

## **Appropriation Account 2023**

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### **Vote 23**

### **An Coimisiún Toghcháin**

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## Introduction

As Accounting Officer for An Coimisiún Toghcháin, I am required to prepare the appropriation account for Vote 23, and to submit the account to the Comptroller and Auditor General for audit.

In accordance with this requirement, I have prepared the attached account of the amount expended in the year ended 31 December 2023 for the salaries and expenses of An Coimisiún Toghcháin.

The expenditure outturn is compared with the sums granted by Dáil Éireann under the Appropriation Act 2023, including the amount that could be used as appropriations-in-aid of expenditure for the year.

A surplus of €2.677 million is liable for surrender to the Exchequer.

The statement of accounting policies and principles and notes 1 to 5 form part of the account.

### ***Establishment of the Vote***

Vote 23 was established for An Coimisiún Toghcháin on 1 March 2023.

## Statement of accounting policies and principles

The standard accounting policies and principles for the production of appropriation accounts, as set out by the Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform in circular 22 of 2023, have been applied in the preparation of the account.

The useful lives and associated amortisation rates of classes of intangible assets have been estimated as follows.

<i>Asset class</i>	<i>Useful life</i>	<i>Rate of amortisation</i>
Software licences	Licence term 2-10 years	50%-10%
Developed software	10 years	10%

## Statement on internal financial control

### ***Responsibility for system of internal financial control***

As Accounting Officer, I acknowledge my responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal financial control is maintained and operated by the Authority.

This responsibility was exercised in the context of the resources available to me and my other obligations as Chief Executive. Also, any system of internal financial control can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions authorised and properly recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or would be detected in a timely manner. Developing and maintaining the system of internal financial controls is a continuous process and the system and its effectiveness are kept under ongoing review.

### ***Shared services***

Payroll and human resources functions are provided to An Coimisiún on a shared services basis by the National Shared Services Office (Vote 18) through the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (Vote 34).

I rely on a letter of assurance from the Accounting Officer of the National Shared Services Office provided to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage that the appropriate controls are exercised in the provision of shared services to An Coimisiún.

### ***Financial control environment***

A control environment comprising the following elements were in place.

- Financial responsibilities were assigned at management level with corresponding accountability.
- Reporting arrangements were established at all levels where responsibility for financial management has been assigned.
- Formal procedures were established for reporting significant control failures and ensuring appropriate corrective action.
- An Audit and Risk Committee was established in October 2023, and will advise me in discharging my responsibilities for the internal financial control system.
- Procedures for key business processes were documented as they were developed, the remaining documented processes are under development.
- There were systems in place to safeguard the assets.

### ***Administrative controls and management reporting***

A framework of administrative procedures and regular management reporting were in place, including segregation of duties and a system of delegation and accountability and, in particular, that

- there was an appropriate budgeting system with an annual budget which was kept under review by senior management
- there were regular reviews by senior management of periodic and annual financial reports which indicate financial performance against forecasts
- a risk management system operated within the Authority
- there were systems aimed at ensuring the security of the ICT systems
- there were appropriate capital investment control guidelines and formal project management disciplines.

### ***Internal audit and Audit and Risk Committee***

An Coimisiún Toghcháin was established on 9 February 2023 and the Vote established on 1 March 2023. An Audit and Risk Committee was established and met twice in 2023. The terms of reference of the Committee were agreed and a process was put in place to procure an internal audit function. This process commenced in early 2024. Once in place, the internal audit function will prepare an audit plan which will be reviewed by me and by the Audit and Risk Committee. Procedures will be put in place to ensure that the reports of the internal audit function are followed up.

### ***Procurement***

An Coimisiún ensures that there is an appropriate focus on good procurement practice in the award of all contracts and that procedures are in place to ensure compliance with all relevant guidelines. Expenditure on goods and services, including the cost of contracted-in staff, amounted to a total of €1.665 million in 2023. There were no instances of non-competitive or non-compliant contracts in excess of €25,000 (exclusive of VAT).

