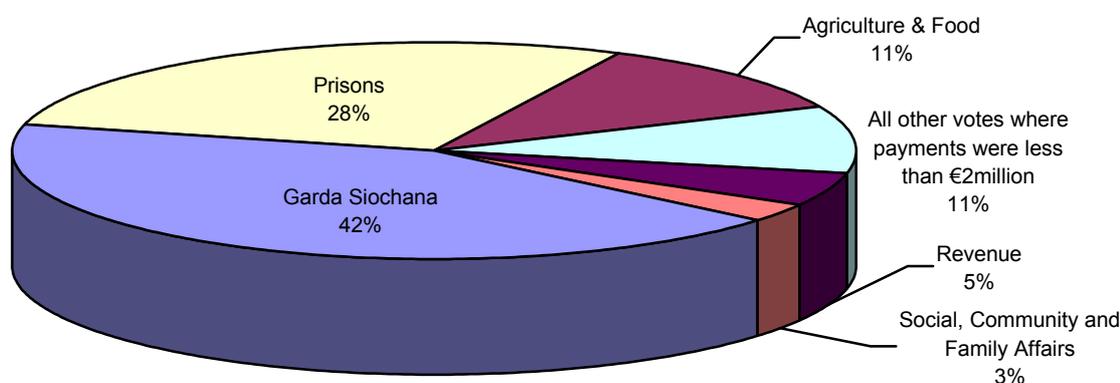


## Chapter 5 - Garda Síochána and Prisons

### 5.1 Overtime

Public financial procedures as prescribed by the Department of Finance require that each Appropriation Account shows the total amount charged to the Account in respect of overtime and extra attendance, the numbers who were paid overtime and the highest individual overtime payment. Total expenditure on overtime and extra attendance amounted to almost €200 million in 2001. Figure 1 shows the key areas in which this expenditure occurred.

**Figure 1 - Overtime in 2001**



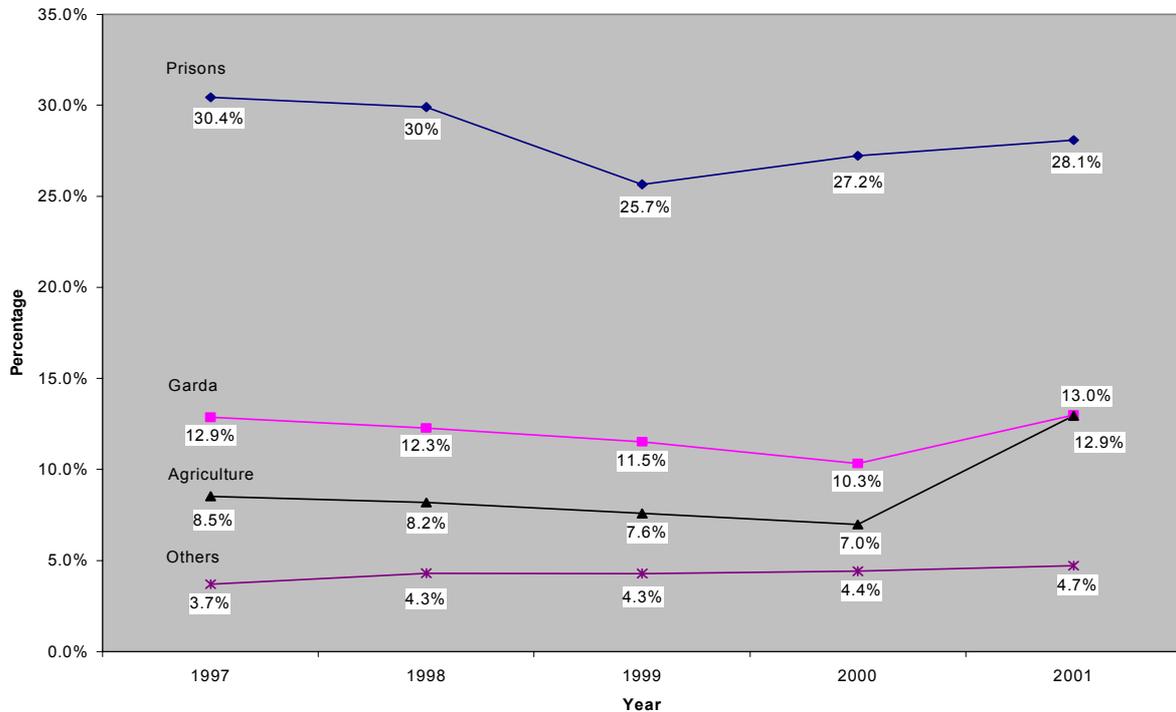
As can be seen the Garda Síochána and the Prison Service continue to dominate expenditure on overtime. Both votes saw their overtime payments increase by approximately 50% from 1997 when compared with 2001, as shown in Table 18 below.

