

Department of the Taoiseach Annual Report 2017



A Message from the Taoiseach

Following on from the good work of my predecessor Enda Kenny T.D. and supported by this Department, my ambition as head of the Government is to maintain and spread the economic gains that we have collectively made. This is about continuing to implement the Programme for a Partnership Government, improving access to our health services, increasing the supply of affordable housing, and making life easier for families.

We have recovered from the recent economic crisis to the point where our economy is now one of the fastest growing in the European Union. Project Ireland 2040, the overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic and cultural development of our country, will enable sustainable growth and regional balance. It is the first time we have had such a coordinated approach to investing in public infrastructure in a way that ties in with our national spatial priorities.

On March 29th 2019 the United Kingdom will leave the European Union. Brexit poses unprecedented political, economic and diplomatic challenges for Ireland. The Government is working intensively at home and abroad to minimise and mitigate the impact of Brexit, and to prepare for its consequences. The work in 2017 was vital to ensure that our national interests were fully reflected in the December Joint Report including the commitment to avoid any return to a hard border.

With our changing trade relationship with the UK we must look to other opportunities around the world. Ireland has long been recognised as one of the most open trading economies in the world. Initiatives such as Global Footprint 2025 and Ireland Connected will allow us to deepen the strong trading and cultural links between Ireland and the world and explore new ones. This will attract greater investment and trade opportunities, boost tourism and strengthen the ties with our diaspora.

I am grateful for the support I received in representing Ireland, from my own Department, as well as from officials across Government Departments and in our diplomatic service.

Together with my ministerial colleagues, Paul Kehoe TD, Helen McEntee TD, Joe McHugh, TD and Pat Breen TD, I would like to thank the staff in the Department for their continued hard work and dedication.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Leo Varadkar'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Leo Varadkar
Taoiseach

Introduction by the Secretary General

This is the first Annual Report under the Department of the Taoiseach's Statement of Strategy 2017-2020.

The Department's work during 2017 was centred on supporting the work of the Taoiseach and the Government both at home and abroad. The year saw the appointment of a new Taoiseach and Government which brought about many changes for the Department including new Ministers of State, responsibility for Brexit coordination moving to the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the establishment of Cabinet Committees.

In addition to our existing responsibilities, which are set out in this report, the Department undertook additional work in the areas of Pensions Reform, Ireland's bioeconomy, the National Planning Framework, and Ireland Global Footprint 2025.

Led by Second Secretary General John Callinan, the Department has supported the Taoiseach's intensive engagement and negotiations on Brexit matters with EU leaders. We continued to engage in a wide range of national priority issues, as directed by the Taoiseach, such as Brexit, housing and homelessness, climate change, health and justice reform, infrastructure planning and investment, gender equality and disability, economic planning, and rural development.

In addition to policy development and implementation the Department staff continued to provide the essential corporate support services underpinning the work of all divisions and ministerial offices in the Department. Press and protocol support services continued to support the large programme of events including the state funeral of Liam Cosgrave and visits by Heads of State and senior EU officials.

The Department was centrally involved in supporting the Taoiseach and the National Emergency Coordination Group in its response to Storm Ophelia in October.

In 2017, Lorcan Fullam, a valued and much missed member of staff passed away. His absence is felt by all his colleagues in the Department.

I would like to thank all the staff of the Department for their hard work, professionalism and commitment throughout the year.

Martin Fraser
Secretary General

Our Mission

Our purpose is to help the Taoiseach and the Government to develop a sustainable economy and a successful society, to pursue Ireland's interests abroad, to implement the Government's Programme and to build a better future for Ireland and all her citizens.

Civil Service Vision

To provide a world-class service to the State and to the people of Ireland.



Strategic Priorities 2017-2020

Following the appointment of the Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar T.D., in June 2017 and the subsequent formation of the new Government, a new Statement of Strategy 2017-2020 was prepared for the Department and published in January 2018. This was a revision of the Statement of Strategy 2016-2019 published in February 2017 following the 2016 general election. To support the work of the Taoiseach and Government six strategic priorities, agreed in 2017, have been identified in the Department's Strategy Statement 2017 - 2020.



