underpinning diverse parenting situations and provide legal clarity on parental rights. It will address the legal issues for children born by means of surrogacy or assisted human reproduction.

Expert Group on the A, B and C v Ireland Judgement

Following considerable work carried out during in 2013 and following the publication of the report of the Expert Group, the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013 was commenced on 1 January 2014.

Organ Donation

The outcome of a recent public consultation and an event involving 80 key stakeholders is informing the development of legislative proposals which will give effect to an opt-out system of consent for organ donation.

Early Childhood Care and Education

Maintaining and Improving the Quality of the Free Pre-school year

In addition to maintaining the free pre-school year, Budget 2014 provided €4.5 million to improve the quality of pre-school services through: a Learner Fund to assist existing staff meet the new qualification requirements being introduced in September 2015; the establishment of a Quality Support Service which will assist services in implementing Síolta and Aistear; and the recruitment of additional Early Years Inspectors to strengthen the existing inspection regime.

Empowering Schools to Improve Standards

Reform Teacher Training

Considerable progress is being made towards the proposed 6 new centres for education with the HEA in discussions with the institutions concerned and funding in place to help with the costs involved in the transitions. From January 2014, teachers employed in State-funded teaching positions in schools must be registered with the Teaching Council in order to be paid from State funds. This paves the way for the implementation relating to the Council's investigative and disciplinary functions and to undertake inquiries into the professional conduct of teachers.

Greater Autonomy to Schools

Ensuring more responsibility and accountability at school level is a core part of reforms in relation to curriculum & assessment, teacher performance and the literacy and numeracy strategy. Curriculum reforms, like junior cycle reform, will require schools to take ownership for curriculum and assessment issues. A key objective of the new of School Self Evaluation model, introduced in 2012, is to make schools responsible and accountable for their educational outcomes and this will involve schools producing school improvement plans and annual reports on the self evaluation process by the end of the school year 2014.

Protecting the Frontline

Protect Frontline Services in Education

Budget 2014 provided for an additional 1,400 teachers to be recruited in primary and post-primary schools in 2014. The projected saving in the education sector under the pay and productivity measures contained in the Haddington Road Agreement is €600 million over its lifetime, including:

- 43 hours of supervision and substitution duties per teacher per annum without payment
- Third-level academic staff will work 78 additional hours each per annum
- The working week of administrative grades has been increased and standardised

Improving Outcomes

Ireland's PISA Scores

The latest OECD PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) results demonstrate significantly improved performance by Ireland since 2009, when compared to the 34 OECD countries. Ireland's 15 year olds are ranked 4th for reading – up 13 places, 9th for science – up 5 places and 13th for maths – up 13 places. International comparisons at primary level are also positive: Ireland's fourth class pupils are ranked 10th out of 45 countries in the PIRLS reading test and 17th out of 50 countries in the TIMSS mathematics test.

Reform of the Junior Certificate

Implementation of the new reformed Junior Cycle, renamed the Junior Cycle Student Award (JCSA), commences in September 2014 with a new English syllabus to be followed by a new Science curriculum in September 2015 and other subjects incrementally until full reform is achieved in 2022.

€4.8 million is being provided in 2014 to allow up to 7,000 school personnel, including principals and teachers of English, to receive training for the reformed Junior Cycle.

Reform of Maths and Science Subjects

The second intake of Maths teachers for the Professional Diploma in Mathematics for Teaching saw a further 300 teachers admitted to the programme in September. A dedicated programme of in-school, online and workshop supports for Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths teachers continued in 2013.

Schools involved in the pilot Project Maths initiative sat exams at Junior and Leaving Certificate in all strands of the new programme in 2013. Students in all other mainstream schools sat exams with a Project Maths component for the first time. Participation at higher level in Science at Junior Cycle was up to 79% from 76% in 2012 with overall participation in Science at Junior Cycle at 90.1%. 52% of Junior Certificate students opted to take higher level maths paper compared to 48% in 2012.

School Evaluations

External inspections of schools by the Inspectorate have become more frequent, with half of all primary schools inspected in the period 2010-12 and 93% of

post-primary schools inspected in 2011 and 2012. As part of the new School Self Evaluation Model, each year all schools are required to self-evaluate one aspect of teaching and learning, to prepare a report on this and to provide a summary report to the school community. They are also required to prepare a school improvement plan outlining the targets and actions they will take over a three-year period to improve practice in this aspect of teaching and learning. Schools are required to provide the first summary SSE report and School Improvement Plan no later than the end of the 2013/14 school year.

Bonus Points for Maths

In 2013, 26% (13,014) of all Leaving Certificate Mathematics students took the Higher Level paper – the highest figure on record.

Making Literacy a National Cause

National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

Progress during 2013 on the implementation of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy included:

- Provision of relevant workshops to Teachers on Comprehension, Oral Language, Guided Reading, English as an Additional Language, Infant Maths and Problem Solving
- Reconfigured and extended post-graduate programmes for both primary and post-primary teachers to commence in September 2014
- Collation of school based standardised testing on literacy and numeracy
- 'The Family Project' developed in partnership with NALA was screened on TV and showcased the educational tools and techniques that are available to all families
- All new pre-school leaders to have a minimum of full award at Level 6 from September and existing pre-school leaders by 2015 which includes a mandatory literacy and numeracy module

Literacy Training for Teachers

There are now 40 primary and 14 post-primary literacy and numeracy advisors within the Professional Development Service for Teachers. The Strategy requires all schools to set specific targets for the promotion and improvement of literacy and numeracy. To date over 71,000 training places have been made

available to all teachers, both primary and post primary, who are leading the roll out of support for the strategy. Over the course of the 10 year strategy, teachers will be charged with accessing 20 hours of Continuous Professional Development and sufficient provision will be made for them to access same.

21st Century Schools

Digital Strategy for Schools

A public consultation was launched in December with parents, teachers, students, industry and academics asked for their views on how best to make use of computers and technology in the classroom. This follows a comprehensive online survey of principals and teachers earlier in 2013 on the use of ICT in teaching and learning in primary and post primary schools, all of which will feed into a new Digital Strategy for Schools in 2014.

Broadband to Schools

In 2013, contracts were awarded under the high speed network for a further 234 second-level schools in the counties of Dublin, Kildare and Meath which will bring the total to 516 schools connected when complete. The final stage will see the remaining 269 schools in the south connected during 2014.

Greater use of Online Platforms

Following a tender process in 2013, the Department's portal website, Scoilnet.ie, was redeveloped and migrated to a platform that will support the inclusion and sharing of learning objects. The new website will collate all relevant resources produced by the Department's skills support services in recent years, and make them available in the repository under open licences for teachers to adapt and reuse as they see fit. Other public sector bodies and Departments with educational content will be encouraged to make it available within the repository under open licences. Rollout is commencing early in 2014.

Building Schools for the Future

School Building Projects

Capital investment in schools continued in 2013 with a total of 44 major school projects completed, comprising 29 primary and 15 post-primary schools,

providing a total of 13,767 permanent school places and enhanced facilities for almost 8,000 pupils. A further 3,220 schools at primary level benefited from the 2013 €28 million once-off Minor Works Grant scheme.

70 school building projects were announced for 2014 as part of the €2 billion five-year capital investment programme 2012 - 2016 which will deliver over 27,500 permanent school places. €470 million will be spent on primary/post primary infrastructure next year and projected expenditure of €290 million on large scale projects.

Replacing School Prefabs

A second phase of the Prefab Replacement Initiative was announced in 2013 with an allocation of €15 million. This will allow 46 schools to replace their prefabs with 119 mainstream classrooms and 37 resource rooms.

School Accommodation Inventory

Following the completion of a pilot study in Tuam, Navan, Clonmel, Portlaoise, and part of Limerick City, to develop an inventory of education infrastructure and related community assets, a project team has been appointed to progress the development of inventory data for the rest of the country.

Shared Educational Campuses

As part of the five-year capital programme there are a number of Shared Education Campuses being delivered in areas of demographic growth. Campuses have recently been completed in Dublin, Monaghan and Portlaoise, with delivery of the first phase of permanent accommodation also completed on campuses in Navan, Greystones and Luttrellstown.

Delivering Equity in Education

Review of the DEIS Programme

The latest findings by the Educational Research Centre on longitudinal testing of reading and mathematics over the period 2007-2013 has found that test scores in urban DEIS primary schools at all grade levels have increased significantly. Gains are particularly evident in the junior grades and in schools that have high levels of disadvantage. Levels of pupil absence have also fallen from 10.8% in 2007 to 7.1% in 2013. Evaluation

of the DEIS will continue during 2014 with further ERC reports expected.

The latest Report on Retention Rates in Post Primary Schools show the Leaving Certificate retention rate in DEIS schools increased by almost 7 percentage points from 73.2% to 80.1%. It also shows that in 2011 the proportion of early school leavers in Ireland was 10.6%, down from 13% in 2004 and ahead of the EU average of 14%.

Supporting Children with Special Needs

An additional 390 Special Needs Assistant (SNA) posts were approved by Government in 2013 bringing the total number of SNAs available for children with an assessed need in primary and post primary schools to almost 11,000. There are also now over 10,700 additional teachers in schools supporting children with special educational and learning support needs, up 695 since 2012 and more than at any time previously.

In 2013, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) developed comprehensive policy advice on supporting children with special educational need in schools. The report showed that in 2012/2013 there were 31,202 pupils in mainstream education in receipt of NCSE allocated resource teaching, 3,678 pupils attending special classes attached to mainstream schools and a further 7,094 pupils attending special schools.

The report recommends revising the current approach to allocating additional special educational teaching supports to schools to ensure the system is equitable and based on need. At the request of the Minister the NCSE has established a Working Group to develop a proposal for a new allocation model for teaching supports based on the profiled needs of children in schools, which is expected to report in Spring 2014.

