

Appropriation Account 2024

Vote 32

Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Introduction

As Accounting Officer for Vote 32, I am required each year to prepare the appropriation account for the Vote and 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 2024 for the salaries and expenses of the Office of the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, including certain services administered by that Office, for the payment of certain subsidies and grants and for the payment of certain grants under cash-limited schemes.

The expenditure outturn is compared with the sums

- granted by Dáil Eireann under the Appropriation Act 2024, including the amount that could be used as appropriations-in-aid of expenditure for the year, and
- provided for capital supply services in 2024 out of unspent 2023 appropriations, under the deferred surrender arrangements established by section 91 of the Finance Act 2004.

A surplus of €63.075 million is liable for surrender to the Exchequer.

The statement of accounting policies and principles and notes 1 to 6 form part of the account.

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, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation in circular 20 of 2024 have been applied in the preparation of the account. This includes the application of a number of Central Government Accounting Standards (CGAS) brought into effect from 1 January 2024.

Depreciation of capital assets

Depreciation of property, plant and equipment and amortisation of intangible assets are calculated and charged in accordance with CGAS 17 and CGAS 31 respectively.

The useful lives and associated rates of depreciation or amortisation for major classes of capital assets are as follows.

<i>Asset class</i>	<i>Useful life</i>	<i>Rate of depreciation/ amortisation</i>
Office and IT equipment	5 years	20%
Furniture and fittings	10 years	10%
Acquired and 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 Department. This responsibility is exercised in the context of the resources available to me and my other obligations as Secretary General. 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. Maintaining the system of internal financial controls is a continuous process and the system and its effectiveness are kept under ongoing review.

Shared services

I have fulfilled my responsibilities in relation to the requirements of the service management agreement between this Department and the National Shared Services Office for the provision of human resources and payroll shared services.

I rely on a letter of assurance from the Accounting Officer of the National Shared Services Office that the appropriate controls are exercised in the provision of shared services to this Department.

Financial control environment

A control environment comprising the following elements is in place.

- Financial responsibilities have been assigned at management level with corresponding accountability.
- Reporting arrangements have been established at all levels where responsibility for financial management has been assigned.
- Formal procedures have been established for reporting significant control failures and ensuring appropriate corrective action.
- There is an Audit Committee to advise me in discharging my responsibilities for the internal financial control system.
- Procedures for key business processes have been documented.
- There are systems in place to safeguard the assets.

Administrative controls and management reporting

A framework of administrative procedures and regular management reporting is in place, including segregation of duties and a system of delegation and accountability.

- There is an appropriate budgeting system with an annual budget which is kept under review by senior management.
- There are regular reviews by senior management of periodic and annual financial reports which indicate financial performance against forecasts.
- A risk management system operates within the Department.
- There are systems aimed at ensuring the security of the ICT systems.
- There are appropriate capital investment control guidelines and formal project management disciplines.

Internal audit and Audit Committee

The Department has an internal audit function with appropriately trained personnel, which operates in accordance with a written charter which I have approved. Its work is informed by analysis of the financial risks to which the Department is exposed and its annual internal audit plans, jointly approved by me and the Audit Committee, are based on this analysis. These plans aim to cover the key controls on a rolling basis over a reasonable period. The internal audit function is reviewed periodically by me and by the Audit Committee. I have put procedures in place to ensure that the reports of the internal audit function are followed up.

Procurement

The Department 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.

The Department has provided details of eight non-competitive contracts in excess of €25,000 in the annual return in respect of Circular 40/2002 to the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation.

Non-compliance with procurement rules

The Department complied with the guidelines with the exception of four contracts in excess of €25,000 (exclusive of VAT) totalling €207,881 (exclusive of VAT) as set out below.

- One procurement with a cumulative value of €85,672 was related to the cost to the Companies Registration Office (CRO) of file storage. There was some concern as to the effective commencement date of the contract with the then service provider, principally as a result to the restrictions caused by Covid 19. On the advice of the Office Government Procurement, the CRO consulted with the Chief State Solicitors Office who advised that the contract with the then supplier should conclude on 13 March 2024. Since then the CRO has further engaged with the Chief State Solicitors Office (CSSO) to ensure the request for tenders (RFT) for the new contract meets with legislative requirements and the needs of the CRO. The RFT has been published on the eTenders website and the CRO expect the contract to be signed with the selected provider in Q4 2025.
- A second procurement with a cumulative value of €70,665 related to the ongoing requirement for consistent information security advice relating to a number of ICT development projects. Given the nature of the advice required it was considered that knowledge of the work of the Department was essential and that there was a need to have continuity with the independent security consultant previously engaged for this work. A procurement process to ensure future accessibility for such advice was duly undertaken and a new contract for this advice was entered into in July 2024.
- A third procurement with a cumulative value of €26,017 related to the purchase of office supplies and stationery after the contract expired with the previous contract holder in March 2024. Whilst a new contract was put in place with a new supplier from May 2024, the Department continued to use the old supplier for certain items. Once the Department became aware of this, staff were reminded that only the new supplier should be used for all office supplies and stationery needs.

- A fourth procurement with a cumulative value of €25,527 related to the purchase of cleaning services for a number of different premises. The tendering process for the purchase of these services closed in December 2023. A new provider was selected on foot of that process. However, due to a number of reasons, not least related to transfer of undertakings obligations, the contract with the new provider did not commence until June 2024.

Risk and control framework

The Department 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 the Department and these have been identified, evaluated and graded according to their significance. The register is reviewed and updated by the Management Board 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 have been established for monitoring control processes and control deficiencies are communicated to those responsible for taking corrective action and to management and the Management Board, where relevant, in a timely way. I confirm that key risks and related controls have been identified, and processes have been put in place to monitor the operation of those key controls and report any identified deficiencies.

Review of effectiveness

The Department has procedures to monitor the effectiveness of its risk management and control procedures. The Department's monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial control is informed by the work of the internal and external auditors and the senior management within the Department responsible for the development and maintenance of the internal financial control framework.

Internal financial control issues

Suspected fraud in loan schemes managed on the Department's behalf

The Statement of Internal Financial Control in the Department's 2023 account referred to a small number of loans issued by lenders who were participants in loan schemes operated on the Department's behalf by the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) and covered by guarantees funded in part from the Department's Vote in respect of which concerns had been raised in relation to possible fraud. Specifically, the SBCI had been notified by a participating on-lender that a small number of loans may have been approved by the on-lender on the basis of fraudulent financial information presented by the borrowers. The on-lender confirmed that these cases were reported to the relevant authorities and that investigations were ongoing. The Department continued to receive updates from the SBCI regarding the eleven loans in question which had a total value of €1.25 million. This issue has also been disclosed under note 6.4.

Credit guarantee scheme premia

The SBCI operates several credit guarantee schemes on behalf of the Department. The scheme agreements are between the Department and the lending partners, and the SBCI acts as administrator of the schemes on behalf of the Department (since October 2016). Under the 2012, 2015 and 2017 credit guarantee schemes (CGS), guarantee premiums were collected by the SBCI from borrowers and paid over to the Department. Prior to October 2016, the schemes were operated by a different third-party operator.

In Q4 2024, the SBCI identified discrepancies in its collection of the guarantee premia for the CGS 2012, 2015 and 2017 schemes. A review of the historic premiums collected on the CGS portfolio was carried out by the SBCI covering the period 2012 to March 2025. Circa 375 loans are affected. The findings indicate instances of over collection to a total value of €75,000 and under collection to a total of €500,000 of premia. The SBCI has advised that the majority of the under collected guarantee premia may not be collectable, for a number of reasons relating to administrative processes within the SBCI.

The SBCI informed the Department of the findings of its review in April 2025. The Department is engaging with the SBCI in relation to the findings.

