

## **Chapter 15 Garda Síochána**

---

### **Garda Civilianisation**



## Garda Civilianisation

15.1 Civilian staff were first introduced into An Garda Síochána in the 1970s. Between 1970 and 1998, 15 individual reports into different areas of Garda activity and reform recommended additional civilianisation.

The civilianisation programme in An Garda Síochána can take a number of forms

- The replacement of sworn members currently performing exclusively clerical, administrative or technical duties, with civilian staff
- The use of civilian support, which allows sworn members who would otherwise have to perform some administrative duties, to focus exclusively on front-line policing duties
- The recruitment of civilians to perform new or expanded administrative, managerial and professional roles in An Garda Síochána.

15.2 The ratio of civilians to police officers in An Garda Síochána is approximately 1:7 compared with international norms of 1:3 in the UK and 1:4 in Australia, Sweden and The Netherlands (OECD, 2008).

15.3 While the number of civilian staff in An Garda Síochána is low by international standards, an exact comparison is not possible since in Ireland the organisation has outsourced a number of functions to external services providers which would be part of the support services of other police forces

- The Financial Shared Services Centre for payroll and the payment for goods and services for the entire organisation located in Killarney
- The Public Appointments Service for recruitment
- The Chief State Solicitors Office for legal advice and representation
- The Office of Public Works for housing and completion of works
- Consultants for specialist work in information technology, telecommunications, etc.
- Civilians on interview boards, delivering the Garda Executive Leadership programme, correcting promotion examination papers, etc.

However, the recent OECD Report suggests that there is need to address this issue in an evidence-based way.

### ***OECD Report 2008***

In its recent report, Ireland: Towards an Integrated Public Service, the OECD noted that Ireland has a relatively low percentage of civilian staff in its police force relative to other OECD countries and that increased civilianisation is generally supported in principle by stakeholders. According to the OECD report the current approach has met with resistance within An Garda Síochána, in part because the current policy of civilianisation has not been based on a clear and shared assessment of needs linking the scale of civilianisation needed with the problem at hand. The report says that An Garda Síochána should develop the human resource management capacity to assess its functional resource requirements and skills needs, in light of its workload and an analysis of future challenges. It also recommended that it should develop capacity for workforce planning and for linking inputs to the delivery of outputs and the achievement of outcomes.

15.4 A report in 2001<sup>45</sup> recommended the civilianisation of 496 existing posts in a twenty-year programme. The report concluded that there was a significant additional cost in employing a Garda to do work that did not require Garda skills and that where this work could be done by civilians it would free up Gardaí to do police work.

15.5 Figure 51 shows the savings (at 2008 rates of pay) that would be achieved by replacing Garda grades with their civilian equivalents.

**Figure 51 Cost Saving arising from Employing Civilian Staff (September 2008 Rates)**

Garda Rank	Civilian Grade	Average annual saving	Average annual saving (incl. Imputed Pension Contribution <sup>a</sup> )
		€	€
Garda	Clerical Officer	7,519	13,516
Sergeant	Executive Officer	13,356	22,335
Inspector	Higher Executive Officer	7,217	15,719
Superintendent	Assistant Principal	10,512	22,595
Chief Superintendent	Principal Officer	7,356	20,956

Note:

- a As per the last Benchmarking Report dated 21 December 2007, the Imputed Pension Contributions for sworn members of An Garda Síochána and civil servants are 32.9% and 21.3% respectively.

15.6 The most significant achievement of the 2001 programme was the civilianisation of 115 District Finance Officer posts. However, the programme was soon overtaken by events, including the enactment of the Garda Síochána Act, 2005. At the same time there was significant increased pressure to enhance the visibility of policing on the streets as a result of rising crime, including gangland crime. A new civilianisation programme commenced with the approval by Government for the re-assignment to An Garda Síochána of 300 posts which were surplus to requirements in other Government Departments.

## Audit Focus

The audit sought to establish

- The progress in increasing civilianisation on foot of Government Decisions
- The extent of redeployment of Gardaí to policing duties on foot of the increases in civilian numbers.