Autism and Educational Psychology Services

The National Disability Implementation Plan 2013-2015 provides a framework for driving the delivery of real and meaningful improvements in the lives of people with disabilities. The National Disability Authority has been asked to examine how the actions already contained in the Plan can be tailored to the needs of people with autism and how any issues arising can be addressed within that framework. The consultation with stakeholders begins in early 2014. In addition

the NCSE has been asked to prepare policy advice on educational provision for children with autism.

There are currently 168 (WTE) educational psychologists employed within National Educational Psychological Service, an increase of 9 since 2010.

Anti-Bullying Policies

An Action Plan on Bullying was launched in January 2013 to help prevent and tackle bullying in primary and second level schools. The following actions were delivered in 2013:

- New anti-bullying procedures launched and being implemented by all 4,000 primary and post primary schools
- 105 parent anti-bullying sessions delivered to 3,279 participants
- A phased programme of continuing professional development, developed to support teachers in schools in relation to the Action Plan and the Anti-Bullying Procedures
- Work began on updating guidelines for school staff and boards of management in relation to homophobic bullying

Patronage

White Paper on Patronage and Pluralism

The Report of the Advisory Group to the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector made a series of recommendations aimed at ensuring that schools are as inclusive as possible, and accommodate students of various belief systems and traditions. A public consultation on promoting inclusiveness in primary schools was launched in 2013 with 440 submissions received which will feed into the preparation of the White Paper in 2014.

A General Scheme for an Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2013, as well as draft regulations, were published in 2013 and are currently under consideration by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection. The aim of these proposals is to ensure that the way schools decide on applications for enrolment is structured, fair and transparent.

Giving Parents a Say in School Patronage

Results of primary school patronage surveys from 43 areas across the country showed that there is sufficient parental demand in 28 out of the 43 areas to support a change in the existing school patronage. Dialogue is underway with patrons to agree actions and firm up timelines.

Patronage at Second Level

A variety of patrons were announced for nine new post primary schools which will open in 2015 and 2016 and will provide for up to 7,300 students in areas of Cavan, Cork, Dublin, Kildare and North Wicklow. Four of the new schools will be under the patronage of Educate Together; two will be run by the local Education and Training Board (ETB); one by the Edmund Rice Schools Trust; one jointly by the local ETB and Educate Together and the final school will be managed by the local ETB with involvement of the Catholic Bishop of Cloyne.

Third Level Reform

Third Level Reform

At present in Ireland there are 39 higher education institutions in receipt of over €1 billion State funding, serving around 170,000 students. Following a year-long process of research, analysis and engagement, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) made a series of recommendations on system re-configuration in Irish higher education and implementation of these reforms is underway.

The HEA has been asked to establish regional clusters of institutions in three identified regions, involving all seven universities and 14 Institutes. Each of these will now develop regional plans, eliminating unnecessary duplication of provision and establishing clear pathways of transfer and progression for students in the region.

A new system performance framework is being put in place during 2014 by the HEA which will assess system performance against the national priorities, system objectives and key indicators published in 2013.

New Universities

In May, the HEA was instructed to implement recommendations arising from their report on

Irish Higher Education relating to the proposed consolidation of three groups of Institutes of Technology to progress towards attaining Technological University status:

- The Dublin Institute of Technology, IT Tallaght and IT Blanchardstown
- Cork IT and IT Tralee
- Waterford IT and Carlow IT

A fourth group, the Connacht-Ulster Alliance (Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology; Sligo IT and Letterkenny IT) have indicated that they are deepening their existing alliance with a view to merging in the medium term.

The general scheme of a Technological Universities Bill has been published which will allow for the future establishment of Technological Universities and the mergers of institutes of technology.

Audit of Level 8 Qualifications

The 'Supporting a Better Transition from Second Level to Higher Education' report, published in 2013, committed to significantly reduce the number of level 8 degree programmes in higher education and make them more broadly-based. Following publication, a consultation process and further detailed research was undertaken including a major conference held in NUI Maynooth in June involving key stakeholders. A framework for implementation will be agreed during 2014.

Housing and Distressed Mortgages

Supporting People with Mortgage Arrears

In March 2013, the Central Bank published specific, time-bound targets for the six main banks to ensure measurable progress towards helping those in mortgage arrears. By end 2013, banks have indicated that they have met their targets of sustainable offers made to 50% of borrowers more than 90 days in arrears and concluded agreements in 15% of cases. Their performance against these targets will be audited by the Central Bank during Q1 2014. Further targets set for end June 2014 are 75% for offers and 35% concluded.

In this context the Central Bank published a revised Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears (CCMA) setting out requirements for mortgage lenders dealing with

borrowers facing or in mortgage arrears. The revised CCMA came into effect from 1 July 2013. Co-operating borrowers must now be given at least eight months, from the date arrears first arise, before legal action can commence and at the end of the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process (MARP) lenders will be required to provide a newly introduced three-month notice period to allow co-operating borrowers time to consider their options, such as voluntary surrender or an arrangement under the Personal Insolvency Act before legal action can commence.

Personal Bankruptcy Reform

Updated bankruptcy legislation came into effect in 2013 providing for automatic discharge from bankruptcy, subject to certain conditions, after 3 years in place of the previous 12 year period. The legislation brings Ireland's bankruptcy laws into line with best international standards.

New debt resolution mechanisms introduced under the legislation are:

- A Debt Relief Notice to allow for the write-off of debt up to €20,000
- A Debt Settlement Arrangement for the agreed settlement of unsecured debt, with no limit
- A Personal Insolvency Arrangement for the agreed settlement of secured debt up to €3 million and unsecured debt, with no limit involved

From the 9 September 2013, the Insolvency Service of Ireland (ISI) began accepting applications for the new forms of debt relief under the new legislation. To date the ISI has authorised 106 Personal Insolvency Practitioners to act on behalf of insolvent debtors. Additionally, 26 Money Advice and Budgeting Service branches, with 62 responsible persons, are currently authorised as Approved Intermediaries. The publication of quarterly statistics on applications processed will commence in the second quarter of 2014.

Priory Hall

Following negotiations with all relevant parties, a Resolution Framework was agreed with the Priory Hall Residents on 10 October 2013. Work is well underway on the implementation of the framework, and is being overseen by Dr Martin McAleese, Chair of the oversight board, which includes representatives of the Priory Hall residents, the Irish Banking Federation, Dublin City Council and relevant Government Departments and

Agencies. As part of the Framework, DCC will ensure that Priory Hall is refurbished into a high quality, safe location.

Ghost Estates

The number of unfinished housing developments has decreased by 56% since 2010 with 553 developments effectively resolved in the 12 months to November 2013. The remaining 1258 developments will be progressed through a mixture of enforcement measures, completion works and site clearance. The €10 million Site Resolution Fund announced in Budget 2014 will help contribute towards the completion of essential works to footpaths, drainage, roads etc. to finish out developments towards sale.

Social Housing

Social Housing

In 2013, 915 new social housing units were delivered comprising of 500 Local Authority Social Housing, 250 special needs units and 165 units under the Regeneration Programme. An additional 596 NAMA properties were also delivered for social housing. Social housing output in 2014 across all delivery mechanisms will be in the region of 5,000 units.

Regulation in the Housing Sector

A new voluntary regulatory code for approved housing bodies is in place since July as a first step to a new scheme of statutory regulation of the not for profit housing sector. All approved housing bodies signing up to the voluntary regulation code will submit a signed Charter of Commitments on a yearly basis and make themselves available for examination by the Department and the Housing Agency.

Urban Regeneration

2013 saw the publication of the Limerick Regeneration Implementation Plan, setting out a 10 year roadmap and investment programme with €253 million to be invested on physical programmes, €30 million on social programmes and €10 million on economic programmes. Work continued on the remaining housing projects in Ballymun and on planning for the regeneration of Dolphin House and St. Teresa's Gardens with works largely concluded on the St. Michaels Estate, Dublin.

€79 million was announced in Budget 2014 for the national regeneration programme with priorities for 2014:

- New focus on construction and refurbishment in Limerick Regeneration
- Final phase of housing construction/refurbishment in Tralee and Ballymun
- Refurbishment, demolition and construction at Dolphin House and St. Teresa's Gardens
- Commence construction on Phase 1 of social housing in Cork City

Homelessness

End Long Term Homelessness

Funding of €45 million was provided for homeless services in 2013 including accommodation costs, daytime drop-in centres, food services, outreach services, settlement and tenancy sustainment services. A further €30 million per annum is spent by the HSE on accompanying health support services. In 2013 over 4,600 individuals used homeless emergency accommodation services.

The new Homeless Oversight Group published its first report in December which acknowledged limited progress and identified some major challenges, in particular to secure an adequate supply of long term accommodation. Their recommendation is for an inter-agency implementation team to set out a detailed plan to deliver the required supply and accompanying supports to achieve a sustainable long-term solution.

A new social impact investment initiative announced as part of Budget 2014 will see more than 130 homeless families move out of private emergency accommodation and into sustainable long-term tenancies. The initiative is being jointly implemented by Clann Credo, Focus Ireland and Dublin City Council.

Housing

Legislate for Tougher Building Controls

Strict new measures for the control of building projects came into force on 1 March 2014 to prevent the future reoccurrence of poorly constructed dwellings, pyrite damage and structures breaching fire regulations

left as a legacy of a poorly regulated housing boom. Under the new regulations ending the system of self-certification, building works will be inspected at key stages of construction by assigned certifiers such as registered architects, engineers or building surveyors.

Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme

Government has approved proposals for a deposit protection scheme which will see an independent operator holding and returning tenant deposits which will be introduced at the Seanad Committee Stage of the Residential Tenancies (Amendment)(No. 2) Bill.

