

Anti-corruption

1. On the draft Strategy to combat Economic crime and Corruption:

A. What is the timeline now for the Strategy to be presented to the Minister for Justice Home Affairs and Migration for agreement and for its approval by the government?

The draft Strategy has been developed by the Advisory Council against Economic Crime and Corruption and has formally been agreed by the Council. The Strategy has now been approved by government and will be published in due course. The implementation and progress of the Strategy will be tracked through an Action Plan, which will assign responsibility, measures and timelines to relevant bodies.

B. Could you please detail whether the draft Strategy to combat Economic crime and Corruption has a specific focus?

- The Strategy adopts a whole-of-society and cross-government approach to tackling economic crime and corruption, recognising that an effective response requires coordinated action across Government Departments, law enforcement, regulators, the private sector and civil society.
- Its overall focus is to strengthen Ireland's ability to prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute economic crime and corruption, while protecting public trust, economic integrity and Ireland's international reputation.
- The Strategy provides a structured and targeted framework built around five key strategic objectives which guide priority actions and recommendations. These focus on:
 - Improving the collection, analysis and use of data to support evidence-based policy
 - Strengthening cross-sector cooperation and information sharing, including public-private partnerships
 - Enhancing investigation, enforcement and prosecution tools and specialist capabilities
 - Improving asset recovery and confiscation
 - Promoting prevention through education, awareness and compliance measures.
- Together, these pillars ensure a balanced approach across prevention, disruption, enforcement and recovery.

C. What will be the time frame for the implementation of the measures it contains

- The Strategy is designed as a multi-annual framework and will be implemented on a phased basis over a number of years.
- Implementation will be guided by the Action Plan which will set out specific measures, responsibility and timelines across relevant Departments and agencies.
- It is envisaged that the strategy and action plan will have a five-year timeframe.
- Progress will be monitored regularly to ensure measures are delivered within the agreed timeframes.

D. Did it take into account the inputs from the online public consultation?

- The development of the Strategy was informed by a comprehensive consultation and stakeholder engagement process. This included an online survey to gather views from the public, an open call for written submissions, and an in-person stakeholder event.
- The Advisory Council also engaged directly with key stakeholders across the public sector, private sector, civil society, and relevant European and international partners.
- Feedback from these engagements helped shape the scope, priorities and strategic objectives of the Strategy.

E. Which entity will be in charge of its implementation? Will this Strategy be accompanied by any associated action plan?

- Responsibility for implementation of the Strategy will be shared across relevant Government Departments, law enforcement bodies, regulators and other key stakeholders, reflecting the cross-sectoral and whole-of-government nature of the response to economic crime and corruption.
- The Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, through its secretariat role to the Advisory Council, will support coordination and oversight of delivery.
- The Strategy will be supported by a detailed Action Plan which will set out specific measures, lead owners and timelines for implementation.

The Action Plan will be published in due course.

F. Will there be an annual report on the implementation of the strategy? How will its implementation be monitored?

- Implementation of the Strategy will be subject to ongoing monitoring, reporting and evaluation arrangements.

- Progress will be tracked through the Action Plan, which will assign responsibility, measures and timelines to relevant bodies.
- The Council may carry out periodic evaluations to assess the delivery and effectiveness of the measures.
- These arrangements will support oversight and ensure that progress is monitored, and adjustments can be made where required.

2. As regards legislative developments on anti-corruption “core” repressive legislation, could you confirm that the main progress has been on asset recovery and anti-money laundering? In that regard, we understand that the Proceeds of Crime and Related Matters Bill 2025 strengthens the State’s capacity to freeze and dispose of criminal assets and updates the proceeds-of-crime and corruption framework. Is our understanding correct? Could you further explain the changes introduced?

The Proceeds of Crime and Related Matters Bill 2025 is not considered as core repressive legislation in relation to Corruption. The Proceeds of Crime Act was designed to deal with organised crime and the amendments in the Bill are a significant and necessary step forward in efforts to ensure that Ireland’s framework for tackling organised crime is robust and effective.

The Proceeds of Crime and Related Matters Bill completed its passage through Dáil Éireann on 17 December 2025 and is currently proceeding through Seanad Éireann. . It strengthens the State’s ability to freeze, manage and ultimately dispose of assets identified as the proceeds of crime, and updates the existing proceeds-of-crime and corruption framework to improve its effectiveness.