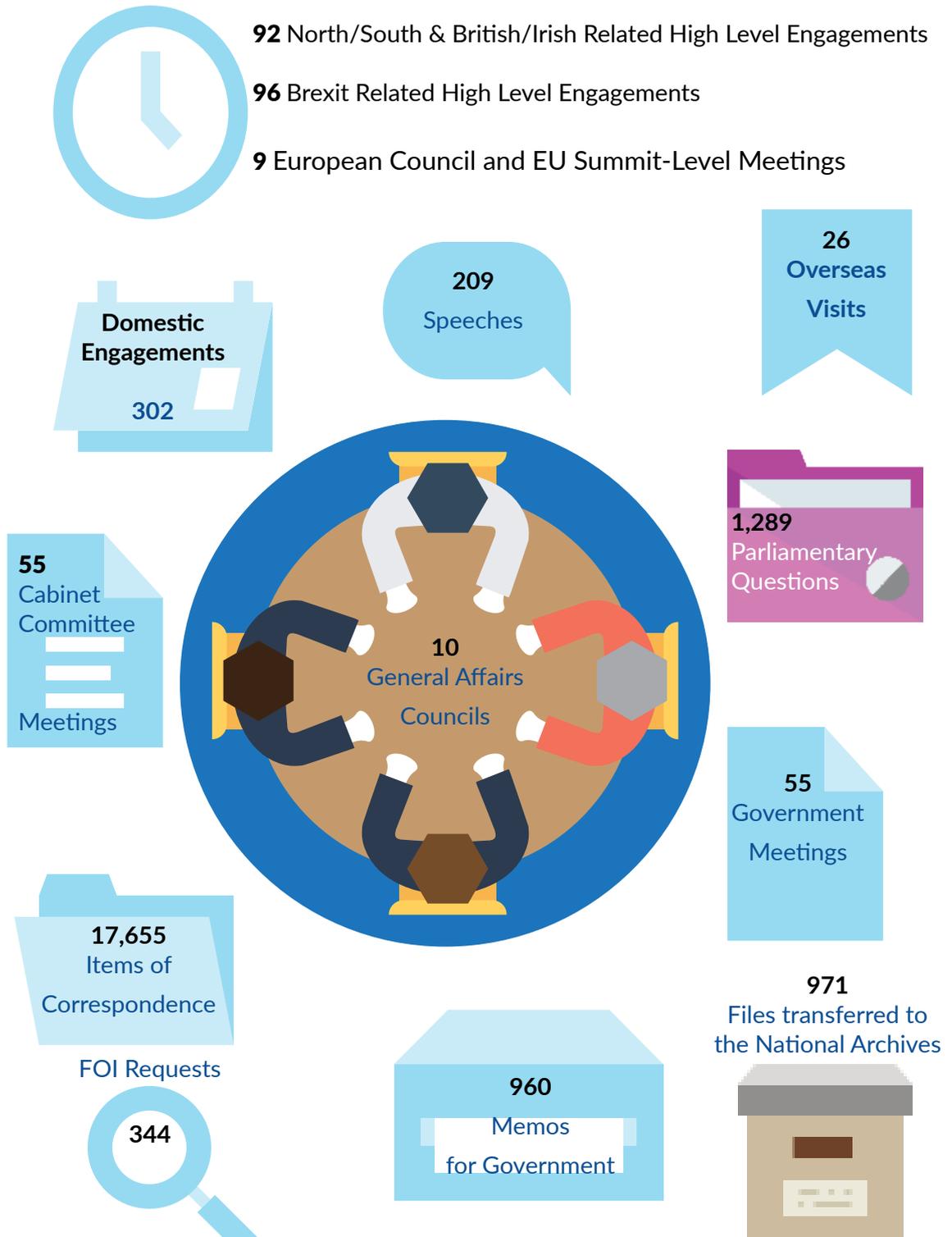
The Core Functions of the Department in 2017

- Delivering the Executive functions of the Taoiseach and the Government
- Providing the Government Secretariat
- Supporting the Taoiseach in carrying out his duties as Head of Government, including in relation to Oireachtas, Constitutional issues, Protocol, the European Council, the North/South Ministerial Council and the British-Irish Council
- Working with the Office of the President and with the Oireachtas
- Engaging with the formulation and implementation of Government policy, mainly through the system of Cabinet Committees, Senior Officials' Groups, the Programme for Government Office and the Parliamentary Liaison Unit
- the Office of the Taoiseach (as well as support for the Tánaiste)
- Support for Independent Ministers in Government
- the Office of the Government Chief Whip (who also has responsibility for the Central Statistics Office)
- Support for the Ministers of State assigned to the Department (with responsibility for Defence; for European Affairs, and for Data Protection)
- the Government Press Office
- the Strategic Communications Unit
- Providing briefing and advice for the Taoiseach on the full range of domestic policy issues and on international affairs (including through the work of the National Economic and Social Council)
- Supporting the Taoiseach and Government in the formulation, implementation and coordination across Government of policy on EU and international matters and in respect of Northern Ireland and British-Irish relations
- Delivering support services through Protocol and Corporate Affairs Division (HR, Finance, IT and other services)