Criminal Law Reform

Criminal Assets Bureau

In 2013 the Criminal Assets Bureau returned approximately €6 million to the Exchequer. While the majority of actions continue to be drug related, actions have also been taken against persons suspected of fraud, theft, and fuel and tobacco smuggling. During 2013, 8 new cases incorporating 27 respondents were brought before the high court and 14 proceeds of crime cases were finalised.

An Expert Group has undertaken a comprehensive review of the Proceeds of Crime legislation with a view to identifying possible improvements which would serve to strengthen the operation of the Bureau.

Establish a DNA Database

The Criminal Justice (Forensic Evidence and DNA Database System) Bill 2013, currently before the Houses of the Oireachtas, will provide for the establishment of a DNA database to assist the Garda Síochána in tackling crime. The database will have the capacity to link crimes and to identify suspects in relation to unsolved crimes enabling the Gardaí to better target their investigations and make better use of resources.

Strong and Efficient Policing

Gardaí resources

With a budget of €1.3 billion in 2014, there are currently 13,000 Gardaí, 1,200 Reserve Gardaí and over 2,000 civilian staff across 564 Garda stations, protecting and serving local communities on a 24/7 basis, 365 days of the year. For the first time since

2009, new Gardaí are being recruited to the force and a recruitment competition for trainee Gardaí is underway. It is expected that the first Garda recruits will enter the Garda College in Templemore in July of 2014.

The success of ongoing Garda crime prevention and detection work is demonstrated in the latest CSO crime figures for the 12 month period to end Q3 in 2013. These figures show reductions or no change in 12 out of the 14 categories for which figures are given, and an overall reduction in crime of 7.1% in the period. The continued impact of Garda operations on burglary is reflected in a significant fall of 10.4% in this category of offence. Garda actions to counteract burglary under Operation Fiacla have led to the arrest of 7,973 persons with 4,558 persons being charged as of 31 January 2014.

Combat Smuggling

In 2013, Revenue drug smuggling detection seized €20.8 million in drugs and €20.7 million in illegal tobacco and cigarettes. Revenue engaged in 53 joint operations involving supply detection quantities of drugs and illicit medicines with An Garda Síochána and the Irish Medicines Board resulting in significant seizures and arrests. Revenue is working at national and international level on joint operations with An Garda Síochána and targeting those involved in the distribution of smuggled tobacco and cigarettes at street level.

Sentencing and Penal Reform

Alternatives to Imprisonment

The General Scheme of the Criminal Justice (Community Sanctions) Bill has been recently published which will provide a modern statutory framework for the role of the Probation Service in the criminal justice system and facilitate the more efficient and effective use of community sanctions by the courts.

The Fines (Payment and Recovery) Bill 2013, currently making its way through the Houses of the Oireachtas, provides for the introduction of attachment of earnings as a means of recovering unpaid fines with the intention of reducing substantially the numbers of people committed to prison for the non-payment of fines.

Post-Imprisonment Monitoring

The Government recently approved the drafting of a wide-ranging Sexual Offences Bill which includes provisions for the electronic monitoring of convicted sex offenders in specific circumstances.

Prison Visiting Committees

The Government has approved the drafting of a General Scheme of an Inspection of Places of Detention Bill, which will include provisions to make prison Visiting Committees more effective. A link will be established between the Visiting Committees and the Inspector of Prisons, whose role is intended to be expanded as part of these plans.

Upgrading Prison Infrastructure

Work is continuing on the modernisation project at Mountjoy prison with B and C wings complete and the refurbishment of A wing substantially complete. Following the upgrading of D wing (at tender stage) all cells in Mountjoy will have in cell sanitation facilities.

Construction of the new, modern 250 space replacement prison is underway in Cork.

St. Patricks Institution

Following the announcement in 2013 that St Patrick's Institution was to close, all sentenced 17 year olds and the 18-20 year old population of St. Patrick's Institution have now been transferred to the Wheatfield Place of Detention.

The only children now remaining at St. Patrick's Institution are 17 year olds who are remanded in custody pending trial. They continue to be detained in a dedicated unit pending their transfer to Oberstown. Construction is underway on the new €56.4 million facility at Oberstown with the first three new residential units to be available in the third quarter of 2014, which will be used to facilitate the transfer of responsibility for the 17 year olds.

Anti-social Behaviour

Community Policing

The Gardaí continued to build on the strong partnership with local communities in 2013:

- Over 950 dedicated Community Gardaí deployed around the country are engaged in community

policing and running community clinics

- New Garda Community Crime Prevention Guidelines were published giving information and advice to help establish new and revitalise existing community “watch” groups
- New Garda Text Alert Scheme, launched in co-operation with a number of community groups
- Following a review of the operation of Joint Policing Committees, revised guidelines for their operation will be ready for the changeover to the new local government structures in May 2014

Addressing Anti-Social Tenants

The forthcoming Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill will provide for updated measures to enable housing authorities to recover possession of their dwellings from households in serious breach of their tenancy agreements, including engaging in anti-social behaviour, and strengthening the existing powers of housing authorities to seek excluding orders against persons in local authority housing engaged in anti-social behaviour.

Government has also approved proposals for strengthened provisions against anti-social behaviour in the private rented sector. These changes will now be introduced at the Seanad Committee Stage of the Residential Tenancies Bill.

Youth Diversion Programmes

The Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs) are nationwide, community-based, crime prevention initiatives which seek to divert young people from being involved in anti-social and/or criminal behaviour. Funding of about €12 million is provided to the 100 GYDPs to engage with about 5,000 young people per annum. €2 million of this funding comes from the European Social Fund for supporting young people towards future employment. The newly published Youth Justice Action Plan 2014-2018 aims to reduce youth offending through appropriate targeted interventions and linkages to services and reduce the necessity for detention.

Social Impact Initiative to Reduce Re-offending

A new Social Impact Investing scheme was announced as part of Budget 2014 to develop innovative interventions to significantly reduce recidivism in young offenders. The project aims to target 125 children

remanded to detention by Dublin Courts over a five-year period and demonstrate that with a new bail supervision service, they can be released by the court and safely managed on bail in the community.

Drugs

National Substance Misuse Strategy

The Government approved an extensive package of measures to deal with alcohol misuse, to be incorporated in a Public Health (Alcohol) Bill, the General Scheme for which will be published in 2014.

The main measures include:

- Minimum unit pricing for retailing of alcohol products
- Regulation of marketing and advertising of alcohol
- Structural Separation of alcohol from other products in mixed trading outlets
- Enforcement powers will be given to Environmental Health Officers
- Health labelling to include warnings and advice

A working group will report within 12 months on the issue of the regulation of sports sponsorship.

Local Rehabilitation Services

Considerable resources are allocated to the provision of drug treatment and rehabilitation services with 2013 funding for the HSE addiction services at €91.5 million (not including funding of community and voluntary and prison based services). In total over 12,500 people are in receipt of drug treatment for all types of drug use, including over 9,600 people receiving methadone treatment. At the end of 2013 almost 100% of people over 18 can access treatment within one month following assessment and almost 100% of children access treatment within 1 week following assessment.

A National Rehabilitation Framework to improve the quality and quantity of interagency referrals between drugs services was implemented on a phased basis at 10 pilot sites across the country. Following a process evaluation of the 10 sites by Trinity College Dublin in 2013, an implementation plan for national rollout of the Framework is being developed for 2014.

Supply Reduction

Drug seizures for the first three quarters of 2013 are estimated to have a provisional value of €67 million

and An Garda Síochána's Operation Nitrogen continues to be very successful in identifying and dismantling cannabis cultivation sites across all areas of the country.

The Criminal Assets Bureau returned approximately €6 million to the Exchequer in 2013, the majority of which resulted from drug trafficking.

Prisons

While a full range of security initiatives continue to be implemented to eliminate the supply of drugs into prisons, Drug Free Units continue to be rolled out in all closed prisons. These Units accommodate and cater for the needs of both drug free prisoners and illicit drug free prisoners including those prisoners stable on methadone. There are 522 places filled in Drug Free Units operating across nine closed prisons with the 35 places in Portlaoise due to become operational shortly.

Drug Specific CE Schemes

With a budget of almost €15 million in 2013, drug specific community employment schemes play an important part for participants in facilitating stabilisation and recovery from problem drug use providing individual care plans and tailored supports. At the end of 2013 there were 790 participants referred to drug-specific community employment schemes and 161 support workers to support the work of these schemes. The numbers progressing onto employment or further education/training was 28.3% in December 2013.

Law Reform, Courts and Judiciary

Establish a Judicial Council

Drafting of the proposed Judicial Council Bill is well underway and will provide for the establishment of the Council to promote high standards of conduct by judges and the means for investigating any allegations of judicial misconduct. A review of the judicial appointments process is also underway to consider issues such as the appointment process, eligibility criteria, and the need to promote equality and diversity while protecting the principle of judicial independence. A public consultation process was initiated in December seeking the views of the Judiciary, the legal profession and the general public.

Court of Appeal

A new Court of Appeal will be established following the passing of the Referendum on 4 October 2013. The general scheme of the implementation bill to deal with issues surrounding the establishment, organisation and membership of the Court has been published. It is planned that the Court will be up and running in the new law term in autumn 2014.

Reform and Modernise Family Law

New legislative provisions are in place to allow the media to report on family law and childcare proceedings within strict parameters to protect privacy. These reforms are designed to address the need for public access to important information on the operation of family and child care proceedings in the courts.

Regulation of Legal Services

The Legal Services Regulation Bill 2011, currently advancing through the Oireachtas, will provide for a new independent Legal Services Regulatory Authority with responsibility for oversight of both solicitors and barristers, an independent complaints system and a new and enhanced legal costs regime that will bring greater transparency to legal costs. It is expected to have the new Regulation Authority established by the end of the year following enactment of the legislation.