Ukraine Credit Guarantee Scheme (UCGS) eligibility

The SBCI also operates the Ukraine Credit Guarantee Scheme (UCGS) on behalf of the Department. One of the eligibility criteria for the scheme required businesses to declare that “costs incurred by it have increased by a minimum of 10% over its costs for 2020 due to the economic difficulties resulting from the aggression against Ukraine by Russia”.

During 2024, the SBCI identified 206 loans totalling €12.6 million (4.4% of total scheme value) where the borrowers had self-declared that their business was established after 2020, and, therefore, may not have met the scheme eligibility. However, many of these businesses had evolved from previous business entities. In May 2024, the SBCI informed the Department of the finding. On foot of this, it was agreed that the SBCI would update the eligibility application process to reduce any potential misinterpretation by scheme applicants. This update was completed in May 2024, and the scheme closed in December 2024.

Companies Registration Office – strike-off process

The statement on internal financial control in the 2023 appropriation account advised of the circumstances that gave rise to the Companies Registration Office (CRO) temporarily suspending its involuntary strike-off activity and of the intention to review the CRO’s ICT procedures, controls and staff training to remedy the matter.

The CRO has introduced new procedures in relation to the publication of materials, such as strike-off notices, in its gazettes. Additional training has also been provided to staff to ensure the accuracy of information published in the gazettes. Work is ongoing with the CRO's ICT services provider to reinstate the automated enforcement processes, including the involuntary strike-off process. In the interim, the CRO has recommenced a limited number of involuntary strike-offs on a manual basis.

I am satisfied as to the efficacy of the Department's internal financial control systems.

Declan Hughes

Accounting Officer

Enterprise, Trade and Employment

11 September 2025

Comptroller and Auditor General Report for presentation to Dáil Éireann

Vote 32 Enterprise, Trade and Employment Opinion on the appropriation account

I have audited the appropriation account for Vote 32 Enterprise, Trade and Employment for the year ended 31 December 2024 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 32 Enterprise, Trade and Employment for the year ended 31 December 2024, and
- has been prepared in the form prescribed by the Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation.

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 the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment 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.

Issues arising in relation to guarantee and loan schemes

The Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) manages a number of loan and credit guarantee schemes on behalf of the Department. In the statement on financial control, the Accounting Officer discloses a number of issues arising in SBCI's administration of these schemes.

- A payment of €670,000 was made in respect of guarantees extended for eight loans which are now suspected to have been fraudulently obtained.
- A review of the collection of premiums for certain loan guarantee schemes found under collection of premiums on some loans totalling €500,000, the majority of which may now not be collectible.
- Issues were identified regarding the eligibility for support of some loans that were guaranteed under the Ukraine Credit Guarantee Scheme.

Seamus McCarthy
Comptroller and Auditor General

15 September 2025

Appendix to the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General

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, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation's Public Financial Procedures, and with other directions of the Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation
- 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 Dáil Éireann 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, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation'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.

Appendix to the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (continued)

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 32 Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Appropriation Account 2024

		2024		2023
		Estimate provision		Outturn
		€000	€000	€000
Programme expenditure				
A	Jobs and enterprise development			
	<i>Original</i>	890,325		
	<i>Deferred surrender</i>	20,000		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	<u>167,662</u>		
			1,077,987	1,028,114
B	Enterprise innovation and commercialisation			729,531
	<i>Original</i>	244,917		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	<u>(2,654)</u>		
			242,263	236,863
C	Regulation			224,286
	<i>Original</i>	133,272		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	<u>2,114</u>		
			135,386	132,506
			<u>1,455,636</u>	<u>1,397,483</u>
				<u>1,065,773</u>
Gross expenditure				
	<i>Original</i>	1,268,514		
	<i>Deferred surrender</i>	20,000		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	<u>167,122</u>		
			<u>1,455,636</u>	<u>1,397,483</u>
				<u>1,065,773</u>
Deduct				
D	Appropriations-in-aid			
	<i>Original</i>	74,881		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	<u>12,000</u>		
			<u>86,881</u>	<u>91,803</u>
				<u>78,631</u>
Net expenditure				
	<i>Original</i>	1,193,633		
	<i>Deferred surrender</i>	20,000		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	<u>155,122</u>		
			<u>1,368,755</u>	<u>1,305,680</u>
				<u>987,142</u>

Surplus

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

Under Section 91 of the Finance Act 2004, all or part of any unspent appropriations for capital supply services may be carried over for spending in the following year.

	2024	2023
	€	€
Surplus	63,074,732	616,850,553
Deferred surrender	—	(20,000,000)
Surplus to be surrendered	<u>63,074,732</u>	<u>596,850,553</u>

Declan Hughes

Accounting Officer
Enterprise, Trade and Employment

11 September 2025

Notes to the Appropriation Account

Note 1 Operating Cost Statement 2024

	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Programme cost	1,344,966	1,017,536
Pay	42,005	37,667
Non pay	10,512	10,570
Gross expenditure	1,397,483	1,065,773
<i>Deduct</i>		
Appropriations-in-aid	91,803	78,631
Net expenditure	1,305,680	987,142
Changes in capital assets		
<i>Property, plant and equipment (note 2.1)</i>		
Purchases	(163)	
Depreciation	320	
<i>Intangible assets (note 2.2)</i>		
Purchases	(1,200)	
Amortisation	829	
	(214)	(141)
Changes in net current assets		
Decrease in prepayments	93	
Increase in accrued income	(389)	
Increase in accrued expenses	690	
Increase in deferred income	2,470	
	2,864	3,255
Direct expenditure	1,308,330	990,256
Expenditure borne elsewhere		
Net allied services expenditure (cash) (note 1.1)	30,210	29,066
Notional rents (non-cash)	2,847	2,847
Net programme cost	1,341,387	1,022,169

1.1 Net allied services expenditure

The net allied services expenditure amount is made up of the following amounts in relation to Vote 32 borne elsewhere.

	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Vote 9 Office of the Revenue Commissioners	—	62
Vote 12 Superannuation and Retired Allowances	25,390	24,257
Vote 13 Office of Public Works	3,830	3,868
Vote 18 National Shared Services Office	134	134
Vote 20 Garda Síochána	290	251
Vote 43 Office of the Government Chief Information Officer	221	153
Central Fund – ministerial pensions	345	341
	30,210	29,066

Note 2 Statement of Financial Position as at 31 December 2024

	Note	2024 €000	2023 €000
Fixed assets			
Property, plant and equipment	2.1	446	603
Intangible assets	2.2	6,018	5,647
		6,464	6,250
Current assets			
Bank and cash		3,805	19,993
Other prepayments	2.3	1,621	1,714
Accrued income	2.4	727	338
Other debit balances	2.5	2,213	926
		8,366	22,971
<i>Less</i>			
Current liabilities			
Accrued expenses	2.6	4,660	3,970
Deferred income	2.7	6,639	4,169
Other credit balances	2.8	5,466	5,639
	2.9	552	15,280
		17,317	29,058
Net current liabilities		(8,951)	(6,087)
Net (liabilities)/assets		(2,487)	163
Represented by:			
State funding account	2.10	(2,487)	163

2.1 Property, plant and equipment

	Office and IT equipment	Furniture and fittings	Total
	€000	€000	€000
Cost or valuation ^a			
At 1 January 2024	6,543	2,856	9,399
Additions	163	—	163
Disposals	(260)	—	(260)
At 31 December 2024	6,446	2,856	9,302
Accumulated depreciation			
At 1 January 2024	6,118	2,678	8,796
Depreciation for the year	262	58	320
Depreciation on disposals	(260)	—	(260)
At 31 December 2024	6,120	2,736	8,856
Net assets			
At 31 December 2024	326	120	446
At 31 December 2023	425	178	603

Note ^a Cost or valuation includes some assets acquired for less than €10,000 prior to 1 January 2021.