Through the Civil Service Management Board, which is chaired by the Secretary General, we provide collective leadership of the Civil Service Renewal Programme, working closely with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Highlights

During 2017, the 211.5 staff of the Department of the Taoiseach dealt with:



The Government and Cabinet Committees

The Department provides the Secretariat to the Government. During 2017, the Government met 55 times and dealt with 960 Memoranda. The Department supported two away-day Cabinet meetings in Celbridge and Cork devoted to strategic policy challenges facing the country and also provided support to the Taoiseach for ongoing bilateral meetings between him and Government Ministers.

Cabinet Committees continue to be central to the work of the Department in driving implementation of Government policy and effective cross-departmental collaboration. The Department provides the secretariat for Cabinet Committees and chairs the supporting Senior Officials' Groups. There were 37 Cabinet Committee meetings in 2017. Following the appointment of the new Government in June, the system of Cabinet Committees was reconstituted as follows, with Cabinet Committee G established in early 2018:

<p>Cabinet Committee A Economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> oversees issues relating to the Economy, Jobs, the Labour Market, Competitiveness, Productivity, Trade, and the Action Plan on Rural Development, the Digital Economy and Pensions.
<p>Cabinet Committee B Social Policy and Public Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> oversees and co-ordinates in the areas of social inclusion, poverty reduction and service delivery supports the development and implementation of public service reform
<p>Cabinet Committee C European Union including Brexit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> oversees the co-ordination of the Irish position on key European issues and the Government's response to Brexit including the economic impact and the negotiations at an EU level and with the administrations in Belfast and London
<p>Cabinet Committee D Infrastructure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensures a coordinated and whole of government approach to the development and implementation of policy in relation to housing, infrastructure investment and delivery, climate action and the National Planning Framework
<p>Cabinet Committee E Health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> oversees issues relating to health including delivery of health service reforms.
<p>Cabinet Committee F National Security</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> keeps under review the State's systems for the analysis of, preparation for, and response to, threats to national security and provides for high-level coordination on issues of national security
<p>Cabinet Committee G Justice and Equality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides political oversight of developments in relation to justice and equality issues

State Visits and Events

During 2017, the Department organised, or assisted in organising, a number of notable events and inward official visits, including:

- Japanese Foreign Minister, Minister Kishida
- President of the European Council, Donald Tusk
- Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau
- Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall
- Prime Minister Theresa May
- Chinese Vice-Premier Hu Chunhua
- Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović
- European Commission's Chief Brexit Negotiator, Michel Barnier
- Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mark Rutte
- EU Parliament Chief Negotiator on Brexit, Guy Verhofstadt
- Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon

The Department also supported the Taoiseach and the Ministers of State as they represented and promoted Ireland at various meetings and engagements abroad, including:

- St. Patrick's Day events in Philadelphia, Boston, Washington D.C., and New York meeting with President Trump, Vice-President Pence, and Speaker of the House of Representatives Paul Ryan
- The World Economic Forum in Davos
- Trade and investment missions to Germany, Poland, Rome, the Netherlands, Madrid, and Malta
- Digital Summit in Tallin as part of the Estonian EU Presidency
- Trade and investment missions to Toronto and Montreal meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau; Chicago; and San Francisco, Silicon Valley and Seattle
- Nine European Council and other EU summit-level meetings including, an EU Heads of Government Informal Summit in Valletta, Malta
- The Minister of State for European Affairs attended ten General Affairs Council meetings

The Department also supported preparations for the State funeral for former Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave in October and, in July, the National Day of Commemoration honouring all Irish people who died in past wars or on service with the United Nations.

In June the Taoiseach, along with the Duke of Cambridge and Princess Astrid of Belgium, attended commemorations for the Battle of Messines Ridge in Belgium at the Island of Ireland Peace Park. The Taoiseach also took part in the annual Remembrance Day ceremonies in Enniskillen, where he laid a wreath at the Cenotaph before attending a Remembrance Service in Saint Macartin's Cathedral.