Prioritise a Programme of Law Reform

The Government approved the Law Reform Commission's Fourth Programme which contains 11 projects that will deal with a range of issues including white collar crime, sexual offences against children, cyber-bullying and residential tenancies.

Reduce the Cost of Legal Services to the State

A number of measures have been implemented to reduce the cost of legal fees the State including:

- A reduction of 10% in Criminal Legal Aid fees and Tribunal fees and brief and refresher fees paid by the Office of the DPP
- Changes in regard to one day fees in the District Court, rates payable in respect of travel and subsistence and the rate paid for sentence fees in the Circuit and Higher Courts
- A new pre-approval process prior to the engagement of expert witnesses

Further measures include a critical review of legal work to ensure that payments reflect the value of work completed, the use of junior counsel rather than senior counsel wherever practical and the reduction of numbers in the size of legal teams representing the State in court.

As part of the public services reform agenda, the new Office of Government Procurement will work with Government Departments and agencies to assess the legal services spend across the public service and conduct a review of the markets for the various different services involved, such as employment law, conveyancing, tax law, etc. and determine appropriate procurement strategies.

Equality and Social Protection

Eliminating Poverty

The national social target for poverty reduction, under the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, is to reduce consistent poverty to 4% by 2016 (interim target) and to 2% or less by 2020. Targeted actions to ensure education and employment opportunities for those at risk, maintaining social transfers and targeted supports to vulnerable groups are central to the Government's response to addressing poverty in Ireland. A recent ESRI study shows that Ireland's system of social transfers is the most effective among EU15 countries with 90% effectiveness in reducing the poverty gap through social transfers. A Social Inclusion Report covering progress during the years 2011 and 2012 was completed in 2013.

Under Pathways to Work, a report is being prepared to examine the factors influencing the level of jobless households and to develop a range of recommendations to allow Government to take additional tangible steps in 2014 to assist these households to return to work.

New Area Based Approach to Tackle Child Poverty

Following a call for proposals and an assessment process, a further ten areas around the country have been admitted into the design phase of the Area Based Childhood Programme. This is in addition to the three existing initiatives which have already entered the Programme.

Existing

Tallaght CDI
Young Ballymun
Northside Partnership (Darndale/Moatview/Belcamp)

New sites

Bray
Ballyfermot/Dublin 10
Clondalkin/Archways
Dublin Docklands
Finglas (Barnardos-led project)
Grangegorman/NW Inner City
Knocknaheeny (Cork)
Limerick
Louth (Drogheda & Dundalk)
Midlands (to be included as part of Northside project)

A further twelve applicants will be given access to a mentoring programme in the implementation of evidence-based programmes to improve outcomes for children and young people. This is a very important initiative that will lead the way in improving the lives of children and young people who are experiencing disadvantage. The Programme has attracted 50% co-funding from Atlantic Philanthropies bringing total funding to nearly €30 million.

Eliminating Poverty Traps

Eliminating Poverty Traps

The introduction in 2013 of the Jobseeker's Allowance transitional arrangement gives some customers greater flexibility on work patterns e.g. work mornings only. This scheme helps to ease the transition of former One-Parent Family Payment recipients with children under 14 years of age onto the Jobseeker's Allowance scheme.

The Afterschool Childcare Scheme provides 800 afterschool childcare places to people who have returned to employment from unemployment or those on One-Parent Family Payment who have significantly increased their part-time hours. A re-focus of funding in 2014 will also allow participants in Community Employment to avail of the childcare places. This is to encourage lone parents to avail of the CE scheme by helping them with their childcare needs.

The forthcoming Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions)

Bill will provide for the establishment of the new Housing Assistance Payment scheme which will transfer recipients of rent supplement with a long-term housing need to local authorities. This will break the link between rent supplement and social welfare payments removing one of the primary disincentives to returning to full-time employment.

A Zero Tolerance Approach to Welfare Fraud

Reducing Welfare Fraud

Last year, 24,720 anonymous fraud and abuse reports were received and were used as a trigger for an investigation. Some 1.1 million reviews were carried out in 2013 with fraud and control savings of €632 million achieved.

The new Intreo offices coupled with the roll out of the Public Services Card provide for a more integrated approach to fraud control, and systematic and regular data matching exercises with external agencies are ongoing. Over 500,000 cards were issued by the end of 2013 with an additional 900,000 to be issued in 2014. Coupled with the face-to-face registration process, the new card offers significant new protections against welfare fraud and opportunities to expand its use across a broader range of public services.

Better Value for Money

Reducing Reliance on Rent Supplement

About 4,700 cases were transferred from rent supplement to longer term housing options in 2013 with about 2,900 housed directly under the Rental Accommodation Scheme and the remainder accommodated under other social housing options. Responsibility for the housing needs for long term rent supplement recipients is moving to housing authorities on a phased basis under the new Housing Assistance Payment which will commence early in 2014 and will enable tenants to take up employment and contribute in line with their income.

Code of Conduct for State Supported Tenants

Under the new Housing Assistance Payment scheme, it is intended that housing authorities will be entitled to refuse to provide, or to cease providing, housing

assistance to a household where a household member is engaged in anti-social behaviour.

Ensuring Landlords are Tax-Compliant

The Department of Social Protection works closely with the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) to ensure that rent supplement tenancies, where required, fulfil their legal obligation to register with the PRTB and that these tenancies will also comply with all other relevant legislation with regards to housing, including standards of accommodation. Details of rent supplement cases are provided to Revenue each year. Outstanding rent supplement cases where landlord's tax reference numbers were not provided were actively followed up during 2013 and included the suspension of rent supplement payments where necessary. Over 99% of rent supplement claims have landlord's tax reference numbers updated.

Social Welfare Appeals Backlog

To address the social welfare appeals backlog and processing times, 15 additional Appeals Officers were appointed to the Social Welfare Appeals Office over the past two years along with the integration of 10 Appeals Officers, from the Community Welfare Service. At the end of December 2013, the number of appeals on hands was 14,770; a reduction of 28% compared to the equivalent figure of 20,414 at the end the 2012. The average processing time for appeals determined by oral hearing has been reduced by 35% from 52.5 weeks in 2011 to 33.9 weeks in 2013.

Equality

Legal Recognition for Trans-Gender

The General Scheme of the Gender Recognition Bill was published last July and referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Social Protection. The Bill provides for the recognition of the acquired gender of transgender people and be fully recognised by the State for all purposes. The Joint Oireachtas Committee held a public consultation and hearings in 2013 on the General Scheme and recently published its report including recommendations for the Ministers consideration.

Marriage Equality

In its third report, the Convention on the Constitution recommends amending the Constitution to provide

for same-sex marriage. This followed discussions informed by presentations from legal and academic experts and advocacy groups and a record number of submissions from the public. The Government has committed to holding a referendum on same sex marriage in 2015.

Magdalen Women

Following the publication of the McAleese and Quirke reports, an ex-gratia scheme has been established to meet the needs of women who spent time and worked in Magdalen Laundries. The priority has been to process applications and make the lump sum payments. At this point just over 700 hundred applications have been received and over €7 million in lump sum payments issued. The €250,000 grant to support Magdalen Women who live in the UK has also been paid.

Collective Bargaining

The forthcoming Industrial Relations (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill will provide for any legislative changes required to deal with collective bargaining. To date there has been ongoing engagement between Government and relevant stakeholders resulting in a number of comprehensive submissions and presentations.

Promoting Integration

In 2013, funding of €1.1 million was paid to organisations to promote integration and tolerance, and to help vulnerable immigrants access employment or further training. To date, 1,536 people from 97 countries have benefitted from specific training.

People with Disabilities

Publish an Implementation Plan for the National Disability Strategy

The National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan was published in 2013. The High Level Goals of the Plan are that people with disabilities are free from discrimination; are supported to live the life they choose; live ordinary lives in ordinary places, participating in the life of the community; and are enabled to reach their full potential. Each goal has specific objectives and actions through which it will be achieved with progress to be reviewed by the National Disability Strategy Implementation Group.

Employment, Training and Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities

The development of a comprehensive employment strategy for people with disabilities is being advanced by the National Disability Authority in consultation with stakeholders and Government Departments. The Strategy which will be published in 2014 aims to ensure that more people with disabilities can access work, that services at local level are co-ordinated and there is joined up access across agency boundaries to deliver more seamless supports to people with disabilities.

Funding of just over €7 million has been provided for 14 projects under the Disability Activation Project to assist approximately 2,700 people with disabilities to access employment under a broad range of targeted measures.

Moving to a Personal Budget Model

Demonstration projects commenced in 2013 to examine the practical aspects of introducing individualised budgeting including the costs and benefits. The projects will be evaluated in 2014 to determine their wider applicability, clarify the issues which must be resolved before the projects can be scaled up, and identify the best way forward. Work is also underway to identify a standardised national assessment tool and resource allocation model which will form the basis of the individualised budgeting framework.

National Standards for Residential Services for People with Disabilities

Following the launch of the National Standards for Residential Services for Children and Adults with Disabilities in April, a new scheme of registration and inspection of residential services for people with disabilities commenced on 1 November. HIQA has carried out 33 inspections to date and reports on all inspections will be published on the Authority's website.

Universal Design

The principal of Universal Design to ensure that everyday environments are designed from the outset to ensure they can be used by everyone, regardless of age, size, ability or disability is embedded in the new National Disability Implementation Plan. A number of specific actions are included involving local authorities and Departments to support the roll out of accessible towns and villages programme and ensure accessibility of public areas, buildings and transport.