## Civilian Support in Policing

15.7 The principal focus of civilianisation since 2005 has been on engaging civilians to carry out new or expanded roles within the service. Many of the civilian staff recruited in recent years have been deployed to carry out rising volumes of administrative work arising from the establishment or expansion of various specialised units and offices. The support provided by these staff has reduced the time which Gardaí would otherwise have had to spend on non-core duties. Consequently the number of civilian staff (WTEs) working in An Garda Síochána has increased

<sup>45</sup> SMI Report to Steering Group on Civilianisation 28 February 2001.

from 1,166 to 2,135 over the period 31 December 2005 to 31 May 2009. These civilian staff provide a wide range of services ranging from clerical duties in Garda stations and offices, to providing support services in administrative, professional, technical and industrial areas, including

- Human Resources
- Training and Development
- IT and Telecommunications
- Finance and Procurement
- Internal Audit
- Communications
- Research and Analysis
- Accommodation and Fleet Management
- Scene-of-crime Support
- Occupational Health Service
- District Finance Officers.

15.8 In addition, the civilianisation programme has enabled the establishment or expansion of a number of operational support functions which are either wholly or largely staffed by civilian staff including

- the Fixed Charge Processing Office (FCPO) in Thurles
- the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) also in Thurles and
- the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC) in Castlebar.

The functions, contributions and outputs of these units are outlined at annexes A to C of this Chapter.

15.9 Civilian support is also used in

- a Garda Síochána Analysis Service, which is staffed by 26 analysts led by three senior managers. Its function is to enhance the strategic crime and policing analysis capacity of An Garda Síochána.
- the National Digital Radio Service which is staffed by 25 telecommunications technicians
- the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB).

## Redeployment of Gardaí

15.10 A number of Government decisions from 2005 onwards envisaged replacing Gardaí with civilian staff. The key decisions<sup>46</sup> bearing on civilianisation since 2005 are outlined in Figure 52.

<sup>46</sup> On 31 July 2006, the Government authorised an increase in the strength of the civilian support staff up to 300 to be achieved to the maximum possible extent through redeployment from Government Departments, including surplus staff arising from the decentralisation programme.

**Figure 52 Key Decisions bearing on Civilianisation since 2005**

<b>Decision</b>	<b>Civilian Recruitment</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<b>Decision of 22 February 2005</b>		
Approved the re-assignment of up to 300 surplus posts from Government Departments to An Garda Síochána to assist with the civilianisation programme.	To date, 215 posts have been specifically identified under this decision. 209 of these posts – comprising 148 posts in GISC in Castlebar; 36 in the Civilian HR Directorate in Navan and 25 Telecommunications Technician posts had been filled by 31 May 2009.	While the stated objective was to free up desk-bound Gardaí for operational duties — no target was specified for Gardaí to be replaced.
<b>Decision of 19 December 2006</b>		
Approved the creation of 300 new clerical officer posts to be filled by open competition. At least the same number of Gardaí would be immediately re-assigned to outdoor operational duties. Approved the creation of seven senior civilian management posts.	300 staff recruited by end 2007 5 posts filled.	74 Gardaí released to operational duties.
<b>Decision of 2 May 2007</b>		
Approved a further increase of civilian staff by 300 to support the redeployment of uniformed Gardaí to outdoor operational duties, outside the greater Dublin area.	307 posts filled.	91 Gardaí released to operational duties.

**Numbers of Gardaí Released to Front-Line Duties 2005 - May 2009**

15.11 As of 31 May 2009, the number of Garda personnel who had been released from administrative duties to operational duties as a result of the civilianisation programme was 144.

**Reports on progress of Civilianisation in the Garda Síochána**

15.12 A Civilian Verification Group was established to monitor progress in relation to the recruitment of these staff and the release of Gardaí to operational duties. It operates under the chairmanship of the Garda Inspectorate. While it reported on the number of civilians recruited in its first report in April 2008, it was apparent that the actual progress in replacement of Gardaí with civilians was of a much lower order than planned.

15.13 A further report of the group is being compiled at present for presentation to the Minister.

**Accounting Officer Observations**

15.14 The Accounting Officer stressed that the civilianisation programme in An Garda Síochána did not imply the direct replacement of Gardaí with civilian staff. Its success and future direction could not be determined solely by reference to the direct civilianisation of existing Garda posts.