2.2 Intangible assets

	Acquired and developed software	Assets under development	Total
	€000	€000	€000
Cost or valuation			
At 1 January 2024	32,250	1,621	33,871
Additions	—	1,200	1,200
Transfers	2,319	(2,319)	—
At 31 December 2024	34,569	502	35,071
Accumulated amortisation			
At 1 January 2024	28,224	—	28,224
Amortisation for the year	829	—	829
At 31 December 2024	29,053	—	29,053
Net assets			
At 31 December 2024	5,516	502	6,018
At 31 December 2023	4,026	1,621	5,647

2.3 Other prepayments

at 31 December	2024	2023
	€000	€000
IT services and support	1,390	1,369
Administration	231	345
	1,621	1,714

2.4 Accrued income

at 31 December	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Income due from Competition and Consumer Protection Commission	203	165
Employment permit income due	59	123
Income due to DETE offices for services	39	30
Credit guarantee schemes	426	20
	727	338

2.5 Other debit balances

at 31 December	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Advances to OPW	8	15
Miscellaneous debit balances	2,064	678
Recoupable expenditure		
Travel	(11)	
Shared services	152	
	141	233
	2,213	926

2.6 Accrued expenses

at 31 December	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Humanitarian relief scheme	—	2,932
Employment permit refunds due	353	349
Administration expenses	463	337
Inter-departmental recoupments	126	132
IT services and support	143	181
Legal expenses	9	2
Credit guarantee schemes	—	37
Payroll related accruals (note 2.15)	3,566	—
	4,660	3,970

2.7 Deferred income

at 31 December	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Employment permit receipts for unprocessed applications	4,999	2,457
CRO customer balances	1,640	1,712
	6,639	4,169

2.8 Other credit balances

at 31 December	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Amounts due to the state		
Income tax	1,276	1,220
Pay related social insurance	881	797
Local property tax	7	7
Professional services withholding tax	128	165
Value added tax on intra EU acquisitions	96	104
Universal social charge	237	239
	<u>2,625</u>	<u>2,532</u>
Share of patent renewal fees payable to the European Patents Office	1,998	1,882
Staff pay-overs	593	450
Pension liability	(35)	4
Recoupable salaries	122	159
Other miscellaneous balances	163	612
	<u>5,466</u>	<u>5,639</u>

2.9 Net Exchequer funding

at 31 December	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Surplus to be surrendered	63,075	596,851
Deferred surrender	—	20,000
Exchequer grant undrawn	(62,523)	(601,571)
Net Exchequer funding	<u>552</u>	<u>15,280</u>
Represented by:		
Debtors		
Bank and cash	3,805	19,993
Other debit balances	2,213	926
	<u>6,018</u>	<u>20,919</u>
Creditors		
Due to the State	(2,625)	(2,532)
Other credit balances	(2,841)	(3,107)
	<u>(5,466)</u>	<u>(5,639)</u>
	<u>552</u>	<u>15,280</u>

2.10 State funding account

	Note	2024	2023
		€000	€000
Balance at 1 January		163	3,277
Disbursements from the Vote			
Estimate provision	Account	1,368,755	
Deferred surrender	Account	—	
Surplus to be surrendered	Account	<u>(63,075)</u>	
Net vote		1,305,680	987,142
Expenditure (cash) borne elsewhere	1.1	30,210	29,066
Non cash expenditure – notional rent	1	2,847	2,847
Net programme cost	1	<u>(1,341,387)</u>	<u>(1,022,169)</u>
Balance at 31 December		<u>(2,487)</u>	<u>163</u>

2.11 Commitments

a) Global commitments^a	2024	2023
at 31 December	€000	€000
Procurement of goods and services	1,289	123,890
Non-capital grant programmes	976	5,774
Capital grant programmes	19,404	1,295,163
Total	<u>21,669</u>	<u>1,424,827</u>
b) Non-capital grant programmes	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Opening balance	5,774	3,837
New grant commitments	4,199	22,700
Grants paid in the year	(6,137)	(20,288)
Grants cancelled	—	(475)
Removal of agency commitments ^a	<u>(2,860)</u>	<u>—</u>
Closing balance	<u>976</u>	<u>5,774</u>

c) Capital grant programmes	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Opening balance	1,295,163	1,153,153
New grant commitments	167,827	784,610
Grants paid in the year	(167,823)	(474,567)
Grants cancelled	—	(168,033)
Removal of agency commitments ^a	(1,275,763)	—
Closing balance	19,404	1,295,163

Note ^a Per circular 20 of 2024, only grant schemes paid directly from the Vote are to be included 2024 commitments, this resulted in the removal of agency commitments in 2024 that were part of the opening balances carried forward from 2023.

2.12 Matured liabilities

at 31 December	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Estimate of matured liabilities not discharged at year end	96	146

2.13 Contingent liabilities

Credit guarantee schemes

The Credit Guarantee Scheme (CGS), which became operational in 2012 and was revised in 2017, provides a State guarantee through the Department to participating lenders of 80% on eligible loans or performance bonds to viable micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The maximum exposure for the Department in relation to loans outstanding at 31 December 2024 for the CGS was €504,647 (2023: €458,000).

The Covid 19 Credit Guarantee Scheme (CCGS) was launched in September 2020 to assist businesses that were negatively impacted by Covid 19, and closed to lending on 30 June 2022. The scheme provided a State guarantee of 80% to participating lenders on lending facilities up to a combined maximum of €2 billion. The Scheme was developed in accordance with the European Commission's State Aid Temporary Framework and was available to SMEs, small mid-caps and primary producers that met the eligibility criteria. The maximum exposure for the Department in relation to loans outstanding at 31 December 2024 for the CCGS was €140.23 million (2023: €280.39 million).

The Ukraine Credit Guarantee Scheme (UCGS) was launched in January 2023. The scheme was developed to assist businesses impacted by cost increases arising from the conflict in Ukraine. The scheme made support available for up to €1.2 billion in loans to SMEs and small mid-caps for working capital and investment purposes. Loans of up to €1 million were available from participating lenders, which includes banks, non-bank providers and credit unions. The Scheme is administered by the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) and was available until 31 December 2024. The maximum exposure for the Department in relation to loans outstanding at 31 December 2024 for the UCGS was €251.71 million (2023: €82.96 million).

In the case of each of these schemes, the guarantee is paid by the State (the guarantor) to the participating lender on the unrecovered outstanding principal balance on a loan in the event of a borrower defaulting on the repayments.

The total maximum exposure for the Department in relation to all loans outstanding at 31 December 2024 was €392.45 million (2023: €363.81 million).

Businesses availing of these schemes are required to pay a small premium to the Department. Claims against the guarantee are paid to participating lenders from subhead A.9. Payments to the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) to operate the schemes are also paid out of this subhead.

	2024		2022-2024	
	€000	€000	€000	€000
Receipts in relation to premiums paid by SMEs		2,228		11,731
Recovery on defaulted loans		1,164		1,273
Scheme expenditure				
Scheme administration	(2,393)		(11,657)	
Claims paid	<u>(12,776)</u>		<u>(23,203)</u>	
Total cost of schemes		<u>(15,169)</u>		<u>(34,860)</u>
Net cost of schemes		<u>(11,777)</u>		<u>(21,856)</u>

Voluntary winding up of European Consumer Centre Ireland

The Department, in conjunction with the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC), may also have a liability in relation to certain costs related to the voluntary winding up of the European Consumer Centre Ireland (ECCI). The ECCI is a private company limited by guarantee incorporated in February 2003. ECCI was designated as a recognised body for the purposes of certain EU regulations and received modest amounts of funding from the ETE Vote in relation to this recognition. The Department also had a member of staff acting as a director of the ECCI.