Strategic Priority A

Support the Taoiseach and Government

The Department provided a wide range of support services to the Taoiseach, the Government and the public, as well as internal support services in 2017. This included work associated with 55 Government meetings, 1,289 Parliamentary Questions, briefings, 209 speeches, 344 Freedom of Information requests, Internal Audit, tours of Government Buildings, responding to representations from the public, organising events and responding to media queries. The Department also provided administrative support to three Commissions of Investigation and the Citizens' Assembly throughout the year.

In June Taoiseach Enda Kenny T.D. resigned and Leo Varadkar T.D. was appointed Taoiseach. As part of the new Government the Department of Rural and Community Development was established in July and in December the Tánaiste stepped down and was replaced by Simon Coveney T.D. A new Chief Justice, Mr Justice Frank Clarke was also appointed.

The Programme for Government Office in the Department monitors the implementation of the Programme for Government and published the first Annual Report in 2017 and two interim progress reports during the year setting out progress across all Departments.

The Parliamentary Liaison Unit continues to facilitate the enhanced relationship between the Government and the Oireachtas. It provides support to Ministers and their Departments on Oireachtas matters, including assistance with Private Members' Business, the volume of which increased significantly in 2017.

The Citizens' Assembly continued its work programme and submitted reports and recommendations to the Houses of the Oireachtas on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution and on Challenges and Opportunities of an Ageing Population. During 2017 it also completed its deliberations on "How the State can make Ireland a leader in tackling Climate Change". A Joint Oireachtas Committee was established to review the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly on the Eighth Amendment; its report recommending a referendum on the matter was submitted in December.

In September the Government published an indicative timetable for a number of referendums on constitutional amendments to be held in 2018 and 2019. The first of these was a referendum on the Eighth Amendment held in May 2018.

During Storm Ophelia in October the National Emergency Co-ordination Group successfully led the interdepartmental and multi-agency response to the extreme weather event. The Taoiseach and the Department contributed strongly to this comprehensive and measured response, ensuring timely communication in the interests of public safety for the duration of the event.

Support Services

The Department's HR Unit continued to provide human resource services to employees and managers in the Department in collaboration with the National Shared Services Office (NSSO). A comprehensive Learning and Development Programme was made available to employees (in collaboration with OneLearning in the latter part of the year). There were also opportunities for employees to undertake further study in areas aligned with business needs. There was continued emphasis on performance management (including through focused induction and probation processes) and a 97.6% compliance rate was achieved for 2017.

The Department's Management Services Unit completed a number of maintenance projects in 2017 and dealt with 1,696 helpdesk calls.

In 2017, the Department's Finance Unit provided a range of financial services that contributed to the effective use of the Department's financial resources through the delivery of economy, efficiency, value for money and promptness in all expenditure. A total of 3,418 supplier invoices were paid with a total value of €7.9 million. The Finance Unit continued to deliver procurement support services to the Department in close consultation with the Office of Government Procurement. The Unit also continued with preparations for the implementation of the cross-Civil Service Financial Management Shared Service (FMSS) project, which is in development under the NSSO.

The Department's ICT Unit continued its programme of enhancements to various business systems and databases in 2017, including eCabinet, FOI, PQ and procurement databases. 6,455 helpdesk calls were dealt with and approx. 720,000 incoming and 585,000 outgoing emails were processed.

The Department's Information & Records Management Unit administered the transfer of 971 files or file parts in respect of the year 1987 to the National Archives in line with the National Archives Act.

In preparation for implementation of the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) from May 2018, the Department appointed a Data Protection Officer and the management and storage of personal data within the Department was reviewed. Training and briefing was also provided to employees in key areas (e.g. Finance, HR, IT) impacted by GDPR.

The Department received no disclosures under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 from its employees or former employees in 2017.

Strategic Priority B Sustainable Economy

The Economic Division of the Department supports the Taoiseach and the Government in developing and implementing economic policy aimed at sustainable and regionally balanced economic growth, well planned infrastructural development and quality employment, taking account in particular of the economic challenge posed by Brexit. In the 2017 European Innovation Scoreboard, Ireland remained the overall leader in product, process and marketing innovation. Ireland also maintained first place in economic success in terms of employment, revenue and exports.

