



Opening Statement

by

Ms Brigid Mc Manus

**Secretary General of the Department of
Education and Skills**

to the

Committee of Public Accounts

Concerning

**the 2010 Appropriation Accounts of Vote 26
– Education and Skills**

Thursday 9th February 2012

I thank the Chairman for the opportunity to make this introductory statement concerning the examination of the 2010 Appropriation Accounts for Vote 26 – Education and Skills.

As requested, I have forwarded some advance briefing to the Committee so I will, therefore, keep this opening statement short. The briefing note provided outlines the structure of the Vote for my Department and gives details regarding the main components of expenditure, together with information regarding expenditure on the Vote in 2010 and 2011. There are no specific chapters on this Department in the Comptroller's 2010 report.

Vote 26 pays the salaries and expenses of the Department of Education and Skills to support a range of activities at all levels of the education sector. In 2010 gross expenditure from Vote 26 was €9.35 billion, while the provisional outturn for 2011 was €8.87 billion.

This expenditure funds education and training across all sectors. In 2010/11 there were some 1,028,000 persons in full time education in institutions aided by the Department. This included 510,000 students at first level, 356,000 at second level/ further education and 162,000 full time students at third level. There were also some 172,000 participants in part-time education and the 103,000 persons who completed FÁS/funded training and apprenticeship programmes.

Members of the committee will see that expenditure on pay and pensions accounts for a very significant portion of overall expenditure on the Vote. Out of total current expenditure in 2010 of €8.56 billion, pay expenditure accounted for €5.4 billion or 63%, while pensions expenditure accounted for €1 billion, or 12%, an overall total of 75% on pay and pensions. The pay expenditure covered the cost of some 95,000 whole time posts across the education sector in 2010 including just over 60,000 teachers and 10,800 special needs assistants employed in 4,052

schools and 18,500 employees in 32 higher education institutions. This equates to about one-third of overall public sector employment.

The 2010 Vote accounts which are under scrutiny today were subject to change arising from the transfer of functions between Government Departments, which took effect from 1 May 2010. Certain functions in relation to skills development and training, which had previously been vested in the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment were transferred to the re-named Department of Education and Skills. The new functions are shown under Subheads G.1 to G.8 on the Vote. In addition, certain research functions were transferred in the other direction, to Vote 34, the Office of the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation.

The structure of the Vote was changed again during 2011 as a result of further transfers of functions. Responsibility for the School Completion Programme (Subhead B20) and the National Education Welfare Board (Subhead B21) were transferred from this Department to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, while responsibility for FAS employment programmes (Subhead G3) was transferred to the Department of Social Protection. Funding responsibility in relation to nursing education was also transferred to this Department from the Department of Health.

During 2010 capital expenditure of €786.5m was incurred on the Vote, including €79m of deferred surrender from 2009. Some of the key areas of capital expenditure included:

- Expenditure on the schools capital programme amounting to almost €526m. The projects concerned delivered just under 8,900 new permanent school places of which almost 5,700 were additional new places.
- There were over 2,650 devolved smaller scale projects completed, under the Additional Accommodation, Summer

Works and Emergency Works schemes. Under the Additional Accommodation Scheme a total of almost 5,800 additional permanent school places were delivered.

- 37 sites were acquired during 2010 to facilitate the continued roll-out of the school building programme while Physical Education Equipment Grants were issued to all schools and the Minor Works Grant issued to primary schools.
- Almost €169 million was spent on capital projects in the Higher Education sector.

The reduced amount of capital expenditure in 2011, just over €556 million, reflected the general reduction in funding available for overall public capital investment.

I and my officials are happy to answer the questions of the Committee.