**Table 18 - Overtime from 1997 to 2001**

Vote	1997 Millions €	1998 Millions €	1999 Millions €	2000 Millions €	2001 Millions €	5 Year Total Millions €
Garda Síochána	56.2	63.9	61.6	60.3	83.7	325.7
Prisons	36.6	43.0	38.6	49.1	55.4	222.7
Agriculture & Food	9.6	9.9	9.7	9.6	21.9	60.7
Revenue	5.9	5.7	7.3	8.0	9.9	36.8
Social & Family Affairs	3.5	3.6	4.2	5.1	5.4	21.8
All Others	13.0	14.5	15.1	17.3	22.1	82.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>124.8</b>	<b>140.6</b>	<b>136.5</b>	<b>149.4</b>	<b>198.4</b>	<b>749.7</b>

Figure 2 shows the trend in overtime as a percentage of pay between 1997 and 2001. Overtime in the Prison Service represents a significantly higher percentage of pay than anywhere else in the public service and at 28.1% in 2001 has fallen only slightly from the level prevailing in 1997. The next highest level of overtime as a percentage of pay occurs in the Garda Vote. The trend shown here initially declined from 12.9% in 1997 to 10.3% in 2000 before climbing again to 13% in 2001.

Figure 2 - Development of Overtime as % of Pay 1997 - 2001



Note: The exceptional increase in overtime in the Department of Agriculture in 2001 is entirely attributable to the Foot and Mouth crisis.

Given that the top two votes, namely the Garda Síochána and the Prison Service account for over 70% of overtime expenditure I asked the Accounting Officer for the Garda Síochána and the Prison Service:

- What, if any, steps have been taken since 1997 to contain expenditure on overtime in both Votes?
- What measures are in place to ensure that resources expended on overtime are used economically and efficiently?
- Had there been any change in the day-to-day management of overtime since 1997 and if so what results have been achieved?
- Had any research been undertaken since 1997 into the underlying reasons for the levels of overtime worked in both organisations and if so what conclusions were reached and what actions taken?

### Garda Overtime

In his reply the Accounting Officer said that the level of overtime as a percentage of salaries on the Garda Vote was decreasing up to last year and prior to the introduction of Foot and Mouth policing operations that were undertaken in 2001 in response to the threat of Foot and Mouth Disease.

The Foot and Mouth operation was resource-intensive and involved at times the redeployment of some 700 Gardaí. The measures required made very substantial demands upon Garda resources and resulted in an increase in overtime. The fact that there would be a substantial increase in overtime was made known to both the Department of Finance and the Government.

## **Garda Síochána and Prisons**

---

The cost of overtime hours directly worked on the Foot and Mouth campaign between February and December 2001 amounted to some €19.07 million. Approval for this additional expenditure was sought in due course from Dáil Éireann in the context of a Supplementary Estimate for the Garda Vote for 2001. If the cost of the Foot and Mouth operation is excluded from the 2001 figure for overtime, the resulting figure of €64.68 million represents 10 % of salaries.

As regards steps taken to contain overtime expenditure and research to establish the underlying causes of the level of overtime worked the Accounting Officer indicated that a Report on Garda Overtime was produced in 1998 as part of the Strategic Management Initiative process of reviews of expenditure programmes in the public service and copies were provided to the Public Accounts Committee.

The Report reviewed in detail Garda overtime expenditure and provided an analysis of that expenditure. The nature of Garda work and the requirement that the Garda authorities respond at short notice to crisis situations means that overtime expenditure is sometimes unavoidable for the purposes of effective policing. Overtime allows the Garda Síochána flexibility in responding to circumstances which require personnel resources over and above those available from Gardaí on rostered duty.

The Report clearly established that a level of overtime is both necessary and desirable because of the nature of police operations. No general areas were identified in the Report where expenditure was not justified or where immediate and substantial savings could be made. A number of structural changes were identified where legislative changes could reduce overtime particularly in the area of court attendance and the implementation of these changes is being pursued.

The Report also made recommendations to enhance the management and monitoring of overtime expenditure. On a strategic level, overtime expenditure is monitored on a monthly basis by the Department and as appropriate discussed with the Garda authorities. Subject to the provisions in the Estimates, there is full delegated sanction to the Garda Síochána for incurring overtime expenditure and they are responsible for all operational decisions regarding overtime.

Prior to January 2001, overtime budgets were allocated to Chief Superintendents. As it was considered that Chief Superintendents were too close to operational exigencies to exercise control, the overtime budgets are now allocated to Assistant Commissioners. Once an Assistant Commissioner has been notified of the budget allocation, it is his responsibility to allocate the Regional budget to the Chief Superintendents who in turn allocate it to their Districts. The Finance Directorate is informed of the budget profiles so that performance can be monitored on an ongoing basis and prepares a Regional Overtime Summary Report.

This report is sent to the Commissioner and both Deputy Commissioners. If there are significant deviations from the profiled budget, this is highlighted in the Director of Finance's report. The Director of Finance will write to the relevant Assistant Commissioner seeking an explanation for the deviation and also requesting that corrective action be taken. The Deputy Commissioner in Strategic and Resource Management may also write to the Assistant Commissioner instructing that corrective action be taken.