The ECCI is in the process of being voluntarily wound up. This decision was taken by the Directors of the company and ECCI ceased operations on 31 December 2023. A liquidator has been appointed to oversee the wind-up process of ECCI and as such they are independent of the Department and the CCPC in their functions.

The Department designated the CCPC as the body to host European Consumer Centre (ECC) functions in Ireland with effect from 1 January 2024.

The CCPC has engaged directly with EISMEA (an independent European Commission Agency through which the Commission provides funding and conducts its audits) on its designation and in the carrying out of ECC functions.

Both the Department and the CCPC are committed to supporting the ECCI through the voluntary wind-up process. The contingent liability relates to the costs of the wind-up process which cannot be readily estimated at this time.

Other contingent liabilities

The Department is involved in a number of pending legal proceedings which may generate liabilities, depending on the outcome of the litigation. Any actual amount or the timing of potential liabilities is uncertain.

2.14 Loan schemes

Future Growth Loan Scheme

The Future Growth Loan Scheme (FGLS) is a long-term capital investment loan scheme that was developed by the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, in partnership with the Department of Finance, the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) and the European Investment Fund (EIF).

The SBCI acts as the guarantor, supported by funding from both departments and underpinned by a counter-guarantee from the European Investment Bank Group (EIBG). The EIF is a subsidiary of the EIBG. The scheme provides an 80% risk-sharing arrangement to lenders, with losses apportioned as follows: 64% covered by EIBG, 16% by SBCI, and 20% by the finance providers.

The scheme was launched by the SBCI in June 2019 and closed to applicants in March 2023. The repayment period is due to conclude on 31 March 2033.

It was delivered through participating finance providers who made up to €300 million of investment loans available to eligible Irish SMEs, including farmers and fishers, and small mid-caps. The loans were competitively priced (an initial maximum loan interest rate of 4.5% for loans less than €250,000), were for terms of 7-10 years and supported strategic long-term investment in a post-Brexit environment. A minimum loan amount of €100,000 up to a maximum of €3,000,000 per applicant applied.

The significant and sudden financial impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on businesses, prompted the launch in 2020 of a second tranche of loans totalling up to €500 million.

The cost of the initial €300 million made available was €63 million, €38 million of which was funded by Vote 32. The cost for the increased (second tranche) lending capacity was €104 million, €62 million of which was provided by Vote 32.

Direct cost of FGLS to Vote 32 Enterprise, Trade and Employment

	2018 – 2023	2024	2025-2030	Total
	€000	€000	€000	€000
First loss provision ^a				
EIF	69,300	—	—	69,300
SBCI	19,528	—	—	19,528
Management fees				
EIF	2,431	—	—	2,431
SBCI	8,732	—	—	8,732
Total cost	99,991	—	—	99,991
Projected value of claims payable on defaulted loans ^b	383	668	15,819	16,870

Recoveries for FGLS amounted to €122,000

Note ^a First Loss funding refers to upfront funding provided by the Department to both SBCI and EIF to cover potential loan defaults on a first loss basis under the FGLS. If defaults exceed the first loss amounts already paid, there is no further cost to the Exchequer, and any additional losses are absorbed by SBCI and EIBG. If defaults are lower than projected, any unused first loss funds will be returned to the Exchequer.

^b Claims paid are applied against the 'first loss' provision. The estimated value of claims projected to arise for the period 2025-2030 is based on the number of loans currently in default and the average claim percentage for schemes.

Analysis of FGLS loans as at 31 December 2024 for Vote 32

	Number of loans	Value of loans €000
Drawn loans (2019-2023)	1,917	531,425
Repaid loans	230	95,624
Defaulted loans	40	9,414
Repaid amount on loans subject to claims	57	2,375
Live loans (repaid amount)	1,590	167,825
Balance outstanding	1,590	256,187

Growth and Sustainability Loan Scheme

The Growth and Sustainability Loan Scheme (GSLs) is a €500 million long-term investment loan scheme, launched in September 2023, delivered by the SBCI which provides an 80% guarantee to participating lenders. The European Investment Bank Group (EIBG) provides a counter guarantee to SBCI such that the risk share for the scheme is as follows: 20% finance providers, 16% SBCI and 64% EIBG.

A minimum of 30% of the lending volume is targeted towards environmental sustainability purposes with the aim of helping SMEs to invest in sustainability and energy efficiency. The remaining (up to) 70% of lending is for lending for strategic investments with a view to increasing productivity and competitiveness and thus underpinning future business sustainability and growth.

The costs for the GSLS are shared by DETE and DAFM on a 60:40 basis.

The costs associated with the €500 million scheme will be approximately €112 million, with DETE providing €67 million between 2022 and 2023. This funding covers a capped 'first loss' guarantee (i.e. the State guarantees to cover the first portion of losses on any defaults) and administrative costs for both the EIF and SBCI.

The scheme is available for three years or until fully subscribed with the repayment period due to conclude on 30 June 2036.

Direct cost of GSLS to Vote 32 Enterprise, Trade and Employment

	2022-2023	2024	2025-2036	Total
	€000	€000	€000	€000
<i>First loss provision^a</i>				
EIF	47,300	—	—	47,300
SBCI	15,082	—	—	15,082
<i>Management fees</i>				
EIF	—	—	—	—
SBCI	4,502	—	—	4,502
Total cost	66,884	—	—	66,884
Claims on defaulted loans paid ^b	—	—	5,886	5,886

Note ^a First Loss funding refers to upfront funding provided by the Department to SBCI and EIF to cover potential loan defaults on a first loss basis under the GSLS. If defaults exceed the first loss amounts paid, there is no further cost to the Exchequer, and any additional losses are absorbed by SBCI and EIBG. If defaults are lower than projected, any unused First Loss funds will be returned to the Exchequer.

^b Claims paid are applied against the 'first loss' provision. The estimated value of claims projected to arise for the period 2025-2036 is based on the number of loans currently in default and the average claim percentage for schemes.

Analysis of GSLS loans as at 31 December 2024 for Vote 32

Year of loan issue	2023		2024	
	Number of loans	Value of loans €000	Number of loans	Value of loans €000
Drawn loans	17	1,750	773	180,111
Repaid loans	—	—	4	786
Defaulted loans	—	—	—	—
Live loans (repaid amount)	17	203	769	21,792
Balance outstanding	17	1,547	769	157,533

2.15 Impact of accounting policy changes in 2024

Nine new central government accounting standards (CGAS) were implemented with effect from 1 January 2024. The implementation had the following impact on the State funding balance.

	2024
	€000
Holiday accrual ^a	(1,732)
Payroll accrual ^a	(1,834)
	<u>(3,566)</u>

Note ^a CGAS 39A Employee Benefits Part A

Note 3 Vote Expenditure

Analysis of administration expenditure

Administration expenditure set out below has been apportioned across the programmes, to present complete programme costings.

		2024		2023
		Estimate provision		Outturn
		€000	€000	€000
i	Salaries, wages and allowances			
	<i>Original</i>	41,542		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	944		
			42,486	37,667
ii	Travel and subsistence			
	<i>Original</i>	809		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	214		
			1,023	1,020
iii	Training and development		560	865
iv	Operational services, supplies and sundry equipment			
	<i>Original</i>	1,303		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	63		
			1,366	906
v	Digital capital investment and IT expenses		5,295	5,319
vi	Premises expenses			
	<i>Original</i>	743		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(3)		
			740	709
vii	Policy reviews, consultancy services and research		1,280	1,206
viii	Advertising and information resources		560	545
			53,310	48,237
			52,517	48,237

The analysis of non-pay administration subheads has been changed as part of the process to modernise the administrative subheads across voted accounts. The 2023 comparative figures have been reanalysed for comparative purposes as regards the new structure.