### ***Risk and control framework***

An Coimisiún has implemented a risk management system which identifies and reports key risks and the management actions being taken to address and, to the extent possible, to mitigate those risks.

A risk register is in place which identifies the key risks facing this office and these have been identified, evaluated and graded according to their significance. The register is reviewed and updated by the Management Team on a quarterly basis. The outcome of these assessments is used to plan and allocate resources to ensure risks are managed to an acceptable level.

The risk register details the controls and actions needed to mitigate risks and responsibility for operation of controls assigned to specific staff.

### ***Ongoing monitoring and review***

Formal procedures are being established for monitoring control processes. Control deficiencies are communicated to those responsible for taking corrective action and to the Management Team and the Audit and Risk Committee, where relevant, in a timely way. Key risks and related controls were identified and processes put in place to monitor the operation of those key controls and report any identified deficiencies.

### ***Review of effectiveness***

An Coimisiún has put in place procedures to monitor the effectiveness of its risk management and control procedures. An Coimisiún's monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial control is informed by the senior management within an Coimisiún responsible for the development and maintenance of the internal financial control framework and will be informed by the work of the internal and external auditors from 2024 onwards.

### ***Internal financial control issues***

No weaknesses in internal financial control were identified in relation to 2023 that resulted in, or may result in, a material loss.

**Art O'Leary**  
Accounting Officer  
An Coimisiún Toghcháin

27 March 2024

## **Comptroller and Auditor General**

### **Report for presentation to the Houses of the Oireachtas**

#### **Vote 23 An Coimisiún Toghcháin**

##### **Opinion on the appropriation account**

I have audited the appropriation account for Vote 23 An Coimisiún Toghcháin for the year ended 31 December 2023 under section 3 of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993.

In my opinion,

- the appropriation account properly presents the receipts and expenditure of Vote 23 An Coimisiún Toghcháin for the year ended 31 December 2023, and
- has been prepared in the form prescribed by the Minister for Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform.

##### ***Basis of opinion***

I conducted my audit of the appropriation account in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) as promulgated by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions. My responsibilities under those standards are described in the appendix to this report. I am independent of An Coimisiún Toghcháin and have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the standards.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

##### **Report on the statement on internal financial control, and on other matters**

The Accounting Officer has presented a statement on internal financial control together with the appropriation account. My responsibilities to report in relation to the information in the statement, and on certain other matters upon which I report by exception, are described in the appendix to this report.

I have nothing to report in that regard.

**Seamus McCarthy**

Comptroller and Auditor General

28 August 2024

## Appendix to the report

### Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer

The Accounting Officer is responsible for

- the preparation of the appropriation account in accordance with section 22 of the Exchequer and Audit Departments Act 1866
- ensuring the appropriation account complies with the requirements of the Department of Public Expenditure National Development Plan Delivery and Reform's *Public Financial Procedures*, and with other directions of the Minister for Public Expenditure National Development Plan Delivery and Reform
- ensuring the regularity of transactions, and
- implementing such internal control as the Accounting Officer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the appropriation account free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

### Responsibilities of the Comptroller and Auditor General

I am required under section 3 of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993 to audit the appropriation account and to report thereon to the Houses of the Oireachtas stating whether, in my opinion, the account properly presents the receipts and expenditure related to the vote.

My objective in carrying out the audit is to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the appropriation account is free from material misstatement due to fraud or error. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the appropriation account.

As part of an audit in accordance with the ISAs, I exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. In doing so,

- I identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the appropriation account whether due to fraud or error; design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks; and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

- I obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal controls.
- I assess whether the accounting provisions of the Department of Public Expenditure National Development Plan Delivery and Reform's *Public Financial Procedures* have been complied with.

I communicate with the Accounting Officer regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

I report by exception if, in my opinion,

- I have not received all the information and explanations I required for my audit, or
- the accounting records were not sufficient to permit the appropriation account to be readily and properly audited, or
- the appropriation account is not in agreement with the accounting records.