Cabinet Committee A oversees issues relating to the economy, jobs, the labour market, competitiveness, productivity, trade, the Action Plan on Rural Development, the digital economy and pensions. During 2017 it considered the National Skills Strategy, the Review of Enterprise 2025, the Roadmap for Pensions Reform, the Action Plan on Jobless Households and preparation of the Action Plan for Jobs 2018. Since the first Action Plan for Jobs was launched in 2012, there are over 358,000 more people at work and unemployment continues to fall - now down to 5.1% (June 2018).

In July the Department published a discussion document inviting submissions on developing Ireland's bioeconomy, culminating in the subsequent National Policy Statement. It highlights the potential of the bioeconomy in promoting the more efficient use of renewable resources while supporting economic development and employment in rural Ireland.

The Department also supported the Taoiseach's participation in the Labour Employer Economic Forum which brings together representatives of employers and trade unions with Government Ministers to discuss areas of shared concern affecting the economy, employment and the labour market on a thematic basis. The Department also co-ordinated Government engagement in the European Semester process, including preparation of Ireland's National Reform Programme.

Realising our Rural Potential, the Action Plan for Rural Development, was launched in January 2017, setting out the whole-of-Government response to unlocking the potential of rural Ireland through a framework of supports which will ensure that people who live in rural areas have increased opportunities for employment locally, and access to public services and social networks that support a high quality of life.

The Economic Division also supports the Minister of State with responsibility for Data Protection and contributes to a whole-of-Government approach to the challenges from the increasing digitisation of modern life and the associated significant increase in the amount of personal data generated. A Data Summit, organised by the Unit, was held in Dublin in June 2017 and attracted a large national and international audience, including industry, academia, and the not-for-profit sector as well as the wider public.

Strategic Priority C A Better and Fairer Society

The Department supports the Taoiseach and Government through the relevant Cabinet Committees to advance policies and services that promote a better and fairer society for everyone.

During 2017 Cabinet Committee B, which co-ordinates the areas of social policy and public service reform, contributed to the development of initiatives targeting gender equality, preparations for a new affordable childcare scheme and proposals for the development of an in-school speech and language therapy service. It also had a strong input into the preparation for Ireland's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which was approved by Government at the end of 2017.

The Health Cabinet Committee (Cabinet Committee E) contributed to the development of reforms linked to the Sláintecare Report published in May as part of a Government response to the cross-party Report. The Committee also considered new medicines costs and availability, homecare services, and initiatives addressing the impacts of demographic trends, including integrated care programmes for older people, chronic disease and work on the new GP contract.

Cabinet Committee G was established in early 2018 to provide political oversight of developments in relation to justice and equality issues, including implications of the Government's programme of reform for the justice sector and the courts. Key developments in 2017 included the establishment of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland to bring forward proposals to Government based on a review of the role, structures, leadership and culture of policing in Ireland and the publication in November of a suite of measures to strengthen Ireland's response to white collar crime. The Department also supports the Effectiveness and Renewal Group for the Department of Justice and Equality, chaired by Mr Pádraig Ó Riordan, which is overseeing the implementation of the outstanding elements of the Toland Report.

The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) continued during 2017 to advise the Taoiseach on strategic policy issues relating to sustainable economic, social and environmental development in Ireland including the publication of a report 'Moving towards the Circular Economy in Ireland'. The Taoiseach appointed a new Council in May 2017 and a work programme up to 2019 has been set out. The NESC Secretariat continued its work in providing analytic and research support and expertise to a number of Government Departments.

The Department supported a number of initiatives during 2017 including the North East Inner City, Creative Ireland and the all-Ireland bid to host the 2023 Rugby World Cup.

Strategic Priority D Strong Relationships in Europe and the World

The Department works closely with other Departments to promote Ireland's interests globally and to maximise our influence politically and economically. The Department supported the Taoiseach in driving increased investment, trade and jobs, strengthening Ireland's bilateral and political relations and developing shared responses to global and regional challenges including through his programme of international visits and engagements.

As part of the Government's programme of intensified engagement with its EU partners, a series of meetings with EU leaders took place.

In March the Taoiseach launched Ireland Connected: Trading and Investing in a Dynamic World, a cohesive, whole-of-government strategy that sets ambitious targets for Ireland's exports, foreign direct investment, tourism and international education. The new strategy will deepen Ireland's economic resilience and responsiveness in the face of highly changeable global conditions by intensifying our business development activity in existing markets and diversifying into new regions.