However, he stated his commitment to reduce the current ratio of civilians to Gardaí which currently stands at 1:7. The long-term aim is to reduce the ratio to 1:4 or even 1:3 in line with similar ratios in neighbouring jurisdictions.

15.15 He noted that 240 vacant civilian posts existed. There was a risk that unsustainable resource pressures would build if the volume of staff departures increased significantly, as was likely if, for example, the Incentivised Early Retirement and Career Break Schemes were extended and made more attractive. Further civilian vacancies would, if not filled, lead to either an unsustainable diminution in essential Garda Síochána services or the forced substitution of sworn members – impacting on front-line service delivery and undermining the progress made in civilianisation in recent years.

15.16 In particular, in the case of the GISC, if the service was not maintained at a high standard, whether through lack of call-taking resources or the absence of duty managers to cover each shift, usage of the service would drop off and visibility on front line policing would be lost.

15.17 With regard to international comparison, he stated that An Garda Síochána could not be compared to UK Police Services as An Garda Síochána was a national police force that also had responsibility for national security.

15.18 With regard to reducing the number of Gardaí in receipt of Designated Post or Ex-Gratia Allowances, he stated that the 'Designated Post' allowance – being paid to 242 officers at 30 June 2009 – was for posts that have been agreed between Garda Management and the Staff Associations and could only be suppressed by natural wastage, retirements etc. The incumbents carried out a pivotal role in District and Divisional branches. The total number of Gardaí in receipt of 'Ex-Gratia' allowances at 30 June 2009 was 108. These posts were filled by Gardaí in the absence of civilian staff to do the work.

15.19 In regard to the operational support units, the Accounting Officer noted that

- an estimated 265 Gardaí have been freed up as a result of the establishment of the GISC in Castlebar. Had the GISC not been established, policing visibility would have been reduced and there would have been a deficit in the provision of a policing service to the public.
- GCVU which was decentralised to Thurles in November 2005 necessitated the prioritisation of extra resources to this critical unit. Similar to the GISC, had civilian staff not been made available to the GCVU, frontline Gardaí would have had to be redeployed from operational duties to administration duties to meet this extra commitment.

## Conclusions

The ratio of civilians to Gardaí is low by international standards.

The recommendations of the OECD report need to be addressed and in particular

- there is need to determine the relative effect of outsourcing of certain administrative and support functions in Ireland in order to allow for comparison with other police forces
- the scope for replacement of Gardaí with clerical or administrative staff should be determined using modern analysis techniques. 900 civilian posts were approved by Government in three decisions since 2005. The expressed intention was to release Gardaí from administrative duties although specific targets were not set in all cases.

The number of Garda personnel released from administrative duties as a result of the civilianisation process since December 2005 is 144. This is considerably less than the number envisaged even discounting cases where a specific target was not set. At the same time, the number of Gardaí in designated posts or in receipt of ex gratia allowances while carrying out administrative duties has fallen by 16 from 366 to 350 in the period to end June 2009. There needs to be a greater emphasis on the establishment of targets for police replacement with civilians in order to allow for effective verification of the extent of replacement.

## Annex A The Fixed Charge Processing Office

The Fixed Charge Processing Office (FCPO) issues fixed charge notices following the capture of information by notepad, electronic notepad and speed cameras. Over 390 traffic offences are subject to fixed charge notices. Since 2008 the system can also be used to process certain public order offences. The FCPO is located in Thurles, Co Tipperary and is staffed by 67 civilian personnel and one Garda Inspector.

The functions of the FCPO include

- transfer of information from pre-formatted Garda notepads to the Fixed Charge Penalty System (FCPS)
- processing a system of ‘nominations’ whereby registered owners not driving their vehicles at the time of an alleged offence can nominate the actual driver
- providing a telephone call centre and correspondence section to handle queries from recipients of fixed charge notices
- compilation and dissemination of court packs for prosecuting Gardaí and defendants who did not pay fixed charge notices within the allowed time period
- other back office functions.