### Reporting on the statement on internal financial control

My opinion on the appropriation account does not cover the Accounting Officer's statement on internal financial control, and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with my audit of the appropriation account, I am required under the ISAs to read the statement on internal financial control and, in doing so, consider whether the information contained therein is materially inconsistent with the appropriation account or with knowledge obtained during the audit, or if it otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement, I am required to report that fact.

### Reporting on other matters

I seek to obtain evidence about the regularity of financial transactions in the course of audit. I am required to report under section 3 of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993 if I identify any material instance where public money has not been applied for the purposes intended or where transactions did not conform to the authorities governing them.

I am also required under the 1993 Act to prepare, in each year, a report on such matters arising from my audits of the appropriation accounts as I consider appropriate. In such cases, the audit reports on the relevant appropriation accounts refer to the relevant chapter(s) in my annual *Report on the Accounts of the Public Services*.

## Vote 23 An Coimisiún Toghcháin

### Appropriation Account 2023

		2023
	Estimate provision	Outturn
	€000	€000
<b>Programme expenditure</b>		
A Manage the functions of An Coimisiún Toghcháin	5,734	3,059
<b>Gross expenditure</b>	<b>5,734</b>	<b>3,059</b>
<i>Deduct</i>		
B Appropriations-in-aid	53	56
<b>Net expenditure</b>	<b>5,681</b>	<b>3,003</b>

#### Surplus

The surplus of the amount provided over the net amount applied is liable for surrender to the Exchequer.

	2023
	€
<b>Surplus to be surrendered</b>	<b>2,677,331</b>

**Art O'Leary**  
Accounting Officer  
An Coimisiún Toghcháin

27 March 2024

## Notes to the Appropriation Account

### Note 1 Operating Cost Statement 2023

		2023
	€000	€000
Programme cost		43
Pay		1,326
Non pay		1,690
<b>Gross expenditure</b>		<b>3,059</b>
<i>Deduct</i>		
<b>Appropriations-in-aid</b>		<b>(56)</b>
<b>Net expenditure</b>		<b>3,003</b>
<b>Changes in capital assets (note 2.1)</b>		
Purchases	(12)	
Depreciation	1	
		(11)
<b>Changes in net current assets</b>		
Increase in prepayments	(9)	
Increase in accrued expenses	46	
		37
<b>Direct expenditure</b>		<b>3,029</b>
<b>Expenditure borne elsewhere</b>		
Net allied services expenditure (note 1.1)		149
<b>Net programme cost</b>		<b>3,178</b>

#### 1.1 Net allied services expenditure

The net allied services expenditure amount is made up of the following amounts in relation to Vote 23 borne elsewhere.

	2023
	€000
Vote 13 Office of Public Works	116
Vote 43 Office of the Government Chief Information Officer	33
	<b>149</b>



## Note 2 Statement of Financial Position as at 31 December 2023

	Note	2023 €000
<b>Fixed assets</b>		
Property, plant and equipment	2.1	11
Intangible assets		—
<b>Total fixed assets</b>		<b>11</b>
<b>Current assets</b>		
Bank and cash	2.2	62
Prepayments	2.3	9
Other debit balance	2.4	13
<b>Total current assets</b>		<b>84</b>
<b>Less current liabilities</b>		
Accrued expenses	2.5	46
Other credit balances	2.6	66
Net Exchequer funding	2.7	9
<b>Total current liabilities</b>		<b>121</b>
<b>Net current assets</b>		<b>(37)</b>
<b>Net assets</b>		<b>(26)</b>
<b>Represented by:</b>		
<b>State funding account</b>	2.8	<b>(26)</b>

**2.1 Property, plant and equipment**

	<b>Furniture and fittings €000</b>	<b>Total €000</b>
<b>Cost or valuation</b>		
At 1 January 2023	—	—
Additions	12	12
At 31 December 2023	12	12
<b>Accumulated depreciation</b>		
At 1 January 2023	—	—
Depreciation for the year	1	1
At 31 December 2023	1	1
<b>Net assets</b>		
<b>At 31 December 2023</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>
At 31 December 2022	—	—