Significant variations

This note outlines the reasons for significant variations (+/- 25% and €100,000) in administration expenditure

iii Training and development

Estimate provision €560,000; Outturn €751,000

The overspend of €191,000 was due to additional expenditure on staff training and development primarily as a result of the increased staffing complement of the Department.

Programme A Jobs and Enterprise Development

		2024		2023
		Estimate provision		Outturn
		€000	€000	€000
A.1	Administration – pay			
	<i>Original</i>	15,570		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	349		
			15,919	14,025
A.2	Administration – non pay			
	<i>Original</i>	3,287		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	104		
			3,391	3,734
A.3	Agency legacy pensions			
	<i>Original</i>	41,117		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	1,749		
			42,866	40,054
A.4	InterTrade Ireland			
	<i>Original</i>	11,625		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	757		
			12,382	11,638
A.5	IDA Ireland			
	<i>Original</i>	265,993		
	<i>Deferred surrender</i>	15,305		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(4,856)		
			276,442	238,990
A.6	NSAI – grant for administration and general expenses			
	<i>Original</i>	11,064		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	641		
			11,705	10,334
A.7	Enterprise Ireland			
	<i>Original</i>	213,173		
	<i>Deferred surrender</i>	4,695		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(12,349)		
			205,519	178,725
A.8	Local enterprise development			
	<i>Original</i>	56,797		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(750)		
			56,047	49,050
A.9	Temporary partial credit guarantee scheme			
	<i>Original</i>	8,000		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	7,900		
			15,900	8,662

		2024		2023
		Estimate provision	Outturn	Outturn
		€000	€000	€000
A.10	Matching funding for PEACEPLUS			
	<i>Original</i>	464		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	<u>(464)</u>		
		—	—	2,675
A.11	Subscriptions to international organisations, etc.			
	<i>Original</i>	5,900		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	<u>(1,618)</u>		
		4,282	4,282	3,807
A.12	Commissions, committees and special inquiries		201	—
				70
A.13	Legal costs and other services		130	13
				1,494
A.14	Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland loan schemes			
	<i>Original</i>	1		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	<u>(1)</u>		
		—	—	11,891
A.15	Humanitarian relief scheme			
	<i>Original</i>	1		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	<u>7,202</u>		
		7,203	6,137	3,681
A.16	Microfinance Ireland			
	<i>Original</i>	1		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	<u>(1)</u>		
		—	—	—
A.17	National Design Centre			
	<i>Original</i>	1		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	<u>(1)</u>		
		—	—	—
A.18	Increased Cost of Business Scheme (ICOB)			
	<i>Original</i>	257,000		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	<u>(1,000)</u>		
		256,000	249,647	150,701
A.19	Power Up			
	<i>Original</i>	—		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	<u>170,000</u>		
		170,000	167,823	—
		<u>1,077,987</u>	<u>1,028,114</u>	<u>729,531</u>

Significant variations

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

A.4 Intertrade Ireland

Estimate provision €11.625 million; outturn €12.586 million

The overspend of €961,000 was due to particular expenditure in relation to a discrete enterprise project approved under the Shared Island Fund. Provision to fund this project was not provided for in the original estimate. An allocation of €757,000 to support the project was included in the Department's 2024 supplementary estimate as approved by the Dáil.

A.6 NSAI – grant for administration and general expenses

Estimate provision €11.064 million; outturn €11.87 million

The overspend of €806,000 was primarily due to a higher than expected requirement arising from pension costs and retirement gratuities.

A.7 Enterprise Ireland

Estimate provision €217.868 million; outturn €174.907 million

The underspend of €42.961 million was due to savings in capital expenditure and shortfalls in drawdowns requested by EI. The capital savings were due to slower than expected activity on a number of programmes, including EI's core grants, Smart Regional Enterprise programmes, capital investment and equity investment programmes. The shortfalls arose due to inaccurate budgeting forecasts.

A.9 Temporary partial credit guarantee scheme

Estimate provision €8 million; outturn €15.169 million

The overspend of €7.169 million was primarily due to the number of claims against the various credit guarantee schemes being more than anticipated. The funding allocated to the temporary partial credit guarantee schemes is to cover the cost of providing the guarantee in respect of loan schemes under the Credit Guarantee Act 2012. Schemes operating under this Act are the Credit Guarantee Scheme, the Covid 19 Credit Guarantee Scheme and the Ukraine Credit Guarantee Scheme.

The cost of providing guarantees under the Act mainly relate to the payment of claims to finance providers in respect of defaulted loans covered by the guarantee and the administration costs of the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) who administer the guarantee schemes on behalf of the Department as well as other costs relating to legal advice and legal services. Of the €15.169 million expended on the temporary partial credit guarantee scheme in 2024, €12.78 million was to financial providers in respect of defaulted loans, including legacy claims of €4.2 million from previous years and €2.389 million was in respect of administration costs in 2024 to the SBCI.

The reality inherent in guarantee schemes is that the number of claims on the guarantee can vary from year-to-year depending on loan default rates. As it happened, the number of claims against the guarantee schemes in 2024 was greater than anticipated.

A.10 Matching funding for PEACEPLUS

Estimates provision €464,000; outturn €nil

PEACEPLUS is the successor to the INTERREG VA programme. The aim of both programmes is to stimulate cooperation in regions both within and bordering the European Union and to share innovative solutions to regional development challenges. The provision of €464,000 was intended to meet Ireland's final obligations under the INTERREG VA programme. As it happened it was possible to fulfil all of Ireland's outstanding financial obligations to this programme in 2023. The successor PEACEPLUS programme will involve budgetary commitments of approximately €19.4 million over the next seven years and it is expected that expenditure under the PEACEPLUS programme will commence in 2025.

A.11 Subscriptions to international organisations

Estimates provision €5.9 million; outturn €4.282 million

The underspend of €1.618 million arose as a result of an expected pension provision related to Ireland's membership of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) not being required in 2024.

Additionally, there was an allocation of €100,000 to fund Ireland's participation in the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), which was not required due to a change in the funding of the GPAI.

A.12 Commissions, committees and special enquiries

Estimate provision €201,000; outturn € Nil

Provision in this subhead mainly supports the operation of Joint Economic Committees (JECs). The JECs are a form of bilateral Government structure to facilitate discussions on trade development between participating countries. No JECs were held in 2024 and as a result there was no expenditure.

A.13 Legal costs and other services

Estimate provision €130,000; outturn €13,000

It is prudent vote management to provide some level of contingency funding in respect of possible legal and other matters in the event that any unforeseen costs arise during the year. As it transpired the actual expenditure incurred was much less than expected resulting in an underspend of €117,000.

A.15 Humanitarian relief scheme

Estimate provision €1,000; outturn €6.137 million

The humanitarian relief scheme is an ad hoc scheme to provide assistance in defined circumstances to small companies and community and voluntary organisations adversely affected by emergency events across the country. The scheme provides a contribution towards the costs of returning business premises and community, voluntary and sporting bodies to their pre-emergency condition including the replacement of flooring, fixtures and fittings and damaged stock. The scheme is administered by the Irish Red Cross on behalf of the Department. The nominal allocation of €1,000 reflects the uncertainty of foretelling emergency events. The majority of the outturn for 2024 related to costs associated with storm Babet and storm Ciarán which occurred in October and November 2023.

A.19 Power Up

Estimate provision €nil; outturn €167.823 million

The 'cost of living' package announced as part of Budget 2025 included provision for further support to business impacted by increased costs through the new Power Up Grant Scheme. Funding of €170 million was provided through the supplementary estimate approved by the Dáil in October 2024 to assist business in the retail and hospitality sectors in managing the cost pressures impacting on their businesses.

The Power Up Scheme follows on from the Increased Cost of Business Scheme which was also designed by the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment and delivered by the local authorities. In total, €771,222 was paid to the Local Government Management Agency for administration and software support costs across both programmes.