PROGRESS – KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Children and Older People

- New Child and Family Support Agency established on 1 Jan 2014
- Unifying services for children with €600m budget and 4,000 staff
- Doubling of staff in Garda Vetting unit dealing with 380,000 applications each year
- Total of 13 areas selected for inclusion in the Area Based Approach to Child Poverty
- Launch of New Positive Ageing Strategy
- Older people's councils in place in 14 local authorities areas

Communications, Energy and the Environment

- €70m approved to help communities devastated by recent storm and flood damage
- Nationwide broadband mapping project underway
- New legislation to allow ESB to develop a fibre network through its electricity network
- ComReg initiative to bring greater transparency on broadband speeds
- Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines to be published shortly
- Phase one of Ireland's largest ever seismic survey completed
- Planning underway for a new system of funding for public service broadcasters
- New Social Welfare contract signed with An Post underpinning future of post office network
- New turf cutting arrangements following review of Natural Heritage Areas
- New Office of the Planning Regulator to be established
- New statutory guidelines for planning authorities on local area planning

Agriculture and Fisheries

- Final agreement on CAP reform securing €11 billion for Ireland
- Total agri-exports set to top €10 billion for the first time
- €1.9 billion for new Rural Development Programme
- 92 per cent of Food Harvest 2020 actions advanced
- Quotas worth €260m secured for Irish fishermen
- New safety initiative for the fishing industry

- New fleet of helicopters supporting Ireland's Coastguard service

Culture, Sport and Transport

- Commemorations plan for decade of Centenaries
- Plans for new Cultural and Heritage Centre at College Green
- Launch of redesigned single online genealogy portal www.irishgenealogy.ie
- New Irish language planning process underway as part of the 20 year strategy
- Radical overhaul of Irish language funding programmes completed
- Údaras na Gaeltachta supported companies contribute €400M to the Irish Economy
- 10% of bus routes to be opened to competitive tendering
- 464,000 Leap Cards sold by the end of January 2014
- €630m spent on improving and maintaining the road network
- Construction work underway on €368m LUAS and N11/N7 road projects
- New legislation to regulate clamping
- Significant expansion to the Dublin Bikes scheme and roll-out to other cities
- €40m for 2014 sports capital programme

International

- Successful Irish Presidency of the EU
- Review of the Government Trade, Tourism and Investment Strategy with new targets
- Five new Irish embassies and three new consulates announced
- Embassy network organised 117 key visits across 52 countries promoting Ireland
- Launch of Ireland's Policy for International Development
- New Irish Aid Volunteering initiative launched
- Deepening of relations with UK with preparations for Presidential visit in April
- Significant Trade Missions to Japan, the USA and the Gulf led by An Taoiseach
- The third Global Irish Economic Forum took place

Children, Families and Older People

New Child and Family Agency

The Child and Family Agency was established with effect from 1 January 2014 putting in place a new regime of governance and accountability for child and family services. The Agency has a dedicated remit for child welfare, protection and family support services and involves the merging of Child and Family services from the HSE with Family Support Agency and National Education Welfare Board services. The Agency has a budget of over €600 million and a staff of 4,000, and represents one of the largest single public sector reforms undertaken by Government.

Enhancing Child Protection

The general scheme of new legislation to put the Children First Guidelines on a statutory footing has been published. This will place obligations on professionals and organisations working with children to report suspected child protection concerns, to share information and to engage in inter-agency and multi-disciplinary working.

The forthcoming National Children and Young People's Policy Framework 2014-2018 will meet one of the key recommendations of the Ryan Report to bring together relevant policies including those relating to prevention and early intervention initiatives, early childhood education, area based approaches to address child poverty, and addressing youth homelessness and aftercare provision.

The number of staff assigned to the Garda vetting service has been increased to 174 compared to 93 at the end of 2012 to help keep waiting times to a minimum in dealing with approximately 380,000 applications per annum. Development of an e-Vetting solution is well underway and will further contribute to reductions in processing times for all vetting.

Reforming Social Welfare Provisions for Lone Parents

The new Jobseeker's Allowance Transition scheme is designed to better suit the family requirements of lone parents allowing them to seek work on a part time basis. The new scheme targets the full support of the Department's activation services to help lone parents

return to work, training or education, while recognising the particular difficulties they face, such as childcare and long-term absence from the labour market.

National Positive Ageing Strategy

The National Positive Ageing Strategy, published in 2013, is the blueprint for age related policy and service delivery in Ireland, outlining a vision for positive ageing and how older people will be recognised, supported and enabled to live independent full lives. An implementation plan is being developed around the key goals of participation, health, security and research.

Arising from a focus on Smart Ageing Innovation at the Global Irish Economic Forum in October 2013, the Action Plan for Jobs 2014 sets out measures to map the existing strengths and activities and clearly define the opportunities for Ireland in smart ageing technologies and services.

Establishment of Older People Councils

14 older people's fora or councils have been established in local authorities within the context of the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme to give a collective voice to older people to influence local planning and other areas affecting their lives. The Programme has also been adopted in a further six counties with an accompanying commitment to develop older people's councils in these areas as a matter of course. Work is continuing to progress the adoption of the Programme and the establishment of councils in the remaining areas.

Pension Reform

The OECD published its Review of the Irish Pensions System in 2013 setting out a range of recommendations aimed at enhancing the long-term sustainability and coverage of pension provision in Ireland. Analysis of the recommendations outlined in the review is on-going and will inform further developments in the area of long-term pension policy.

New measures aimed at tackling difficulties in Defined Benefit pension schemes are provided for under the Social Welfare and Pensions (No. 2) Act 2013. In the case of both a company and scheme being insolvent, the Government will guarantee that existing pensions will be protected to a level of 50% with pensions of €12,000 or less being 100% protected.

Arts, Culture and Sport

Assisting Arts Nationwide

€8.3million was allocated in 2013 to fund 452 individuals and 872 organisations in touring and to support a network of venues, festivals and arts organisations to ensure that they provide employment opportunities for both artists and other personnel, locally as well as nationally.

A major review will be undertaken in 2014 by the Arts Council to address how it plans, partners, promotes and provides for the arts, including in the context of job creation and investment.

Culture Night

Culture Night 2013 has grown from a cultural event staged only in Dublin to a significant national cultural event. The 2013 event took place on 20 September in 34 locations across the island of Ireland with over 1,400 free events attended by over 400,000 people. The event also extends overseas with London, Liverpool and Leeds in the UK and Leuven in Belgium participating.

In addition, the International Week of Irish Culture, based around the St Patrick's Day Festival, included 6,000 visitors from more than 45 countries walking in a new People's Parade through some of Dublin's most historic landmarks. The festival featured 16 special free headline events in addition to a citywide Cultural Events Programme.

Cultural Plan for Commemorative Events

A series of commemorative projects are being developed for the Decade of Centenaries with a significant concentration on the 2013 to 2016 period. This programme will include a range of keynote capital projects, seminal exhibitions and a multifaceted cultural programme, engaging the public, community and private spheres. A dedicated website www.decadeofcentenaries.com has been launched with information on the commemorative events taking place. €6 million will be allocated in 2014 from the sale of the Lottery License to help to fund a number of commemoration projects, including exhibition and interpretative facilities at the GPO.

A new Cultural and Heritage Centre is being established in partnership with Bank of Ireland at the historic Parliament Buildings, College Green. A programme of exhibitions and events to take place at the centre will be developed as part of the Decade of Centenaries.

Promoting Genealogical Tourism

The website www.irishgenealogy.ie was redesigned and launched last March to enable visitors to search genealogy records from a number of on-line sources including Church Records, Military records, Emigration records, Property Valuation records and the Censuses of 1901 and 1911. A recent agreement with the General Register Office will facilitate future searches of all available index data relating to births marriages and deaths in some cases from as early as 1845. A Working Group has been established to examine the technical, legal and resourcing issues in relation to publishing the 1926 census and will submit their report in 2014.

Standards for Sports Bodies

An independent dispute resolution service Just Sport Ireland has been established as the as preferred approach for dispute resolution for sports bodies. Out of 62 sports bodies, 40 sports bodies have, to date, adopted this within their rules with a further seven adopting their own dispute resolution services. 6,500 participants have also completed 450 Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's Sport courses.

Promoting Participation in Sport

Participation in sport and physical activity continues to increase. A new round of sports capital funding was announced in December with €40 million allocated to help develop sports facilities and purchase sports equipment for sports clubs and organisations across Ireland. Funding for sport in 2013 included:

- 625 payments worth €13.5 million paid out in sports capital grants
- €1 million allocated for boxing clubs to upgrade training facilities to encourage participation
- €2 million grants to Local Councils for the provision of sports facilities and equipment
- €13.5 million to develop sports facilities at the National Sports Campus including the opening of multi-sport all-weather floodlit pitches, a National Horse Sport Arena, a new National Diving Training Centre, a National Modern Pentathlon Training Centre, and commence work on the National Indoor Arena
- €43.5 million funding for the Irish Sports Council helping to support high performance, national and local sport with over 200,000 people participating in local programmes

Foreign Affairs, ODA and Defence

Promoting Ireland Abroad

In 2013, working in close co-ordination with the State agencies and other Government Departments, Ireland's embassy network actively promoted Ireland's economic interests abroad through:

- Organising 117 high-level visits with a significant economic or promotional dimension by Government ministers or members of the Oireachtas to 52 countries
- Engaging with 1,152 representatives of international media to promote Ireland's profile and global reputation
- Promoting key economic messages about Ireland in the international media, reaching more than 53 million people
- Undertaking 734 engagements designed to increase trade and investment in Ireland
- Organising 661 engagements to promote Ireland's economic interests to key office-holders.

During the St. Patrick's Day period alone, private bilateral meetings were held with US President Barack Obama, UK Prime Minister David Cameron, Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard, US Secretary of State John Kerry and many more government ministers, national parliamentarians and legislators, and decision-makers across the world.

