

Garda Diversion Projects announced for 2016

In May 2015, additional funding and resources were allocated to Youth Diversion Projects by the Department of Justice and Equality. This brought the total number of projects running up to 102. It has now been announced that a further seven Garda Youth Diversion Projects will get up and running in 2016.

Garda Youth Diversion Projects (GYDPs) are community-based schemes that work with children. These projects aim to help children and young people move away from behaving in a way that could land them in trouble with the law. They also aim to foster positive relations between members of the community and members of the Gardaí. Programmes such as this will be established in areas where youth crime is an issue. This year will also see the introduction of a new mentoring service between juveniles and the Gardaí.

Sean Kenny TD, member of the Oireachtas Justice Committee, was pleased with the announcement, particularly those in the Dublin Bay North area. He said, "It is vital that vulnerable young people in these areas are diverted away from a life of crime and towards a positive life".

The Schemes, as with those developed in 2015, will be funded with money out of the Dormant Accounts Fund, a fund made up of money left unclaimed for a large period of time. Further, as Mr Kenny asserts, "I am also pleased that the projects will also be included in the European Social Fund (ESF) Programme for Employability Inclusion and will therefore have additional funding from the European Union."

INMO weighs new measures against planned action

The Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO)'s executive will meet today to consider the new proposals that aim to avoid Thursday's planned strike. The strike, which is due to take place in emergency departments across seven hospitals, was put off late last year when certain provisions were proposed by the HSE. These provisions were rejected in a recent ballot by nurses.

New proposals that surfaced during talks at the Workplace Relations Commission this weekend aim to adequately tackle the issues of overcrowding and staffing levels. They concern, in the main, ways of implementing the previously-proposed measures in a real way, on the ground. New proposals involve an early warning system for overcrowding and operating escalation plans for dealing with it, and "mandatory weekly regular high-level meetings at hospital or group level between the chief executive, chief operations officer, clinical director and director of nursing and nurses' representatives to monitor implementation of the new arrangements".

The executive council will decide today if the new developments warrant another cancellation of the strike. The agreement would also entail another progress update in a month's time.

Seventh of eight Action Plan for Jobs announced

At 11am today, Monday 11 January, the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Richard Bruton TD, and the Minister for Skills, Research and Innovation, Damien English TD, launched the Mid-East Region Action Plan for Jobs. This is the seventh of eight regional Action Plans for Jobs.

The Mid-East region will include Meath, Kildare and Wicklow. It will see the creation of 25,000 new jobs for the region, to the value of €250m. If it is successful, that will amount to employment growth of 10-15% between 2015 and 2017.

While some regrowth has been seen in the area (6.7% in the past two years), it is still far below the level of jobs lost in the area during the crash (13%). If the plan is successful, employment rates will surpass what they had been before pre-Crash.

Actions involved in the plan include:

- 25% increase in number of start-ups, and improve survival rate by 25%;
- Increase foreign Investment;
- New tourism initiatives;
- Support the equine industry in the region; and
- Exploring and developing the argi-food sector in the region.

House prices will rise in 2016

It is expected that house prices could see a 5% increase this year. This is according to a survey done by property website myhome.ie and Davy.

They attribute this to rising incomes and the on-going economic recovery.

Last year, house prices grew by 7.4%, despite a dip of 0.8% in Q4 2015. The slow-down in the rise of prices, according to the report, can be largely attributed to the Central Bank's revised mortgage lending rules.

Author of the report and Davy's chief economist, Conall MacCoille, expects the disparity between prices in Dublin and prices elsewhere will continue to be the case. "The median asking price for a three-bed semi in Dublin is €275,000, which is six times the average income of €45,600. In contrast, price-to-income multiples in many other areas are still in the range of three to four."

Mr MacCoille also believes that GDP growth forecasts will be revised up from 4% to 5% for 2016. He said, "Income growth is now accelerating, driven by public- and private-sector wage increases, tax cuts and the introduction of a higher minimum wage." In terms of housing, "The lack of supply in many urban areas also remains acute. So a single-digit gain in Irish house prices, close to 5 per cent, seems likely through 2016."

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This week in Dáil Éireann

Wednesday 13 January

2.30 p.m.
Questions (Minister for Social Protection)

3.45 p.m.
Topical Issues

4.33 p.m.
Leaders Questions

4.54 p.m.
Order of Business

5.20 p.m.
Statements on Flooding (to conclude at 11pm if not previously concluded)

11.00 p.m.
Dáil Adjourns

Thursday 14 January

9.30 a.m.
Questions (Minister for Finance)

10.45 a.m.
Private Members Business - (Sinn Féin)

12 noon
Leaders Questions

12.21 p.m.
Order of Business

12.41 p.m.
Private Members Business - Sinn Féin (Resumed)

2.20 p.m.
Statements on Convention on the Constitution Reports (to conclude at 4.42pm if not previously concluded)

4.42 p.m.
Topical Issues

5.30 p.m.
Dáil Adjourns

This week in Seanad Éireann

Wednesday 13 January

2.30 p.m.
Commencement Matters

3.30 p.m.
Order of Business

4.45 p.m.
Statements on Innovation 2020
(Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation)

6.15 p.m.
Private Members Business (Fianna Fáil Senators)

Seanad Adjourns

Thursday 14 January

10.30 a.m.
Commencement Matters

11.30 a.m.
Order of Business

12.45 p.m.
Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill 2015 – Committee Stage (Resumed)
(Department of Justice and Equality)

Seanad Adjourns

This week's Committee Meetings

Tuesday 12 January

Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Joint)
CR2, LH 2000 1.30 p.m.
AGENDA: Private Meeting

Wednesday 13 January

Education and Social Protection (Joint)
CR3, LH 2000 1 p.m. (T)
AGENDA: The Humanitarian Assistance Scheme in relation to household flooding [Officials from the Department of Social Protection]

Public Service Oversight and Petitions (Joint)
CR3, LH 2000
(a) 4 p.m. (P)
(b) 4.30 p.m. (T)
AGENDA:
(a) Private; and
(b) Public Petitions received

Thursday 14 January

Health and Children (Joint)
CR2, LH 2000 9.30 a.m.
AGENDA: Private Meeting

Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Joint)
CR1, LH 2000 10 a.m.
AGENDA: Private Meeting

Education and Skills (Select sub)
CR3, LH 2000 10 a.m. (T)
AGENDA: Technological Universities Bill 2015 [Minister for Education and Skills]