Programme B Enterprise Innovation and Commercialisation

		2024		2023
		Estimate provision		Outturn
		€000	€000	€000
B.1	Administration – pay			
	<i>Original</i>	9,876		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	226		
			10,102	9,877
B.2	Administration – non pay			
	<i>Original</i>	2,878		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	69		
			2,947	3,117
B.3	Intellectual Property Office of Ireland			
	<i>Original</i>	3,714		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	23		
			3,737	3,628
B.4	Science and Technology Development Programme			
	<i>Original</i>	159,132		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	7,000		
			166,132	161,025
B.5	Subscriptions to international organisations, etc.			
	<i>Original</i>	26,686		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	31		
			26,717	26,716
B.6	Commissions, committees and special inquiries		1	—
B.7	Legal costs and other services			
	<i>Original</i>	130		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(3)		
			127	—
B.8	Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund			
	<i>Original</i>	42,500		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(10,000)		
			32,500	32,500
			242,263	236,863
				224,286

Significant variations

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

B.7 Legal costs and other services

Estimate provision €130,000; outturn € Nil

It is prudent vote management to provide some level of contingency funding in the event any unforeseen costs arise during the year. As it happened, no expenditure occurred in this area in 2024 resulting in an underspend of €130,000.

B.8 Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund

Estimate provision €42.5 million; outturn €32.5 million

The Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF) is one of the four headline funds under the National Development Plan (NDP).

The underspend of €10 million was primarily as a result of claims from successful applicants under the DTIF being submitted slower than expected. In addition, eleven projects were formally cancelled resulting in a lower-than-expected drawdown and a lower number of applications than had been expected.

As of 31 December 2024, a total of €376 million has been awarded to 105 projects under the DTIF. Of that amount, a total of €157.14 million has been paid to Enterprise Ireland, as administrators of the Fund, against claims submitted by project partners.

Programme C Regulation

		2024		2023
		Estimate provision		Outturn
		€000	€000	€000
		€000	€000	€000
C.1	Administration – pay			
	<i>Original</i>	16,096		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	369		
			16,465	16,357
C.2	Administration – non pay			14,526
	<i>Original</i>	4,385		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	101		
			4,486	4,310
C.3	Workplace Relations Programme			3,995
	<i>Original</i>	23,605		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(1,771)		
			21,834	21,330
C.4	Grants for trade union education and advisory services – cash limited		900	900
C.5	Health and Safety Authority – grant for administration and general expenses			
	<i>Original</i>	30,710		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	2,075		
			32,785	32,785
C.6	Trade union amalgamations			28,909
	<i>Original</i>	60		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(60)		
			—	—
C.7	Corporate Enforcement Authority			—
	<i>Original</i>	11,101		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(1,826)		
			9,275	7,088
C.8	Competition and Consumer Protection Commission			7,235
	<i>Original</i>	25,701		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(1,846)		
			23,855	24,604
C.9	Personal Injuries Assessment Board			20,425
	<i>Original</i>	499		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	258		
			757	748
C.10	Companies Registration Office and Registry of Friendly Societies – grant for administration and general expenses			311
	<i>Original</i>	8,550		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	(102)		
			8,448	8,412
				7,639

		2024		2023
		Estimate provision	Outturn	Outturn
		€000	€000	€000
C.11	Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority	<i>Original</i> 1,902		
		<i>Supplementary</i> (344)		
			1,558	1,466
C.12	Subscriptions to international organisations, etc.	<i>Original</i> 1,866		
		<i>Supplementary</i> 90		
			1,956	1,954
C.13	Commissions, committees and special inquiries	<i>Original</i> 317		
		<i>Supplementary</i> (6)		
			311	260
C.14	Legal costs and other services	<i>Original</i> 1,055		
		<i>Supplementary</i> (126)		
			929	687
C.15	Low Pay Commission	<i>Original</i> 516		
		<i>Supplementary</i> 2		
			518	302
C.16	Digital Services Coordinator	<i>Original</i> 6,009		
		<i>Supplementary</i> 5,300		
			11,309	11,309
			135,386	132,506
				2,700

Significant variations

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

C.3. Workplace Relations Programme

Estimate provision €23.605 million; outturn €21.33 million

The underspend of €2.275 million was due to a number of factors including

- an underspend in pay expenditure by the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) due to delays in filling a number of vacancies.
- an underspend in expenditure by the Labour Court due to a reduction in the number of divisions in the court from four to three.
- an underspend in the Employment Appeals Tribunal due to a reduction of legacy cases remaining to be heard.

C.5 Health and Safety Authority

Estimate provision €30.71 million; outturn €32.785 million

The excess of €2.075 million included additional pay funding of €1.32 million to meet the costs due under the new public sector pay agreement. Additional non-pay expenditure of €750,000 was required to meet the costs of an ICT development project as well as additional costs in relation to staff training and accommodation.

C.7 Corporate Enforcement Authority

Estimate provision €11.101 million; outturn €7.088 million

The underspend of €4.013 million was made up of pay savings of €1.82 million and non-pay savings of €2.19 million.

The pay savings arose mainly because of difficulties in recruiting staff, particularly specialist staff, in a tight labour market as well as some churning of staff in the course of the year. In terms of non-pay, the saving relates to the fact that legal costs in the year were somewhat lower than had been expected. Legal costs for the CEA are difficult to forecast as it has little or no control over the timing of when cases may be determined, the outcome of the cases in terms of costs orders, and the difficulty in anticipating the scale of costs that could be awarded. Non-pay savings also arose as a result of slower than expected progress in the development of the authorities dedicated CMS ICT project.

C.9 Personal Injuries Assessment Board

Estimate provision €499,000; outturn €748,000

The funding provided to the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (now known as the Personal Injuries Resolution Board) is to enable the Board to meet its pension obligations. The overspend of €249,000 was primarily due to the payment of a retirement lump sum that was not anticipated.

C.11 IAASA

Estimate provision €1.902 million; outturn €1.466 million

The underspend of €436,000 arose mainly from savings in consultancy, which was largely a contingency provision and an underspend in relation to scheduled facilities refurbishment which did not proceed in 2024.

C.14 Legal costs and other services

Estimate provision €1.055 million; outturn €687,000

It is prudent vote management to provide some level of contingency funding in respect of possible legal and other such matters in the event that any unforeseen costs arise during the year. As it happened, expenditure in this area was less than expected in 2024 resulting in an underspend of €368,000.

C.15 Low Pay Commission

Estimate provision €516,000; outturn €302,000

The underspend of €214,000 was primarily as a result of savings in pay of €187,000 and non-pay of €27,000.

In terms of pay, the saving arose as the pay cost of some of the Low Pay Commission (LPC) secretariat staff were not fully apportioned to the LPC subhead but rather were borne in the administration pay subhead. In terms of non-pay, the underspend arose as a result of expected expenditure on advertising being less than anticipated.

C.16 Digital Services Coordinator

Estimate provision €6.01 million; outturn €11.309 million

Coimisiún na Meán was established in March 2023. The Digital Services Coordinator (DSC), which operates under the auspices of Coimisiún na Meán, was appointed in August of that year. The functions of the DSC are somewhat unique and essentially derive from a new and unprecedented EU Regulation. The novel nature of the DSC's mandate presented challenges in estimating the funding that would be required to carry out its functions of supervising, enforcing and monitoring the implementation of the Digital Services Act, not least as 15 of the 25 largest platforms in Europe are established in Ireland.

The DSC was required to achieve full operational capability as a regulator by the spring of 2024 and as it transpired the original estimate of €6 million was not sufficient to enable it to carry out its onerous mandate. Additional funding of €5.3 million was secured for the DSC in the supplementary estimate approved by the Dáil in October. This additional funding was expended in areas such as the recruitment of qualified staff, commissioning research, building capacity and other related areas so as to ensure that the DSC was in a position to fulfil its obligations as required by national and EU legislation.