The third Global Irish Economic Forum took place in October 2013 which saw 260 of our most successful entrepreneurs and businesspeople from home and abroad come together to provide recommendations to boost economic growth, deliver jobs and grow exports, many of which are being advanced within the context of the 2014 Action Plan for Jobs.

Overseas Development Aid

Ireland has contributed over €1.9 billion in Official Development Assistance (ODA) in the past three years and will be providing almost €600 million in 2014. One World, One Future: Ireland's Policy for International Development launched last year sets out the vision, goals and priorities for the Government's international development co-operation programme over the coming four years. The policy reaffirms the Government's commitment to making progress towards the UN target of allocating 0.7% of Gross National Product to ODA as soon as economic circumstances permit.

Co-ordinated Responses to Humanitarian Crises

The Government has provided seed funding for the development of a global pooled funding mechanism for Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Following independent evaluation of the pilot initiative, €600,000 was provided to operationalise the fund, which will operate through a network of 6,800 civil society organisations present in 200 countries. To date 19 international NGOs experienced in humanitarian response have signed up and grants will be made available to NGOs within 72 hours allowing for humanitarian response activities to start within seven days. In 2013, €11 million was provided to eight key NGO partners under the Humanitarian Programme Plan funding scheme for their response to longer term protracted crisis situations.

Establish a Civilian Corps

In line with the commitment to establish a Civilian Volunteer Corps, the new Irish Aid Volunteering Initiative which is a key element of Ireland's new policy for international development was launched in October. The specific aims of the Volunteering Initiative are to strengthen support for volunteering at each stage of the volunteering process – from the information stage to the volunteer's return. In particular, the Initiative seeks to encourage innovation in volunteering and attract interest from a diverse group of skilled volunteers who wish to volunteer abroad.

Northern Ireland

Implementing the Good Friday Agreement and St. Andrew's Agreement

In 2013, members of the Government attended 25 meetings with Northern Ministers within the framework of the North South Ministerial Council on matters of mutual interest. The Irish Government continues to provide significant support through the Reconciliation Fund and the Anti-Sectarianism Fund with €2.7 million provided to 150 community projects in 2013.

The follow up on the March 2012 Joint Statement on British Irish Relations is being advanced through an extensive programme of work. The last plenary of the Secretaries General and Permanent Secretaries took place in Dublin in September to prepare for the annual summit meeting in London later this month.

The State visit of President Higgins to the United Kingdom this April will be an opportunity to deepen the positive relationship that now exists. This follows on from the joint visit in December by Prime Minister Cameron and the Taoiseach to the war graves in Flanders to commemorate and honour all of those Irish and British soldiers who died during the First World War.

The Irish Government welcomes the progress made within the Haass negotiations on a number of the most difficult issues that face society in Northern Ireland and stands ready to work with the Northern Ireland Executive, and with the British Government, to support further efforts to achieve greater peace and the common goal of building a united community in Northern Ireland.

By way of follow up to the BIC Summit meeting in November 2013, all BIC work sectors have been asked to consider the issue of generating employment opportunities for young people in their work.

Economic Co-operation to Support Jobs

The North South Ministerial Council continues to progress economic co-operation and advance job creation on an all-Ireland basis with key developments including:

- Tourism Ireland, and its partners, are implementing the GB Pathway to Growth plan which aims to grow the number of British visitors to the island of Ireland by 20% by 2016
- In the first nine months of 2013 InterTrade Ireland had assisted 48 first time innovators, was assisting 46 first time exporters and had engaged 1,906 companies in North/South business
- The launch by InterTrade Ireland of a free app for the EU's new Horizon 2020 programme

Review of the North-South Bodies

At the Plenary meeting of the North South Ministerial Council in November it was agreed that Ministers North and South would focus on new priorities for practical economic co-operation that can help economic recovery, job creation, the optimal use of public money and the most effective delivery of public services. Both the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive are keen to ensure that a preliminary package of new priorities will be ready for consideration at the next NSMC Plenary meeting in June 2014.

Continue to Develop Relations Between An Garda Síochána and the PSNI

There is close and ongoing co-operation between the Garda Síochána and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in response to the real and persistent threat posed by paramilitary groups. As part of the process of enhancing the policing relationship, the two forces reviewed and refreshed the joint Cross Border Policing Strategy in 2013 to maintain the close co-operation between both police services.

An exchange programme between An Garda Síochána and the PSNI has been very successful, with exchanges taking place across the whole spectrum of policing areas. To date, eighty-nine members of An Garda Síochána and seventy-six members of the PSNI have taken part.

Ireland in Europe

Ireland's Presidency of the EU

Ireland's seventh Presidency of the Council was a busy and productive six months achieving significant results including work towards securing agreement on the €960 billion EU investment programme on infrastructure, cohesion, education, research, agriculture and youth employment.

During the 181 days and 2,477 Presidency meetings/events some 200 policy commitments were achieved, including:

- Positive drivers for growth and job creation across Europe including €8 billion focused on youth employment
- New rules for banks to improve banking stability and to protect taxpayers from having to bail out the banks again
- Agreement to enhance economic governance across the euro area including budgetary co-ordination and enhanced economic and fiscal surveillance
- A package of taxation measures including on tackling tax fraud and evasion.

It is estimated that over 24,000 visitors came to Ireland for Presidency related events. There was also a further 929 events worldwide as part of the Presidency's cultural programme.

EU2020 Strategy

Ireland's National Reform Programme (NRP) update for 2013 set out progress made in achieving Ireland's national targets set out in the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy. This included the work across Government to implement strategies across the areas of employment, innovation, climate and energy, education and social inclusion. Preparation of our 2014 NRP and Stability Programme Update is well underway in advance of submission to the Commission in April, with ongoing engagement by Government Departments with the European Commission on matters relating to the Europe 2020 agenda and European Semester.

Implementation of EU Legislation

An assessment is currently underway of the current Oireachtas arrangements for EU scrutiny in consultation with Government Departments and the Houses of the Oireachtas. The focus is on the identification of areas for improvement, including means of supporting early and focussed engagement by Oireachtas Committees in the EU legislative process; addressing duplication or inefficiency, including in relation to reporting arrangements; and appropriately scrutinising the implementation of EU law, including by statutory instrument.

Enhancing Ireland's Role in EU Judicial and Home Affairs

The Government has been represented at Ministerial level in all 15 formal meetings and five informal meetings of the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council held to the end of 2013. The Government has also engaged with the relevant EU Commissioners in addressing the relevant European Parliamentary and Oireachtas Committees. Government policy has consistently been that Ireland should opt into as many of these JHA measures as is practicable. In 2013, Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union provided a valuable opportunity to take centre stage in advancing the JHA agenda and in enhancing Ireland's reputation as an enthusiastic and committed player in this field.

An Gaeilge agus an Ghaeltacht

Supporting the 20 Year Irish Language Strategy

A progress report on the implementation of the *20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language* was published in July 2013 with relevant Government Departments also publishing their own individual implementation plans under the Strategy. A new Coimisinéir Teanga was nominated by Government in February 2014 for a six-year term.

The Gaeltacht Act 2012 gave legislative effect to a new language planning process which places particular emphasis on integrated language planning at community level. Regulations, prescribing the language planning criteria under the Act, were published in September 2013 and language planning guidelines were published in January 2014. 26 Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas have been recognised for the purposes of the Act. These have been launched with the first notices published in December 2013 in respect of three of the Areas in counties Donegal, Galway and Kerry.

Reform the Irish Curriculum in Schools

Work is underway by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) to inform the development of the new curriculum for Irish at Junior Cycle for implementation in September 2016. A public consultation process has recently concluded on a background paper by the NCCA on the issues that the new junior cycle specification should address. The NCCA will be engaging with stakeholders in 2014 on a new Primary Language Curriculum – for Junior Infant to Second Classes where languages are taught partly in relation to one another.

Students Sitting Higher Level Irish

The number of students sitting Higher Level Irish in the Leaving Cert has increased year on year with 14,358 in 2011, to 15,937 in 2012 and 16,669 in 2013. A review by the NCCA of students' experiences of the new assessment arrangements of the 40% allocation to the oral assessment is due to report soon. With a further 10% allocated to the aural exam, it means that 50% of marks are now allocated for language skills.

Supporting the Gaeltacht Regions

Údarás na Gaeltachta encourages investment in the Gaeltacht through a range of incentives and supports

for new and existing enterprises. It has focused on recent years in developing the key sectors of natural and marine resources, life sciences, ICT, food, niche manufacturing, engineering and other high-value, internationally tradable commodities. In 2013, Údarás client companies created 616 new full-time jobs with a further 560 expected as a result of projects already approved. Údarás client companies employ over 7,650 people and contribute €409.7 million in the form of direct expenditure in the Irish economy.

In 2013, a total of 49 social employment schemes were in operation throughout the Gaeltacht providing important training and work experience for the 1,000 participants while also supporting community development and language maintenance programmes in Gaeltacht areas.

Review Funding Programmes to Irish Language Organisations

Following a review of its 19 core funded Irish Language organisations and as a result of a decision by the North South Ministerial Council, Foras na Gaeilge has announced new funding arrangements coming into effect in July 2014 to support the development of the Irish language in both jurisdictions. Six lead organisations have been selected to specialise in each of the six major areas of activity as follows:

- Irish-Medium/Immersion Education and Irish-medium Preschool Education - Gaelscoileanna
- Awareness Raising, Language Protection and Representation - Conradh na Gaeilge
- Education in the English-language sector - Gael Linn
- Use of Irish and the Establishment of Networks - Oireachtas na Gaeilge
- Community and Economic Development - Glór na nGael
- Use of Irish and of Networks for Young People - Cumann na bhFiann

Foras na Gaeilge will be establishing an all-island partnership forum to ensure a collaborative approach by the 6 lead organisations and an all-island language development forum which is representative of local language interests at community level.