**2.2 Bank and cash**

at 31 December	<b>2023</b>
	<b>€000</b>
PMG balances	62
	<b>62</b>

**2.3 Prepayments**

at 31 December	<b>2023</b>
	<b>€000</b>
Software support	1
Administration	8
	<b>9</b>

**2.4 Other debit balances**

at 31 December	<b>2023</b>
	<b>€000</b>
Other debit balances	13
	<b>13</b>

**2.5 Accrued expenses**

at 31 December	<b>2023</b>
	<b>€000</b>
Administration expenses	14
ICT and telecommunications	18
Due for services	14
	<b>46</b>

**2.6 Other credit balances**

at 31 December	<b>2023</b>
	<b>€000</b>
<b>Amounts due to the State</b>	
Income tax	32
Pay related social insurance	17
Professional services withholding tax	4
Universal social charge	7
	60
Payroll deductions held in suspense	6
	<b>66</b>

**2.7 Net Exchequer funding**

at 31 December	<b>2023</b>
	<b>€000</b>
Surplus to be surrendered	2,678
Exchequer grant undrawn	2,669
<b>Net Exchequer funding</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Represented by:</b>	
<b>Debtors</b>	
Bank and cash	62
Debit balances: suspense	13
	75
<b>Creditors</b>	
Due to the State	(60)
Credit balances: suspense	(6)
	(66)
	<b>9</b>

**2.8 State funding account**

	<b>Note</b>	<b>2023</b>
		<b>€000</b>
Balance at 1 January		—
Disbursements from the Vote		
Estimate provision	Account	5,681
Surplus to be surrendered	Account	2,678
Net vote		3,003
Expenditure (cash) borne elsewhere	1.1	149
Net programme cost	1	(3,178)
<b>Balance at 31 December</b>		<b>(26)</b>

**2.9 Commitments**

<b>Global commitments</b>	<b>2023</b>
at 31 December	<b>€000</b>
Procurement of goods and services	<b>1,934</b>

## Note 3 Vote Expenditure

### Analysis of administration expenditure

		2023	
		Estimate provision	Outturn
		€000	€000
i	Salaries, wages and allowances	2,109	1,326
ii	Travel and subsistence	90	25
iii	Training and development and incidental expenses	310	140
iv	Postal and telecommunications services	65	7
v	Research, education and public engagement	800	253
vi	Office premises expenses	630	239
vi	Office equipment and external IT services	675	80
vii	Consultancy and other services	890	44
viii	Referendum function	10	902
		<b>5,579</b>	<b>3,016</b>

### Significant variations

The following outlines the reasons for significant variations (+/- 25% and €100,000).

#### i Salaries, wages and allowances

*Estimate provision €2.109 million; outturn €1.326 million*

Expenditure was €783,000 lower than the estimate. An Coimisiún Toghcháin was established on 9 February 2023. Capacity and capability building commenced after establishment and recruitment of staff commenced. The original estimate provided for approximately 31 full time equivalents, and there were 20 full time equivalents on the payroll of An Coimisiún at 31 December 2023. A further five had scheduled start dates in January and several recruitment campaigns are underway.

#### iii Training and development and incidental expenses

*Estimate provision €310,000; outturn €140,000*

Expenditure was €170,000 lower than the estimate. The in-year establishment date and the subsequent recruitment campaigns meant that a full year of training and development did not take place. It is expected that this will change in 2024 and beyond.

**v Research, education and public engagement**

*Estimate provision €800,000; outturn €253,000*

Expenditure was €547,000 lower than the estimate as the draft research programme was not published until November 2023 and work across the public engagement programme and education programme only commenced towards the end of 2023.