In terms of future funding, the Digital Services (Levy) Act 2024 enables Coimisiún na Meán to impose a levy to meet its operational costs, including those of the DSC. Accordingly, as and from January 2025, the DSC will not require further funding from the exchequer.

Note 4 Receipts

4.1 Appropriations-in-aid

		2024		2023
		Estimate provision	Realised	Realised
		€000	€000	€000
Employment rights and industrial relations				
1	Receipts from the Social Insurance Fund		269	204
2	Employment permit fees			
	<i>Original</i>	27,000		
	<i>Supplementary</i>	12,000		
		39,000	39,109	27,051
3	Employment agency licences	400	548	534
4	WRC fixed penalty notices	22	8	2
5	WRC court award costs	20	121	40
Insurance and company law				
6	Companies Registration Office	16,857	20,129	18,691
7	Beneficial ownership of companies and industrial and provident societies	200	417	378
Trade, competition and market rights				
8	Receipts under the Trade Marks Act 1963 and Patents Act 1964	10,100	10,479	10,220
9	Occasional trading licences	1	—	—
10	Competition and Consumer Protection Commission – consumer credit	501	502	546
11	Competition and Consumer Protection Commission – court costs	1	—	—
12	Competition and Consumer Protection Commission – fixed payment notices	6	19	12
13	Merger notifications	550	663	528
Other				
14	CEA legal	50	—	490
15	Miscellaneous	400	626	1,054
16	Enterprise policy ^a	6,405	4,166	4,534
17	Competition and Consumer Protection Commission ^b	1,565	1,539	1,389
18	PIAB pay and superannuation	1,168	1,247	1,245
19	HSA superannuation	650	572	646

		2024		2023
		Estimate provision	Realised	Realised
		€000	€000	€000
20	Temporary loan guarantee schemes	2,453	3,392	3,385
21	Expert Group on Future Skills Needs	557	495	498
22	Receipts from additional superannuation contributions on public service remuneration	5,900	7,502	7,184
Total		86,881	91,803	78,631

- Note ^a Enterprise policy shows amounts received from current and former enterprise agencies in relation to staff pension contributions and INTERREG-ERDF reimbursement. The agencies are InterTrade Ireland (which is a North/South body established under the Good Friday Agreement), IDA, EI, and former agency SFADCo.
- ^b Receipts under this line are in part-recoupment of the expenditure under subhead C.8.

Significant variations

Overall appropriations-in-aid were €16.922 million higher than originally provided. Explanations for variances (+/- 5% and €100,000) are set out below.

1. Receipts from the Social Insurance Fund

Estimate €75,000; realised €269,000

The costs incurred by the Department's employment rights bodies in processing employment rights claims, including claims under the Redundancy and Insolvency Payments Acts, are recoupable from the Social Insurance Fund (SIF). The additional monies recouped from the SIF was due to a significant increase in the volume of such claims processed in 2024.

2. Employment permit fees

Estimate €27 million; realised €39 million

The excess of €12 million in receipts was due to a significant increase in the number of permits issued reflecting the strong performance of the economy. There was a year-on-year increase of 21% in the number of applications received compared to 2023, resulting in the excess of receipts.

3. Employment agency licences

Estimate €400,000; realised €548,000

Employment agency licences must be renewed each year. The number of new licences can be difficult to forecast. The excess in licence fees was because the number of licences issued in 2024 was greater than had been expected.

5. WRC court awarded costs

Estimate €20,000; realised €121,000

Accurate estimates of court awards are difficult given such awards are ultimately matters for determination of the courts.

6. Companies Registration Office

Estimate €16.857 million; realised €20.129 million

The fees generated by the Companies Registration Office are dependent on the activity and the timeliness of returns made by companies having regard to their statutory obligations and can, therefore, be difficult to forecast accurately. The excess of €3.27 million in fees realised in 2024 was primarily due to the strength of the economy.

7. Beneficial ownership of companies and industrial and provident societies

Estimate €200,000; realised €417,000

The Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) (Amendment) Act 2021 obliges financial institutions and other prescribed bodies to inspect the Register of Beneficial Owners as part of their due diligence obligations. The excess in fees of €217,000 was in part due to greater than expected customer accounts top-ups for the Register of Beneficial Owners enquiries and court awarded costs.

13. Merger notifications

Estimate €550,000; realised €663,000

The excess of €113,000 was as a result of the number of merger notifications submitted to the CCPC being higher than anticipated.

15. Miscellaneous

Estimate €400,000; realised €626,000

The excess of €226,000 in miscellaneous receipts primarily relates to monies recouped from the Dormant Accounts Fund for expenditure in relation to the Balance for Better Business Initiative.

16. Enterprise policy

Estimate €6.405 million; realised €4.166 million

The shortfall in receipts of €2.239 million is due primarily to delays in the processing of expenditure claims relating to the INTERREG VA Programme. Claims in respect of the refund of INTERREG expenditure from the European Regional Development Fund are managed by the appointed Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). The SEUPB certifies all such claims. The certification process can be subject to delays which makes the accurate forecasting of receipts difficult.

20. Temporary loan guarantee schemes

Estimate €2.453 million; realised €3.392 million

Schemes operating under the Credit Guarantee Act 2012, which include the Covid-19 Credit Guarantee Scheme and the Ukraine Credit Guarantee Scheme, provide a State-backed guarantee on loans under the schemes.

The framework of the schemes requires that a premium is paid on loans provided with State backed guarantees. Premia received are based on the number of loans, the size of the company and the term of the loans. Premia received in 2024 amounted to €2.228 million. Additionally, the amount of recoveries from previously defaulted loans on which a claim on the guarantee was paid was €1.164 million.

22. Receipts from additional superannuation contributions on public service remuneration*Estimate €5.9 million; realised €7.502 million*

The excess of €1.602 million in additional superannuation contributions receipts arose directly as a result of the increase in staff numbers recruited in the course of 2024.

4.2 Extra receipts payable to the Exchequer

	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Balance at 1 January	—	—
Local Enterprise Offices – current ^a	68	18
Local Enterprise Offices – capital ^b	17	—
Local Enterprise Offices – refundable aid ^c	3,652	14,032
Enterprise Ireland- excess own resource income ^d	49,665	20,057
Enterprise Ireland- return of unused Restart grant	—	19
TBESS return of monies ^e	950	—
Miscellaneous	182	—
Business Advisory Hub ^f	342	—
Transferred to the Exchequer	(54,876)	(34,126)
Balance at 31 December	—	—

- Note ^a Local Enterprise Offices – current: this is related to unused funds in subhead A.8 for operational expenditure.
- ^b Local Enterprise Offices – capital: this is related to unused funds in subhead A.8 for particular capital programmes.
- ^c Local Enterprise Offices – refundable aid: this is related to the return of refundable aid balances from 31 Local Enterprise Offices.
- ^d Enterprise Ireland – excess own resource income: this is related to own resource income generated by Enterprise Ireland in excess of the amount sanctioned by DPENDR for their own use in the year.
- ^e Temporary Business Energy Support Scheme – funding returned to the Department from the Office of the Revenue Commissioners.
- ^f Business Advisory Hub suspense account – unspent money returned to the Exchequer.

Note 5 Staffing and Remuneration

5.1 Employee numbers

Full time equivalents	2024	2023
Number of staff at year end		
Department and Offices:		
Department ^a	636	599
Intellectual Property Office of Ireland	42	41
Workplace Relations Commission	193	196
Companies Registration Office	115	109
Labour Court	30	30
	1,016	975
Agencies ^b	2,024	1,962
	3,040	2,937

Note ^a Includes the staff of the Secretariat of the Low Pay Commission.