The Bill introduces a number of important changes, including:

- Reducing the period between a judicial determination that assets are the proceeds of crime and the making of a final disposal order from seven to two years.
- Providing for the immediate and automatic appointment of a receiver once such a court decision has been made, to prevent individuals from continuing to benefit from criminal assets while awaiting final disposal, subject to appropriate safeguards.
- Ensuring that once a judicial determination has been made, the issue of whether assets are the proceeds of crime is not re-litigated at the disposal stage, while maintaining appeal rights and the ability to seek variation or revoke where appropriate.
- Strengthening the powers of the Criminal Assets Bureau, including powers to restrain financial accounts and detain assets during proceeds of crime investigations.

The Bill also includes a technical amendment to section 22 of the Criminal Justice (Corruption Offences) Act 2018, aligning the definition of “cash” with EU Regulation 2018/1672 and addressing practical issues related to the handling of seized assets.

3. Could you share the resource number of Garda Staff strength for the Anti-Corruption Unit (GACU) and for the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) as well as for the Anti-Bribery and Corruption Unit (ABCU)? Do you know how many of the 5.000 new Garda members to be recruited over the next four years according to the programme of the government will be dedicated to the GACU/ABCU? Have there already been some new recruited staff dedicated to them?

- The total reported complement of the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) is 133, comprising 21 staff and 122 Garda members.
- There is a single Garda Corruption Unit, located within the Governance and Accountability division, which deals with Garda corruption allegations and matters. The total reported complement of this unit is 42, comprising 6 staff and 36 Garda members.
- At this stage, it is not possible to confirm how many newly attested or probationer Garda members have been, or will be, allocated to these units, including the planned recruitment of 5000 Garda members over the coming years.

4. In the area of anti-corruption, are you already seeing positive achievements or challenges with regard to the implementation of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Bill? What about the achievements/ opportunities/challenges of these three bodies included in the Policing, Security and Community Safety Bill:

- A. Fiosrú, the Office of the Police Ombudsman, designed to enhance the independence and effectiveness of police oversight in Ireland
- B. the Policing and Community Safety Authority responsible for the oversight of the performance of An Garda Síochána
- C. the Garda board designate to provide support and guidance to the Garda Executive on matters such as organisational governance, human resource management, data protection, public administration and financial management

- The Policing, Security and Community Safety (PSCS) Act 2024 was commenced on Wednesday 2 April 2025. The Act provides an extensive new framework for policing and community safety aimed at improving the performance accountability and external oversight of An Garda Síochána.
- The PSCS Act was developed on the basis of the recommendations of the 2018 Report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland, a body comprised of national and international experts who were appointed in 2017 to perform a comprehensive review of policing in Ireland.

Fiosrú – Office of the Police Ombudsman

The year 2025 saw Fiosrú open its doors as an independent policing oversight body with a reformed and expanded remit and powers. Fiosrú - Oifig an Ombudsman Póilíneachta (Office of the Police Ombudsman) - came into being on 2 April 2025 under the Policing Security and Community Safety Act 2024 (PSCS Act).

Fiosrú is led by a Police Ombudsman and Deputy Police Ombudsman appointed by the President of Ireland and a Chief Executive Officer as Accounting Officer. The Police Ombudsman and the Deputy Police Ombudsman are independent in the performance of their functions and report directly to the Oireachtas.

The statutory objectives of the Police Ombudsman are:

- to promote confidence in the processes for resolving and investigating complaints made by members of the public.
- to improve public understanding of Fiosrú's role.
- to ensure that his or her functions are performed in a timely, efficient and effective manner, and in accordance with fair procedures.

The primary function of the Police Ombudsman is to receive complaints by members of the public concerning Garda personnel.¹ The PSCS Act has enhanced the powers of Fiosrú, as recommended by the Commission on the Future of Policing Report (2018).

The PSCS Act provides that Fiosrú must ensure that its functions are performed in a timely, efficient and effective manner and in accordance with fair procedures.

¹ At the time of writing the regulation does not apply to civilian staff of An Garda Síochána.

Fiosrú has developed guidance and procedures for investigations under the new statute.

Among the key changes is the fact that all public complaints are now routed through Fiosrú. The Police Ombudsman determines whether an admissible complaint should be either resolved by An Garda Síochána or warrants an investigation by the Police Ombudsman. This allows service-level complaints to be referred for resolution, thereby freeing up Fiosrú resources for its investigative work.