Preparations commenced in 2017 on the Ireland Global Footprint 2025 Initiative which aims to double the impact and scope of Ireland's overseas footprint in the period to 2025, enhancing our ability to advance our strategic international goals, and to promote our interests internationally. The key aims are to attract greater investment in Ireland, boost tourism and trade, build stronger links with our diaspora and increase cultural exchanges. Increasing and diversifying trade and investment is a key priority for Government, especially in the context of the UK's decision to leave the EU and other global economic uncertainties.

The Department also supported the Minister of State for European Affairs both at the European Council and at ten General Affairs Council meetings which considered preparatory work for European Councils and enlargement of the Multiannual Financial Framework. The Future of Europe Citizens' Dialogue was launched by the Taoiseach in November to engage with citizens on their views, opinions and insights about the European Union. The Minister for European Affairs initiated a series of Citizens' Dialogues throughout the country.

Along with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department supported extensive diplomatic engagement, advocacy, and dialogue to secure the release of Ibrahim Halawa from detention in Egypt.

Cabinet Committee F allows greater ministerial involvement in preparing for and managing major security threats. Its role is to keep the State's systems for the analysis of, preparation for, and response to, threats to national security under review and to provide for high-level coordination between relevant Departments and agencies on related matters.

Strategic Priority E Brexit (including Northern Ireland)

The Department continued to support the work of the Taoiseach and Government in respect of Government consideration of Brexit issues including the negotiation process. The International, EU and Northern Ireland Division supports Cabinet Committee C to oversee the overall Government response to Brexit. The Department also works closely with other relevant Departments including the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade which, in 2017, took over lead responsibility for Brexit policy matters.

In March, the UK triggered Article 50, formally notifying the European Council of its intention to leave the EU and commencing the two year exit process. The European Council meeting in April set out Guidelines for the forthcoming Brexit negotiations which reflected Ireland's unique concerns – to support and protect the achievements, benefits and commitments of the Peace Process, to avoid a hard border, and to protect the Common Travel Area. The statement agreed by the European Council acknowledged that in the event of a united Ireland, brought about in accordance with the Good Friday Agreement, the entire territory of such a united Ireland would legally be part of the European Union.

The Government has worked hard, as part of the EU 27, to ensure that sufficient progress could be made in the first phase of Brexit negotiations to allow the European Council to agree that negotiations can move to phase two. In the December Joint Report the Government achieved its goals which include maintenance of the Common Travel Area, protection of the Good Friday Agreement and North/South Cooperation, commitment to avoid any return to a hard border (including the backstop option) and protection of EU citizenship and other rights.

Preparing for and dealing with Brexit in a way that delivers the best possible outcome for the country remains a top priority for the Government. Its potential consequences cut across very many areas of our national and economic life. There has been regular discussion of Brexit issues at full Cabinet meetings, including in the run-up to the December agreement between the EU and the UK, and at the away-day meeting in Cork in October.

Detailed work is continuing to prepare for the UK's exit from the European Union including contingency planning for all possible scenarios. Significant measures in Budget 2018 have been committed to provide supports for businesses and the agri-food sector.

The Taoiseach met with Welsh First Minister, Carwyn Jones for a bilateral engagement and discussed the close relationship between Ireland and Wales and the importance of the Holyhead and Pembroke ports for trade and travel between these islands as well as general issues of concern arising in a Brexit context.

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has been without a functioning devolved government for more than a year. The Assembly elections in March 2017, following the resignation of the deputy First Minister, and the UK General Election in June failed to produce a power-sharing government. The Government, working with the British Government, has facilitated and supported talks on the formation of a new Executive. The Taoiseach met the UK Prime Minister several times during 2017 to discuss efforts to re-establish devolved government in the North as well as a range of Brexit-related issues.

Maintaining peace and developing relations on this island remains a core priority. The draft Brexit Withdrawal Agreement contains a Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland making legal provision to implement a 'backstop' of maintaining full alignment in Northern Ireland with the rules of the Single Market and Customs Union. As co-guarantor to the Good Friday Agreement, the Government will continue to engage with the parties in Northern Ireland and the British Government to support the formation of a new power-sharing Executive for Northern Ireland.

In February and September the Taoiseach attended further plenary meetings of the All Island Civic Dialogue in Dublin. Since the launch of the All-Island Civic Dialogue at the end of 2016, views have been heard from over 1,500 civic society and industry representatives from every county on the implications of the Brexit process for their sector. This is informing the Government's approach to the ongoing negotiations and has already informed the measures to support businesses.