If a Region is persistently exceeding its budget allocation, the Deputy Commissioner will require the relevant Assistant Commissioner to account for his stewardship and prepare a detailed report as to what corrective action will be taken to bring overtime consumption into line with budget. If necessary, the Garda Commissioner will convene a meeting with the Assistant Commissioners and Chief Superintendents to discuss the imperative that overtime usage must be contained within budget. To-date in 2002 the Commissioner has convened two such meetings.

These revised reporting arrangements and accountability roles represent something of a cultural shift. While it may have taken some time for the revised arrangements to become established, the Accounting Officer stated that the new procedures are working very well and significant improvements have been made to control overtime usage.

### **Prison Overtime**

In his reply the Accounting Officer said that apart from 1999 when the percentage dropped to 25.7% prison overtime as a percentage of total pay was in the range 27% to 30%. The percentage dropped in 1999 because additional staff were recruited in advance of opening the new Cloverhill Prison in 2000. The extra staff were distributed to prisons around the Prison Service until Cloverhill opened. This had the effect of reducing the overtime cost as these staff undertook tasks that would normally have been completed through the use of overtime.

The underlying causes of prison overtime are derived from the agreed and officially sanctioned rostering and detailing arrangements for prison officers, which date back many years. The issue is made more complex by the fact that these arrangements are the subject of formal detailed industrial relations agreements over the last 14 years with the staff side.

A factor that has to be borne in mind in relation to overtime working is the pressure which the Service is currently operating under and which continues through 2002. The volume of prisoners now being committed is higher than ever before. Over the last five years the prisoner population has increased from 2,191 to 3,177 an increase of 45%. More prisoners have a drug problem than in the past. Roughly 7 out of 10 committals now have a significant illegal drug history – most have a background of heroin addiction. Five new prisons have opened in the last five years and despite an accelerated recruitment campaign for Prison Officers there is a shortfall between the numbers recruited and the numbers required to operate these new prisons.

The Prisons Finance Directorate receives weekly analyses of overtime hours worked in each prison and summaries of these figures are sent to senior management. Explanations for variations in overtime levels are sought from the individual prisons. The figures show that the number of overtime hours worked increased by 186,753 hours in 2001 over 2000, an increase of 9.7%. However if new prisons are excluded the overtime hours worked in 2001 shows a slight decrease over 2000 and analysis of the total overtime hours worked in the Prison Service for the first six months of 2002 shows a slight decrease compared to the same period in 2001.

Prison Governors have been instructed by the Director General of the Prison Service to take all possible steps to control overtime and to ensure that resources spent on overtime are used efficiently and effectively. The fact that the staffing complement for prisons does not include provision for core operational activities such as escorting prisoners to court and hospitals and cover for annual and sick leave makes control of overtime difficult.

The Prison Service has noticed a trend over the last 18 months where staff are not always returning to undertake overtime. It appears to some extent that saturation point has been reached. In general younger staff are anxious to spend time with their families and other staff want to limit the overtime they undertake in order to improve their quality of life.

The Prison Service has long recognised that a strategic and structured approach to address the fundamental causes of overtime was required. As these issues affect the fundamental conditions of service for Prison

Officers, any change will require negotiation through the normal industrial relations machinery.

In August 1996, as a first step to resolve this problem once and for all, a Cost Review Group was established to examine the operating costs of the Prison Service. Its members were drawn from the public and private sector. The Group's Report was published in August 1997. The central finding of the Report was that there was no short-term solution to the high levels of overtime being worked in the Prison Service.

A team of senior Prison Service and Department officials carried out a detailed analysis of staffing arrangements at each prison between 1999 and 2001 in order to develop a blueprint for the operation of the Prison Service on a non-overtime basis. The team produced detailed reports for each institution and published a Global Report in February 2001, which summarises the teams extensive conclusions and recommendations in relation to the service wide staffing issues.

The individual reports identify substantial potential overtime savings to be achieved through, for example, renegotiation of staffing levels, eliminating unnecessary practices, restructuring of certain grades, rostering to eliminate in-built overtime, the rationalisation of store functions and escorts arrangements, tighter local management of attendance, empowerment of Governors generally to manage their prisons and full implementation of the already agreed Program for Competitiveness and Working, specifically contracting out of canteens, civilianisation of offices and automation of gates.

These findings and recommendations are the lynch pin to the next phase in the process of meeting prisons operational requirements without recourse to overtime attendance payments. The Prison Service considers that the prospect of a successful implementation of the process is greatly enhanced where staff representatives actively participate in planning how best implementation can be delivered.

The Prison Service is currently developing a detailed attendance and rostering system based on the detailed individual prison reports which will eliminate the use of overtime to operate the Prison Service. The Accounting Officer pointed out that the prison overtime situation is not unique to this country. Similar overtime cultures developed in neighbouring jurisdictions in recent times and were tackled in a strategic way similar to the process now being undertaken by the Prisons Service.