Climate Change

Climate Change

In 2013, the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht conducted a wide-ranging public consultation on the outline Heads of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill and associated research material and issued a report in November 2013. With regard to that report, final development of the Heads of the Bill is underway, with a view to publication by Easter 2014.

In anticipation of the planned primary legislation, a National Low-Carbon Roadmap to 2050 is now being developed. At present, Departments with responsibility for the key sectors in the national transition agenda are currently preparing the sectoral elements for incorporation into the national roadmap. The key sectors are electricity generation, the built environment, transport and agriculture. Adoption of the national roadmap later in 2014, following an open consultation on a final draft and strategic environment assessment, will conclude the current programme for the development of national climate policy and legislation.

Emergency Planning

The Government Task Force on Emergency Planning provides strategic direction and co-ordination of emergency planning supported by the Office of Emergency Planning (OEP). Under the existing 'Lead Department' principle, when an emergency occurs the relevant Government Department responsible for an activity in normal conditions takes charge of the national co-ordinated response.

A review of roles and responsibilities is underway with the intention of increasing the number of emergency types and also to potentially split the relevant lead Government Department at different stages of the emergency (e.g. response and recovery).

The Government has made a further €70 million available to Local Authorities to help communities and areas which have been devastated by the recent storms and flooding. This funding is in addition to the €25 million which has been available under the Humanitarian Assistance scheme to provide support to people whose homes have been damaged by flooding.

Energy

Offshore Renewable Energy

In addition to the Strategy for Renewable Energy 2012-2020, the Offshore Renewable Energy Development Plan, published in February 2014, sets out the framework for the sustainable development of Ireland's offshore renewable energy resource across three key pillars – environmental sustainability, technical feasibility and commercial viability and includes a number of policy actions and enablers in relation to job creation and the growth potential of the sector. An Offshore Renewable Energy Steering Group will be established to oversee its implementation.

Wind Farm Locations

Following a public consultation launched in December, revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines in relation to noise, proximity and shadow flicker will be published in the coming months and issued to planning authorities under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Work is also ongoing in developing a national policy framework which will facilitate decisions by An Bord Pleanála on wind energy projects specifically for export.

Incentivise and Promote Off-shore Drilling

The regulatory framework applying to the oil and gas exploration sector was further streamlined in December 2013, when the Commission for Energy Regulation commenced operation as the safety regulator for the sector. In 2013, the number of exploration licences in place and exploration companies operating in the Irish offshore was the highest ever. 10 new exploration licences and licensing options were awarded, bringing the total at end 2013 to 48.

The first phase of the Ireland's largest ever offshore seismic survey was carried out in 2013, with over 10,000 km of seismic data acquired. This will help identify the true oil and gas exploration potential of Ireland's Atlantic Margin. The second phase of the survey will be carried out in 2014.

Regulation

Rationalise Regulators to Strengthen Consumer Regulation

A new Government Policy Statement on Economic Regulation was published last July. The new policy, which is currently being implemented, aims to provide a clearer policy and strategic context in which sectoral Departments can establish and articulate, in legislation, policy direction. Departments have been tasked with implementing the actions set out in this Statement which include Sectoral Ministers introducing legislative changes to provide for:

- The setting of a hierarchy of policy objectives with national level objectives prioritised
- Policy/mandate reviews on a statutory basis at least every seven years, and
- A performance and accountability framework for regulators and regulated sectors

A number of Government Departments are developing key elements of the strategic approach to regulation and delivering on regulatory actions outlined in the statement including progressing policy reviews which include regulatory reviews; for example a Green Paper on Energy Policy and a new Aviation Policy statement.

Sustainable Waste Policy

Regulating Waste Collection

The Government's new waste policy encompasses a significantly strengthened regulatory regime to ensure providers adhere to new standards of service, incentivise customers to adopt more sustainable behaviours and be much more transparent about their charging structures. Following the recent consultation process on the regulation of household waste collection, new regulations will be published during 2014.

Waste Producer Responsibility Initiatives

The main Producer Responsibility Initiative review is at an advanced stage and it is expected that the final report will be published in the first half of 2014. The final report will be wide ranging and include segments on packaging, farm plastics, batteries, information and awareness, enforcement, competition in the compliance schemes, and possible new areas that might be covered by Producer Responsibility agreements.

Enhancing the Quality of the Environment

Environmental Crime

The forthcoming Environment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill will be used to introduce on-the-spot fines for illegal dumping providing local authorities with a more direct and cost-effective means of addressing this issue. Consideration is also being given to new legislation in 2014 to provide for on-the-spot fines to address noise pollution.

Peat

National Heritage Areas

The Review of Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) was published in January 2014 setting out a significant reconfiguration of Ireland's NHA raised bog network to meet conservation targets. Turf cutting will continue on 45 NHAs while cutting on a further 36 NHAs will be phased out over three years and 25 new, mainly State owned, sites will be proposed for designation to replace the habitats lost through de-designation of the more heavily cut sites.

Communications

Broadband

The Nationwide Broadband Mapping Project is underway to identify areas that will need to be targeted in the State-led intervention to deliver high speed broadband to areas of the country where the commercial market will not invest. It is expected that this phase will be concluded towards the end of 2014.

A new monitoring service by ComReg to measure and make publicly available broadband speeds as delivered by providers to the consumer's homes is expected to be available in a pilot phase by the summer. The new service will allow users to log broadband speeds they are receiving with the aim of building up a detailed database across the country.

The Advertising Standards Authority of Ireland continues to apply standards on advertising speeds following consultations with ComReg and the National Consumer Agency. Any broadband operators

implementing caps for usage must specify those caps on ComReg's cost comparison website www.callcosts.ie and additionally specify the charge applied for usage over the cap.

In 2013 a further 234 second-level schools in the Counties of Dublin, Kildare and Meath were connected to the high speed network, bringing to 516 the number of schools connected to date.

Public Broadcasting Charge

A consultation paper on the introduction of a Public Service Broadcasting Charge to replace the Television Licence was launched last year. The Minister is considering the submissions received and will publish his response in the coming weeks.

Review the Funding of Broadcasters

Following the publication of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland's 5 year review of public service broadcasting last year, legislation is to be introduced for a new system of funding for public service broadcasters.

Maintaining the Post Office Network

In December 2013, the Government signed a contract with An Post to deliver the cash payment services to customers in receipt of social welfare, following a competitive tender process. The contract will see An Post deliver over €9 billion of payments to welfare customers in 2014, involving more than 40 million transactions. The contract is worth more than €50 million to An Post per annum, and will support jobs and communities and underpin the continued viability and sustainability of the post office network throughout the country.

Transport

Public Transport

The National Transport Authority announced that about 10% of bus routes currently operated by Dublin Bus and by Bus Éireann will be tendered out with contracts expected to be awarded in 2015 and services commencing in 2016. These include some orbital routes and local routes in Dublin, and some Dublin commuter routes into Leinster as well as Waterford routes.

Investing in Transport

Enabling advance works are underway on the €368 million Luas Cross City project and the Building Condition works and Cellars Infill works have been completed. The Utilities Works commenced in January 2014. The main infrastructure works are expected to commence in early 2015 with services due to begin in 2017. Integrated ticketing for public transport has progressed successfully with sales of Leap Cards reaching 464,000 by end of January 2014.

Over €630 million was spent in 2013 on improving and maintaining the road network. The N2/N3 link road in west Dublin was officially opened in May and the PPP roads programme was restarted last year with construction already underway on the N11/N7 project.

Taxi Regulation

The Taxi Regulation Act, 2013, signed into law in October 2013, strengthens the legal basis for the regulation of the sector and sets out a comprehensive regulatory framework for access to the profession and the provision of services.

Regulation of Clamping

Drafting is underway on legislation for a new regulatory regime for those involved in vehicle clamping as a means of parking enforcement, which will be overseen by the National Transport Authority. This will principally provide for maximum de-clamping fees, an appeals process and mandatory signage.

Bikes Share Schemes

Construction to provide for the expansion of the 'Dublinbikes' scheme commenced in October 2013, with 125 bikes already made available at 14 new stations across Dublin. The remaining 44 stations are expected to be in place by July 2014 providing a new total capacity of 1,500 bikes. New bike-share schemes for the cities of Cork, Limerick and Galway are also underway and will become operational during 2014.

Airport Performance

There were over 24.8 million passengers through Irish airports in 2013, up 4%. Dublin Airport had its third successive year of growth of passenger numbers led by a record-breaking performance on transatlantic traffic. As a result of this strong growth, a €5.6 million rebate in airport charges is being paid to a total of 40 airlines at Dublin Airport under the growth incentive

scheme. New and additional routes have been announced out of Dublin, Shannon and Cork to North America, Europe and the UK.

Agriculture

One-Stop-Shop for Agri-Payments

The Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine is the sole EU accredited Paying Agency in Ireland for CAP payments to farmers. Significant reforms of the agri-payment systems have taken place involving major investment in ICT systems, increased on-line scheme application facilities and a centralised payment process. This reorganisation involved the closure of 42 smaller offices, the establishment of 16 enhanced regional offices, the redeployment of 322 staff and the provision of a customer snapshot application in local offices to enable frontline staff deal with the majority of client scheme queries. In 2013, over €1.18 billion was paid on foot of almost 130,000 applications under the Single Farm Payment Scheme and a further €200 million under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme.

Supporting Food Harvest 2020

A progress report for 2013 highlighted that by midyear virtually all of end 2013 targets had been reached and 92% of the 215 Food Harvest 2020 recommendations had been satisfactorily progressed. CSO data illustrates the progress achieved on the FH2020 headline targets, showing that the value of primary production has risen by 33%, exports have grown by 24% while value-added has increased by 20% on the Food Harvest baseline figures. The Irish food and drink sectors continued to show significant growth in 2013 with export values achieving almost €10 billion for the first time. Bord Bia will continue to promote Ireland's sustainable food and drink industry in 2014 through its participation in some fifteen trade exhibitions which will attract in excess of 800,000 business executives across Europe, Russia, the Middle East and Asia.