^b Includes employees of the Personal Injuries Resolution Board, a non-commercial State agency that, aside from a pension provision, is not in direct receipt of Exchequer funding.

5.2 Pay – Department, offices and agencies

	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Pay	224,377	203,006
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	1,187	1,265
Other allowances	3,143	3,225
Overtime	688	615
Employer's PRSI	18,188	16,092
Total pay	247,583	224,203

The remuneration arrangements refer to the pay element of subheads A.1, A.4, A.5, A.6, A.7, B.1, B.3, B.4, C.1, C.3, C.5, C.7, C.8, C.10 and C.15.

5.3 Department

	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Pay ^{a, b}	59,078	54,606
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	809	875
Other allowances	1,027	1,194
Overtime	455	357
Employer's PRSI	5,051	4,501
Total pay ^c	66,420	61,533

- Note ^a Includes pension payments to 38 former members of the Labour Court/Labour Relations Commission and the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC).
- ^b Excludes fees paid to office holders who are not employees of the Department e.g. adjudicators.
- ^c Total pay includes administration pay (A.1, B.1 and C.1) and the pay elements of the Offices of the Department (B.3, C.3, C.10 and C.15). The amount included for pay in note 1 refers to administrative subheads only.

5.4 Allowances and overtime payments – Department staff

	Number of recipients	Recipients of €10,000 or more	Highest individual payment	
			2024	2023
			€	€
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	103	15	24,551	48,485
Other allowances	39	14	140,662	226,246
Overtime	127	16	22,249	21,553
Extra remuneration in more than one category	17	11	29,973	28,984

5.5 Agencies

The agencies included here are the Corporate Enforcement Authority, Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, Enterprise Ireland, Health and Safety Authority, Industrial Development Agency, National Standards Authority of Ireland, InterTrade Ireland (who are a North/South body established under the Good Friday Agreement) and the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority.

The pay expenditure of the agencies is not a direct financial transaction of the Department and as such the Department does not hold detailed pay and allowance information in respect of the agencies concerned. Detailed information in relation to employee numbers and pay in respect of the Department's agencies is available from the relevant annual financial statements/annual reports or directly from the agencies concerned.

	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Pay	165,300	148,400
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	378	390
Other allowances	2,116	2,031
Overtime	233	258
Employer's PRSI	13,136	11,591
Total pay	181,163	162,670

5.6 Allowance and overtime payments – agency staff

	Number of recipients	Recipients of €10,000 or more	Highest individual payment	
			2024	2023
			€	€
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	81	7	58,450	55,904
Other allowances	302	32	96,888	96,918
Overtime	84	5	36,163	32,805
Extra remuneration in more than one category	21	5	39,064	33,844

5.7 Other remuneration arrangements

One retired civil servant in receipt of a civil service pension were re-engaged on a fee basis at a total cost of €900. The payments made were consistent with the principle of the Public Service (Single Scheme and other provisions) Act 2012.

This account includes expenditure of €234,262 in respect of four officers who were serving outside the Department for all or part of 2024 and whose salaries were paid by the Department.

5.8 Remuneration and benefits of Accounting Officer

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

	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Basic pay		
Former Accounting Officer – retired 31 May 2023	—	117
Accounting Officer – appointed 1 June 2023	250	138
	250	255

The value of retirement benefits earned in the period is not included above. The Accounting Officer is a member of the contributory pension scheme for established civil servants and his entitlements in that regard do not extend beyond the standard terms of that scheme.

5.9 Department staffing by pay band

The number of Department 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 ^a	
From	To	2024	2023
20,000	59,999	744	623
60,000	69,999	148	114
70,000	79,999	81	69
80,000	89,999	87	62
90,000	99,999	47	41
100,000	109,999	41	12
110,000	119,999	21	20
120,000	129,999	15	10
130,000	139,999	2	1
140,000	149,999	—	1
150,000	159,999	—	2
160,000	169,999	4	6
170,000	179,999	5	3
180,000	189,999	1	—
190,000	199,999	1	—
200,000	209,999	—	—
210,000	219,999	—	1
220,000	229,999	—	—
230,000	239,999	—	—
240,000	249,999	—	—
250,000	259,999	1	—

Note ^a Includes staff of the Offices of the Department.

5.10 Payroll overpayments

at 31 December	Number of recipients	2024	2023
		€	€
Overpayments	137	221,894	167,171
Recovery plans in place	23	49,380	75,751

5.11 Severance/redundancy

During 2024, three staff members received severance and redundancy payments due to change of a Minister to the Department. These payments totalled €66,748.

Note 6 Miscellaneous

6.1 EU funding

The Department, and the following bodies under the aegis of the Department received EU aid directly as shown below.

Subhead	2024	2023
	€000	€000
A.4 InterTrade Ireland	60	2,233
A.6 NSAI	270	—
A.7 Enterprise Ireland	884	111 ^a
A.10 Matching funding for INTERREG	—	1,195
B.3 Intellectual Property Office of Ireland	231	330
B.4 Science and Technology Development Programme - Enterprise Ireland	8,720	12,242 ^a
C.5 Health and Safety Authority	—	11
C.8 CCPC	242	—
	10,407	16,122

Note ^a Figures restated for 2023

6.2 Compensation and legal costs

Payments/costs paid by the Department in the year

	Claims by		Total 2024	Total 2023
	Employees	Members of the public		
Number of cases	—	9	9	6
	€000	€000	€000	€000
Department's own legal costs	—	283	283 ^a	1,020
Payments by/on behalf of Department				
Compensation	—	13	13	—
Legal costs	—	298	298 ^b	341
Other costs	—	—	—	—
2024 Total ^b	—	594	594^c	—
2023 Total	—	1,361	1,361	

Note ^a Two cases in total both of which exceed € 50,000

^b Six cases in total which includes two single cases exceeding €50,000

^c There are no payments in relation to staff personal injuries or for loss/damage included in total.

6.3 Commissions, committees and special inquiries

	Year of establishment	2024	2023
		€000	€000
Permanent/open-ended			
Balance for Better Business	2021	200	181
		200	223

6.4 Fraud and suspected fraud

The 2023 Appropriation Account referred to a small number of loans issued by lenders who were participants in DETE loan schemes managed on the Department's behalf by the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) and in respect of which concerns had been raised in relation to possible fraud. The 2023 account gave details of the eleven loans involved. These loans are now under investigation by An Garda Síochána. This includes eight loans under the Covid Credit Guarantee Scheme totalling €1 million (CCGS) and three loans under the Brexit Loan Scheme/Covid Working Capital Scheme totalling €0.25 million (BLS/CWCS). Legal advice received by the Department in 2024 advised that the eight claims under the CCGS should be paid, as the lender had not breached any of the terms of their bi-lateral guarantee agreement between the Department and the lender. Accordingly, these claims totalling €670,263 were paid in October 2024.

The Department had no role in the administration of these schemes which are managed on its behalf by the SBCI. The SBCI engages with the participating on-lenders in relation to the manner in how loans are administered under both schemes. In terms of the eleven expected fraudulent loans, the SBCI has confirmed that the cases were reported to the relevant authorities and investigations into the cases are ongoing.

6.5 Employment and training levy

The Employment and Training Levy – set at 1% of an individual's total income with some exceptions – was abolished with effect from 6 April 1999. The Department continues to receive amounts relating to historical payments of the levy. The Employment and Training Levy is collected by the Office of the Revenue Commissioners and paid over to the Department monthly. The moneys are in turn paid over to the Exchequer.

Statement of payments made in accordance with Section 25(1) of the Labour Services Act 1987.

	2024	2023
	€000	€000
Received from Revenue Commissioners	6	13
Paid into the Exchequer	6	13