Strategic Priority F

Planning for the Future

Through the Cabinet Committee process the Department supports the whole-of-government approach to the development and implementation of policy in relation to housing, infrastructure investment and delivery, climate action and the National Planning Framework. Topics considered in 2017 include the National Planning Framework, preparation of the Ten Year Capital Plan, the National Broadband Plan and maintaining a strong focus on increasing the supply of affordable housing through implementation of the Rebuilding Ireland Plan.

Significant work was undertaken during 2017 on Project Ireland 2040 which combines the National Planning Framework as the overarching policy and planning framework for the social, economic, and cultural development of Ireland and the ten year capital investment plan - National Development Plan 2018-2027.

Climate change is one of the biggest global challenges of our time. Its scale and complexity demand a coordinated approach at both national and international levels. The Programme for a Partnership Government commits us to chart a course towards achieving a low carbon and climate resilient future by 2050. Ireland's first statutory National Mitigation Plan was published in July 2017 with measures and actions to address the immediate challenge to 2020 and to prepare for the EU targets that Ireland will take on for 2030. It specifies the national strategy for adaptation measures in different sectors and by local authorities to reduce the vulnerability of the State to the negative effects of climate change. The Plan includes over 70 measures underpinned by 106 individual actions.

The Department of the Taoiseach published the 2017 National Risk Assessment setting out a high level overview of strategic risks facing the country based on consultation with Departments, stakeholders and the public. It acknowledges the significance of risk arising from Brexit which could have far-reaching impacts on nearly all aspects of national life, while also noting the importance of keeping sight of other strategic risks.

The Government Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018-2023 was developed during 2017. This is a five year plan to improve pensions' sustainability and coverage. The Plan's six strands include reform of the state pension, public service pensions reform, improving governance and regulation, introduction of a new automatic enrolment pension scheme for private sector workers, and providing older people with greater flexibility to work to, and beyond, the normal retirement age.

Improving Our Capability

The Department supported the work of the Civil Service Management Board, chaired by the Secretary General, which met nine times in 2017 to oversee implementation of the Civil Service Renewal Plan. As part of the overall effort to enhance capability and performance across the Civil Service, specific progress was made during 2017 on developing a new mobility scheme for Executive and Clerical Officers, new shared Learning and Development training service for employees and the launch of the HR People Strategy for the Civil Service.

The Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey is an important action in the Civil Service Renewal Plan and the Department's response rate for the 2017 Survey was 88% which compares favourably with the Department's response rate in 2015 (51%) and the Civil Service average response rate for 2017 (56%). The overall Civil Service results published in March 2018 show an improvement across most of the 24 themes demonstrating that employees are both highly engaged and highly competent. The results for the Department show an improvement in 21 of the 24 themes measured compared to the 2015 results, and the Department scores above the Civil Service 2017 average in 23 of the 24 themes surveyed.

The Department actively supports gender equality initiatives. In 2017, all Department nominees for the Senior Public Service Talent Management Programme were female, and 50% of Department nominees for the Principal Officer Executive Leadership programme were female. The Department is also participating in the 2018 IMI/30% Club Cross-Company Mentoring Programme. 50% of participating mentees (at Assistant Principal Officer level) and mentors (at Second Secretary / Assistant Secretary level) are female.

Our Public Service 2020, launched in December 2017, is the new framework for development and innovation in the public service. It aims to build a stronger public service and to deliver better quality services to the Irish public. Senior managers from the Civil and Public Service will oversee its implementation.

The Strategic Communications Unit (SCU) was established in July 2017 to simplify and improve capacity in communications across Government. Following a review of the SCU by the Secretary General to the Government in March 2018, it was recommended that the Unit should be wound down and that the Department of the Taoiseach should revert to a reformed Government Information Service (GIS) with a smaller budget and a more limited role than the SCU. The streamlining communications and capacity building workstreams will continue, including the single web portal www.gov.ie; the single government identity project; efficiency measures with better cross-Government collaboration; and training and continuous professional development of employees working in the area of communications.