**vi Office premises expenses**

*Estimate provision €630,000; outturn €239,000*

Expenditure was €391,000 lower than the estimate as permanent office premises were arranged by the OPW for An Coimisiún and were made available on 22 December 2023. During 2023 the OPW provided temporary accommodation for An Coimisiún on a no-charge basis. As a result, An Coimisiún did not have any ongoing operating cost such as utilities in 2023. The expenditure incurred in 2023 provided for fit out costs of the permanent accommodation.

**vi Office equipment and external IT services**

*Estimate provision €675,000; outturn €80,000*

Expenditure was €595,000 lower than the estimate due to the estimated ICT equipment and infrastructure costs not arising in 2023 as the premises were not available until the end of December 2023.

**vii Consultancy and other services**

*Estimate provision €890,000; outturn €44,000 million*

Expenditure was €846,000 lower than the estimate as the estimate provided for legal costs in relation to a regulatory environment. These parts of the Electoral Reform Act were not commenced and these legal costs did not materialise.

**viii Referendum function**

*Estimate provision €10,000; outturn €902,000*

Expenditure was €892,000 higher than the estimate. The estimate provision was allocated to facilitate additional budget allocation as and when required. Referendums announced in March 2023 were originally to be held in autumn 2023, and work commenced on preparation of an information campaign in 2023.

### Programme A - Manage the functions of An Coimisiún Toghcháin

		2023	
		Estimate provision	Outturn
		€000	€000
A.1	Administration – pay	2,109	1,326
A.2	Administration – non pay	3,470	1,690
A.3	An Coimisiún Toghcháin	155	43
		<b>5,734</b>	<b>3,059</b>

#### Significant variations

The following outlines the reasons for significant variations in non-administration programme expenditure (+/- 5% and €100,000).

#### A.3 An Coimisiún Toghcháin

*Estimate provision €155,000; outturn €43,000*

Expenditure was €112,000 lower than the estimate because while provision was made for the Chairperson's salary for 2023, this was not required until 2024.

## Note 4 Receipts

### 4.1 Appropriations-in-aid

		2023	
		Estimated	Realised
		€000	€000
1.	Receipts from additional superannuation contributions on public service remuneration	53	56
		<b>53</b>	<b>56</b>

## Note 5 Staffing and Remuneration

### 5.1 Employee numbers

<b>Full time equivalents</b>	<b>2023</b>
Number of staff at 31 December	20

### 5.2 Pay

	<b>2023</b>
	<b>€000</b>
Pay	1,225
Other allowances	1
Overtime	1
Employer's PRSI	99
<b>Total pay</b>	<b>1,326</b>

### 5.3 Allowances and overtime payments

	<b>Number of recipients</b>	<b>Recipients of €10,000 or more</b>	<b>Highest individual payment</b>
			<b>2023</b>
			<b>€</b>
Other allowances	1	—	887
Overtime	4	—	812



### 5.4 An Coimisiún Toghcháin staffing by pay bands

The number of An Coimisiún employees whose total employee benefits (including basic pay, allowances, overtime; excluding employer PRSI, employer pension costs) for the financial year fell between €20,000 and €59,999 and within each band of €10,000 from €60,000 upwards are as follows.

Pay bands (€)		Number of employees
From	To	2023
20,000	59,999	11
60,000	69,999	1
70,000	79,999	2
80,000	89,999	—
90,000	99,999	1
100,000	109,999	—
110,000	119,999	1
120,000	129,999	1
130,000	139,999	—
140,000	149,999	—
150,000	159,999	—
160,000	169,999	—
170,000	179,999	—
180,000	189,999	—
190,000	199,999	—
200,000	209,999	—
210,000	219,999	1

### 5.5 Remuneration and benefits of Accounting Officer

The Accounting Officer's remuneration and taxable benefits for the financial year was as follows.

	2023 €000
Basic pay	215

The value of retirement benefits earned in the period is not included above. The Accounting Officer is a member of the pre-1995 superannuation scheme for established civil servants and the entitlements to retirement benefits did not extend beyond the standard terms of that scheme.