Fiosrú may undertake investigations of matters referred to it by An Garda Síochána, the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, the Policing and Community Safety Authority, or matters meriting investigation in the public interest.

Fiosrú additionally investigates protected disclosures. Any person in Ireland may make a protected disclosure to the Ombudsman regarding alleged wrongdoing or misconduct by a member of Garda personnel.

The Office of the Police Ombudsman also has an expanded remit which includes an expanded definition of serious harm, to include sexual offences and abuse of power for a sexual purpose, under which the Police Ombudsman can investigate the conduct of a Garda member

The PSCS Act allows Fiosrú to address both criminal and disciplinary allegations at the same time in the majority of its investigations. This permits more streamlined investigations and therefore is an efficiency which it is anticipated will shorten the time-frame for completion of some cases.

Another new provision has widened the oversight lens of the organisation. Section 204 of the Act places a statutory obligation on An Garda Síochána to notify the Police Ombudsman of “incidents of concern” relating to Garda members. The notification must be made when there is an allegation (that is not already the subject of either a public complaint or a Garda referral) that a member of Garda personnel may have committed a criminal offence or breached Garda discipline.

Once a notification of an incident of concern is received, the Police Ombudsman may decide that no further action is required, or may undertake other actions, including carrying out a Police Ombudsman investigation.

The Police Ombudsman may also now under the PSCS Act make statutory recommendations on foot of investigations, including where an investigation raises concerns about the practices, policies or procedures of An Garda Síochána or any general or systemic issues. (Previously, recommendations made by GSOC did not have a statutory basis.)

The new statutory objectives as cited above also mandate the Police Ombudsman to improve understanding of Fiosrú’s role and promote confidence in its complaints handling. This work in enabled

in part through a new statutory function under section 173(2) of the Act for the Police Ombudsman to undertake research and analysis in order to identify trends and patterns arising from the performance of his or her functions.

Other improvements brought in by the new legislation include the ability to make pre-admissibility inquiries which allow for more informed and earlier decision-making and stronger powers to compel co-operation with investigations

Challenges facing the new organisation, which are being proactively managed, include implementing new protocols and processes and building staff capacity at the same time as Fiosrú is experiencing a steady increase in complaints since it came into being.

Fiosrú's more proactive stakeholder engagement and increase media engagement has enhanced its public profile in recent months and may be feeding into the growth in complaints received.

Policing and Community Safety Authority

The Policing and Community Safety Authority, An tÚdarás Póilíneachta agus Sábháilteachta Pobail (the Authority), was formally established under Part 4 of the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024. It is the successor organisation to the Policing Authority and the Garda Síochána Inspectorate. It is made up of an Authority of nine members, supported by an Executive team under a CEO.

The PCSA functions as an independent statutory body, with responsibility to oversee and assess in an independent and transparent manner the performance of An Garda Síochána of its function relating to policing services in order to support the effective provision of and continuous improvement of such services to the benefit of the safety of the public.

Garda Board

Part 2 of the PSCS Act 2024 provides for the establishment of a new Garda Board. The establishment of a new non-executive board will enhance the internal governance of An Garda Síochána.

The Garda Board is responsible for the long-term sustainability of An Garda Síochána; setting its ethical tone; obtaining reasonable assurance over its level of compliance with its statutory and governance obligations; holding the Garda Commissioner to account for the effective performance of his/her functions; and keeping the Minister advised of matters arising in respect of An Garda Síochána.

The Board's responsibility for overseeing and approving the development of corporate strategy in relation to major plans of action includes plans concerning the strategic direction of An Garda Síochána, the development of the capacity and capability of An Garda Síochána and of the members of garda personnel and the optimum use of the resources of An Garda Síochána.

The Board has worked effectively with the Executive towards providing support and guidance on a range of issues. In the short period since the Board was established, it has met five times and approved a Governance Framework, three year Strategic Plan, Annual Service Plan, Annual Report and Senior Appointments in accordance with the Policing, Security and Community Safety Act 2024. In addition, the Board approved nominations to establish an Audit & Risk Committee which has met with the Executive on two occasions to date. Further meetings of the Board and Audit & Risk Committee are due to be held in March. The Board will continue to support the Executive and develop a relationship built on transparency, trust and cooperation.