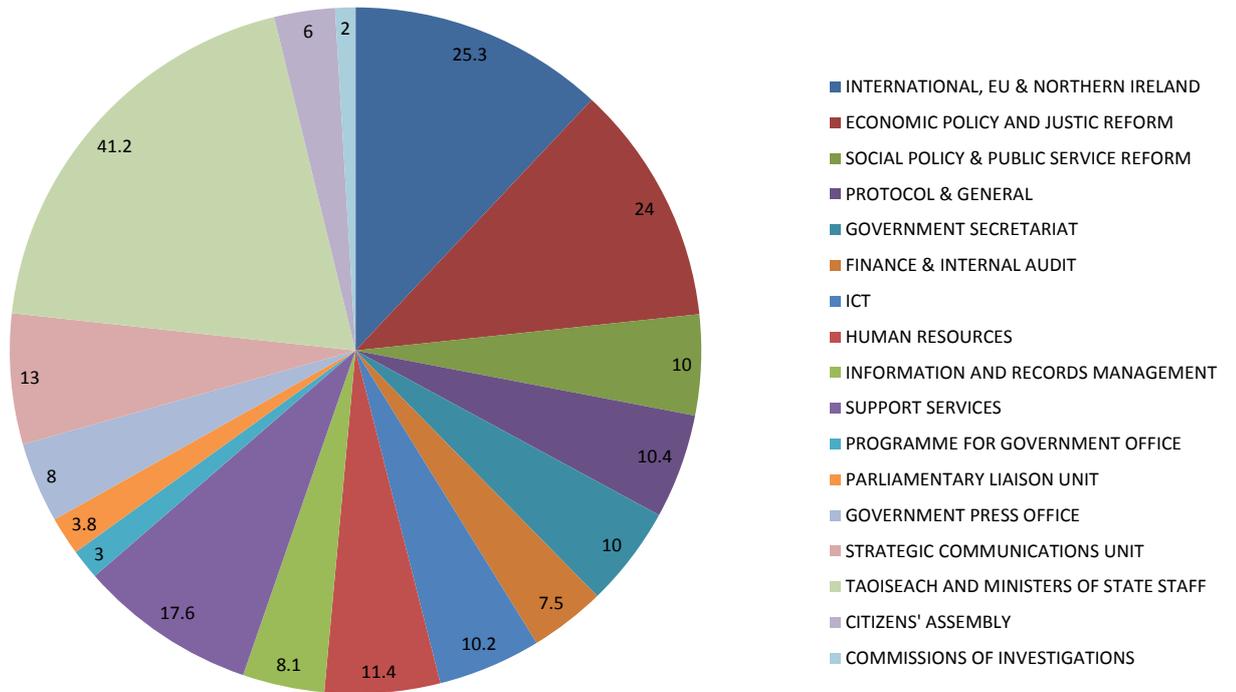
Expenditure for the year 2017

Department of the Taoiseach

	2017 Provisional Outturn	€000
ADMINISTRATION		
Salaries, Wages and Allowances		12,487
Travel and Subsistence		618
Training and Development and Incidental Expenses		555
Postal and Telecommunications		274
Office Machinery & Office Supplies		1,040
Offices Premises Expenses		348
Consultancy Services		0
Total Administration		15,322
OTHER SERVICES		
National Economic and Social Development Office (Grant-in-Aid)		1,889
Tribunals of Inquiry		6,552
Commissions of Investigation		2,403
Data Protection		378
Diaspora Affairs		266
Citizens' Assembly		1,535
Gross Total		28,345
Less Appropriations-in-Aid		(757)
Net Total		27,588

(Interest/compensation paid in 2017 because of late payments totalled €667.99)

Staff in the Department



*There were 211.5 whole-time-equivalent staff working in the Department at end 2017

Overview of Energy Usage in 2017

Energy usage in the Government Buildings complex, including the Department of the Taoiseach, is administered by the Houses of the Oireachtas. In recent years there have been some significant changes in the way energy services are provided and in the way service charges are apportioned among the different tenants of the complex.

Energy usage is incurred for lighting, heating, air conditioning, hot water, office and IT equipment, and catering equipment. Work is ongoing in the Department to decrease our electricity usage. Measures taken during 2017 included lighting upgrades which installed LED light bulbs and a complete upgrade of the lighting in the Press Centre. The Department has appointed an Energy Performance Officer as required under the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy.

During 2017 the Department of the Taoiseach consumed a total of energy as follows:

1.034 MWH of Electricity
1.106 MWH of Gas

The Department also consumed 6.6 tonnes of wood pellets used in the complex's biomass boiler. Use of the pellets was down on previous years due to a breakdown of the boiler and this resulted in an increase in consumption of electricity in 2017.

In 2018 the Department will continue its work to achieve further energy reductions and continue its lighting upgrade programme. An SEAI Awareness Day will also be held.



Roinn an Taoisigh
Department of the Taoiseach