Afforestation Programme

Annual funding is provided to facilitate close to 7,000 hectares of new forestry planting in each year. Payments in respect of 6,652 and 6,252 hectares of new planting were made in 2012 and 2013 respectively. A significant increase in the number of applications

for technical approval to plant is evidence that interest in planting is growing but the challenge remains to translate this increase in approvals into actual planting.

Animal Welfare

The Animal Health & Welfare Act 2013 includes new provisions which will lead to greater protection of animals. It will allow the courts to bar individuals convicted of serious animal welfare offences from keeping animals. The Act also strengthens laws on animal baiting and dog fighting so that for the first time those attending dogfights will be liable for prosecution.

Coastal Communities, Fisheries & Marine Environment

Common Fisheries Policy

Quotas of 270,077 tonnes were secured for Irish fishermen for 2014, worth €260 million to the fishing industry, which is up 2% on last year. The overall package did also include some reductions in quota, responding to scientific advice on a number of stocks, which are designed to ensure the sustainability of the fish stocks into the future.

Ireland's Coastline

In light of the substantial damage that has been caused by the recent storms, the Government has made €20 million available to Local Authorities for restoring the coastal protection infrastructure. A further €26 million has been provided to aid the repair of local authority infrastructure, tourism, amenity and community infrastructure, and piers/harbours.

Safety at Sea

A new safety initiative was launched in 2013 to improve the safety of people on fishing boats with €800,000 made available to fund the purchase of safety equipment. A new enhanced safety training course will also provide training to every fisherman. Work is underway on a new national maritime safety strategy to be published in 2014 with the aim of reducing the numbers of deaths and injuries among recreational users, fishers, passengers and seafarers.

All of Ireland's Coast Guard helicopters have been replaced meaning Ireland now has one of the most modern and effective helicopter fleets in the world operating from bases in Dublin, Shannon, Sligo and

Waterford. In 2013, the Irish Coast Guard responded to 2,627 incidents involving fishing craft, leisure vessels and mountaineers.

Planning

Co-ordination of National, Regional and Local Planning Laws

Preparation is underway on the General Scheme of a new Planning and Development Bill to establish a new Office of the Planning Regulator in line with the key planning recommendation of the Final Report of the Mahon Tribunal. The Planning Regulator will carry out independent appraisals of all relevant statutory plans – including local area plans, development plans, and regional planning guidelines.

On the foot of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, reconfigured Regional Assemblies will be tasked with preparing Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies to ensure the co-ordination of economic and spatial development across the regions and enable local government to play a stronger role in economic development in general.

In 2013, statutory guidelines for Planning Authorities on the preparation of local area plans were published highlighting best practice to improve the quality of local area plans, especially in relation to their content and consistency with higher-level plans. They also improve community and institutional participation in the process of preparing or amending local area plans; and thereby enhance the co-ordination and provision of essential public infrastructure within the planning process.

Taking Housing Estates 'In Charge'

There are 377 developments which are the subject of legal enforcement proceedings. Existing planning legislation allows planning authorities take an unfinished housing estate in charge, at any time after the expiration of the planning permission, in situations where enforcement actions have failed or the planning authority has not taken enforcement action.

Flood Prevention

The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities are in place to ensure a more consistent, rigorous and systematic approach to flood risk assessment and management

in the planning system. Development plans and local area plans are monitored to ensure planning authorities identify, assess and take appropriate steps to manage flood risk in a sustainable manner within their area.

€69.5 million was allocated last year to Flood Risk Management to complete major flood relief projects in Clonmel, Mallow, Tullamore and Carlow with projects in Fermoy, Ennis, Dublin and Waterford due to be completed in 2014. 58 minor flood works schemes were also undertaken in 2014.

UNDER REVIEW

Packaging Levy

Following the conclusion of the ESRI report that a packaging levy was likely to generate a large number of costs with few, if any, tangible benefits, Government will not proceed with the proposed packaging levy.

Appendix 1: Constitutional Convention

Topics Considered	Recommendations of the Constitutional Convention	Current Position
<p>Reduction of the Presidential term of office to five years and the alignment with local and European elections</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No change to the length of the Presidential term of office nor to any alignment with local and European elections 2. Reduce the age of candidacy for Presidential candidates 3. Give citizens a say in the nomination process for presidential candidates 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No action required 2. The Government has committed to holding a referendum in 2015 3. The Government has referred this proposal to the Oireachtas committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht for consideration
<p>Reduction of the voting age to 17</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Voting age should be reduced to 16 2. No change to the age of candidacy for non-Presidential elections 3. No change to the voting age only for certain types of elections (eg local elections) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Government has committed to holding a referendum in 2015 2. No action required 3. No action required
<p>Clause on the role of women in the home & encouraging greater participation of women in public life</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Article 41.2 (on the role of women) should be made gender-neutral to include other carers both 'in the home' and 'beyond the home' 2. The state should provide 'a reasonable level of support' to ensure that carers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Government has decided to establish a task force to examine the proposal and report back by October 2014 in order to prepare wording for a referendum at the earliest opportunity 2. As above
<p>Increasing the participation of women in politics</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Constitution should be amended to include an explicit provision on gender equality 2. Apart from constitutional reform, there should be more government action to encourage greater participation of women in politics 3. The Constitution should be amended to include 'gender-inclusive' language 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Minister for Justice and Equality will examine this proposal, in consultation with other Departments and the Attorney General's Office and report back by October 2014 2. A number of initiatives have already been completed or are ongoing and these will be built on throughout the lifetime of this Government. 3. The Minister for Justice will undertake a preliminary feasibility study on this proposal prior to it being considered further by Government
<p>Provisions for same-sex marriage</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Constitution should be amended to allow for same-sex marriage (and this amendment should be 'directive') 2. The state should enact laws incorporating necessary changed arrangements in regard to the parentage, guardianship and upbringing of children 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Government has committed to holding a referendum in 2015 2. The Minister for Justice and Equality will bring legislative proposals to Government in 2014

Topics Considered	Recommendations of the Constitutional Convention	Current Position
Review of the Dáil electoral system	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The existing (STV) electoral system should be amended to ensure that the smallest constituency size is a 5-seater and to remove the alphabetical order of candidates on the ballot paper 2. The state should establish an Electoral Commission 3. Polling hours/days should be extended 4. There should be greater access to postal voting 5. Accuracy of the electoral register should be improved 6. Measures should be introduced to increase electoral turnout 7. Education programmes should be introduced in schools 8. There should be non-parliamentary ministers in government 9. Members of the Dail should be required to resign their seats on being appointed to ministerial office 10. Citizen-initiatives should be introduced (both for influencing the parliamentary agenda and for the calling of referendums) 	<p>The Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government is currently considering the recommendations in the report</p>
Irish citizens' right to vote at Irish Embassies in Presidential elections	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rights for citizens abroad and citizens in Northern Ireland to vote in presidential elections 	<p>The Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government is currently considering the recommendations in the report</p>
Removal of the offence of Blasphemy from the Constitution	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The offence of blasphemy should be replaced by a new general provision to include incitement to religious hatred 2. The introduction a new set of detailed legislative provisions to include incitement to religious hatred 	<p>The Minister for Justice and Equality is currently considering the recommendations in the report</p>
'Any other Constitutional amendments': a. Dáil Reform b. Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	<p>The Convention met and discussed both of these issues in February 2014 and is due to submit its reports by end March 2014.</p>	

Appendix 2: Government legislation enacted since March 2013

Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Act 2013

Child Care (Amendment) Act 2013

Water Services (Amendment) Act 2013

Electoral (Amendment) (Dáil Constituencies) Act 2013

Finance Act 2013

Motor Vehicles (Duties and Licences) Act 2013

Health (Alteration of Criteria for Eligibility) Act 2013

Education and Training Boards Act 2013

Defence Forces (Second World War Amnesty and Immunity) Act 2013

National Lottery Act 2013

Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013

Animal, Health and Welfare Act 2013

Non-Use of Motor Vehicles Act 2013

Public Health (Tobacco) (Amendment) Act 2013

Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2013

Criminal Justice Act 2013

Social Welfare and Pensions (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2013

European Union (Accession of the Republic of Croatia) (Access to the Labour Market) Act 2013

Housing (Amendment) Act 2013

Health Service Executive (Governance) Act 2013

Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) (Amendment) Act 2013

Further Education and Training Act 2013

Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2013

Electoral, Local Government and Planning and Development Act 2013

Prison Development (Confirmation of Resolutions) Act 2013

Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act 2013

Land and Conveyancing Law Reform Act 2013

Health (Amendment) Act 2013

Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2013

Houses of the Oireachtas (Inquiries, Privileges and Procedures) Act 2013

Construction Contracts Act 2013

Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013

Industrial Development (Science Foundation Ireland) (Amendment) Act 2013

Taxi Regulation Act 2013

Thirty-Third Amendment of the Constitution (Court of Appeal) Act 2013

Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2013

Gas Regulation Act 2013

Child and Family Agency Act 2013

Finance (No. 2) Act 2013

Health (Alteration of Criteria for Eligibility) (No. 2) Act 2013

Appropriation Act 2013

Adoption (Amendment) Act 2013

Credit Reporting Act 2013

Companies (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2013

Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments)(Amendment)Act 2013

Health Insurance (Amendment) Act 2013

Social Welfare and Pensions (No. 2) Act 2013

Water Services (No. 2) Act 2013

Pyrite Resolution Act 2013

Local Government Reform Act 2014

European Parliament Elections (Amendment) Act 2014

