



28 February 2012 - Written Answers

102. Deputy Seamus Kirk asked the **Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform** if he is satisfied that the format of the forthcoming report on the implementation of the Croke Park agreement will address perceived shortcomings in the previous report such as more comprehensive details on the savings being achieved will be provided; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [11186/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):   The Implementation Body published a very comprehensive progress report last June, on foot of its annual review of the Agreement, which outlined the sustainable pay savings that were achieved under the framework of the Agreement in its first year. The Report also gave a very thorough account of the progress that had been achieved on implementing the change and reform agendas in each sector of the public service. The Body also provided an assessment of the progress to date and outlined areas for priority action in the next reporting period.

The second annual review of the Agreement will be undertaken by the Body after Easter and, as before, will assess the level of savings achieved under the framework of the Agreement in its second year (1st April 2011 to 31st March 2012). As before, it will also scrutinise the level of progress being made on implementing the reform programmes in each sector. I look forward to the outcome of that review which I expect will be published shortly thereafter.

290. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the **Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform** his views that there should be more co-operation in relation to roster flexibility in the context of the Croke Park agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7781/12]

291. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the **Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform** his views and if he will provide an update on the Croke Park agreement implementation. [7787/12]

292. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the **Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform** if he has met recently with the social partners in relation to the Croke Park agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [7783/12]

295. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the **Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform** his views on the future of the Croke Park agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [5153/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 290 to 292, inclusive, and 295 together.

The Implementation Body for the Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 (or 'Croke Park Agreement) published its first Annual Progress Report in June 2011. The Report

examined the savings and reform delivered in the first year of the Agreement and found that sustainable pay bill savings in the order of €289m had been achieved during the review period. It also reported that “solid and measurable” progress was being made on implementing the Action Plans for reform in each sector, while pointing to certain issues that needed to be accelerated over the next reporting period.

An interim report published by the Body in November provided evidence of further progress on the delivery of change and reform across the public service under the Agreement over the period April to September 2011. The second annual review of the Agreement is scheduled to take place after Easter and will assess the savings achieved in the second year of the Agreement. As before, it will also scrutinise the level of progress being made on implementing the reform programmes in each sector. I look forward to the outcome of that review which I expect will be published shortly thereafter.

The Government has stated that it wishes to honour the commitments given under the Agreement, namely that there would be no further reductions in the pay rates of serving public servants or compulsory redundancies (save where existing exit provisions apply). However, we have also made clear that it will only be possible to do so provided there is full delivery of the necessary flexibilities and reforms that are required under the Agreement. There are no proposals to invoke Paragraph 1.28 of the Agreement (“The implementation of this Agreement is subject to no currently unforeseen budgetary deterioration”).

In regard to rostering reform, it is for public service management in the sectors concerned to pursue such reform in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement, and the agreements in each sector, in a manner which ensures the full potential of the Croke Park Agreement is realised. I am not aware of instances where staff are refusing to co-operate with roster reform. There are some examples of progress in this area including the introduction of an extended working day for medical laboratory staff last year; extended working arrangements for radiography staff from February 2012 and the scheduled introduction of a new roster model for An Garda Síochána from April 2012.

Finally, in regard to engagement with the social partners, I addressed a meeting of the IBEC National Council on 25th January last and it was a useful opportunity to listen to the views of IBEC members on a range of issues relating to the public service reform agenda and the Croke Park Agreement. In addition, my officials are in regular contact with representatives from the Public Services Committee of ICTU, IBEC and other stakeholders on issues relating to the Department’s work.