The Accounting Officer has stated that the FCPO contributes to policing work by

- providing a support function to the Gardaí which leads to a reduction in Garda time spent on court appearances and on administration work
- enhancing the enforcement capability of the traffic corps
- providing an improved customer service with prompt responses to queries
- processing all queries, complaints and appeals to finality, where appropriate, obviating the need to refer back to the Gardaí for further investigation
- facilitating the expansion of the FCPS to include additional fixed charge offences and increased enforcement levels
- providing capacity to manage the impact of any developments such as the provision of fixed cameras without deploying additional resources
- acting as liaison between An Garda Síochána and outside agents such as An Post.

### Key Outputs

Inbound correspondence is analysed since January 2008. An indication of the Office’s output in terms of notepads inputted, correspondence received and phone calls answered is set out in Figure 53.

**Figure 53 FCPO Output**

<b>Year/Period Ended</b>	<b>Notepads Inputted</b>	<b>Correspondence Received</b>	<b>Telephone Calls Answered (Est.)</b>
31 December 2007	108,952	91,138	40,000
31 December 2008	145,601	67,008	245,000
21 June 2009	73,056	34,195	110,000

## **Annex B The Garda Central Vetting Unit**

The Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) extends Garda vetting to all organisations that employ personnel in a full-time, part-time, student placement or voluntary basis who may have unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults. The GCVU is located in Thurles, Co Tipperary and is staffed by 72 civilian personnel, one Garda Superintendent and five Garda Sergeants.

The functions of the GCVU include providing a telephone call centre and correspondence section to handle queries from organisations seeking vetting and criminal disclosures for their employees, which has increased from 130 in 2006 to approximately 17,000 organisations in 2009 and associated back office functions.

The GCVU contributes to policing work through

- processing queries, complaints and appeals to finality, where appropriate in relation to Garda vetting, criminal records and data protection issues
- providing liaison between agencies such as the Courts Service, the prison service, the probation service, PSNI and other police agencies and foreign criminal records authorities in relation to criminal records and related matters
- providing a dedicated central point in An Garda Síochána which means that this work and associated queries do not have to be handled by operational Gardaí
- providing support to Garda management
- reducing Garda time spent on administration
- providing an improved customer service with prompt responses to correspondence and queries
- providing capacity to manage the impact of future developments such as the forthcoming European criminal records information system and international aspects of vetting.

### **Key Outputs**

The programme handles vetting queries from up to 17,000 organisations.

## **Annex C The Garda Information Services Centre**

The Garda Information Services Centre (GISC) was initially set up on a pilot basis in 2005 to record crime and other incidents on the PULSE Garda computer system. The recording system operates through Gardaí ringing the GISC with details of incidents and those details being inputted to PULSE by trained civilian operators in an interactive process. The GISC is located in Castlebar, Co. Mayo and is staffed by 197 civilian personnel, one Garda Inspector and three Garda Sergeants.

The functions of the GISC include

- inputting details of incidents on the PULSE system
- processing driving licence and insurance production cases
- taking traffic watch calls from members of the public and contacting Gardaí in cases where it is deemed that immediate Garda action is necessary
- monitoring the transfer of information under the Criminal Justice Interoperability Pilot Project (CJIPP)
- investigating errors and mismatches preventing the transfer of data, acting as a single point of contact with the Courts Service and providing a business support desk for Gardaí who encounter problems with summons or other court related work.

The GISC contributes to policing work through

- increasing Garda visibility and reducing Garda administrative workload
- improving the quality of information on the PULSE system
- reviewing all manually created incident reports, whether input by GISC or Gardaí themselves
- relieving Gardaí of the necessity to take and record all traffic watch calls
- relieving Gardaí of the task of sorting out problems that arise with summonses and other court-related work.

### **Key Outputs**

The quality of information on PULSE has improved through the inputting of information by a small number of trained operators who handle a large volume of calls on a daily basis. The GISC can be contacted by mobile phone and reports of incidents can be inputted on PULSE from the scenes of incidents. Every incident record is reviewed by trained supervisors in the GISC.

The throughput of cases in terms of calls handled per week is estimated as follows

- 13,000 – 14,000 incident reports
- 150 – 200 traffic watch
- 450 – 550 CJIPP.

