



# AGSI

Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors  
Cumann Sairsintí agus Cigirí de'n Gharda Síochaná



**CHANGING LANES FOR CHANGING TIMES**  
*Reforming to Improve Working & Economic Conditions*

## **AGSI Pre-Budget Submission**

**SEPTEMBER 2013**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## *5 Steps to Improve Working and Economic Conditions*

**The Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors is conscious of the need for fiscal rectitude and for prudent budgeting. AGSI recognises that the country has for the past number of years engaged in austerity measures as a means of matching expenditure with income. The impact of this austerity on the Garda organisation and our members has been significant.**

We have played our part in a number of ways. We have embraced a new Roster; our working day has increased by 25% from 8 to 10 hours; the Garda organisation membership has fallen to almost 13,000 from a high of 14,500 in 2011; we have contributed to payroll savings by absorbing multiple new taxes, pay cuts and unpaid promised pay increases and we have seen 139 station closures in the past year. Under the Haddington Road agreement each Sergeant and Inspector work an extra 30 hours unpaid for the benefit of the Garda Organisation.

Our Association was the first to conclude negotiations on proposals by Government through Haddington Road. The proposals for An Garda Síochána contain a clause which will see a total examination of all aspects of the Organisation, with an emphasis on reducing costs through reformed working conditions. AGSI members have committed themselves to being involved in a collaborative way to this work and the Association will continue to find solutions to any challenges which are exposed as a result of the Review.

*AGSI believes a continued policy of austerity in the Justice area will be detrimental to policing in Ireland and counter-productive in terms of savings.*

It is difficult to see how the Garda Management and members of this Association can be expected to deliver on the Garda Strategic plan 2013 – 2015 with ever-reducing budgets. This strategy, endorsed and signed off by the Minister for Justice, must be adequately funded if there is to be any scope to fulfill its objective.

The public expects the Garda organisation to deliver on its own Garda Strategic goals of securing our nation, proactive policing operations, and ensuring safer communities. Achieving these goals and delivering a professional service requires adequate funding. The current Government strategy of shrinking the Garda budget will impede the Organisation's ability to deliver essential service to the public.

It is against this background that AGSI make its submission to the Minister for Finance in advance of Budget 2014.

The premise of our submission is that Government needs to invest in An Garda Síochána to ensure the delivery of the new policing model that is being rolled out.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONT.

*5 Steps to Improve Working and Economic Conditions*

**WE HAVE FIVE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:**



**1 STAFFING**

**2 INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE**

**3 WELFARE & RIGHTS**

**4 CIVILIANISATION**

**5 REFORM OF AN GARDÁ SÍOCHÁNA**

**The recent announcement of recruitment to An Garda Síochána is welcomed by AGSI. 27,000 people have expressed an interest in taking up an estimated 100 new positions within An Garda Síochána. It may take about 12 months to conclude the recruitment process meaning that successful candidates might begin training towards the end of 2014. This will mean that they will not officially be fully trained professional police officers for a further two years - towards the end of 2016.**

Simultaneously the Haddington Road Agreement has left it more advantageous for senior members to leave the organisation before August 2014. This will mean a constant drain of human resources at a senior level. We desperately need a cohort of new blood in the immediate short term.

Accordingly a token number of new Garda members is in AGSI's view unacceptable. We cannot allow a situation to develop in the future whereby attrition outstrips recruitment.

Garda numbers have been in decline since 2011. Currently the Garda organisation strength is circa 13000, a 17.2% decrease from an organisation high of 14,500 - a figure Government felt was appropriate to provide an adequate police service to the public.

To effect change and implement new policing AGSI believes that a police Organisation of at least 14,000 members is required. Previously a Minister for Justice and his Government colleagues felt that 16,000 members was a minimum requirement to run a professional policing operation.

The reduction in Garda numbers in conjunction with a rolling back of integrated rural community policing means that proactive preventative patrolling is becoming infrequent. The net result shows a noticeable decline in the police presence around the country. This is a position AGSI believes is unacceptable. This situation lends itself to unwelcome opportunities for criminal elements to exploit vulnerable communities and individuals.

*AGSI calls on the Minister for Finance to provide sufficient funding for at least 500 new recruits during 2014. It further calls on the Minister to provide ongoing funding to Garda management to allow them implement a sustainable recruitment process for An Garda Síochána into the future.*

This sustainable recruitment process should take account of European police to public ratios and ensure that at a minimum the Garda organisation has a ratio of 3.6 Gardaí to 1,000 population.



## PROMOTIONS

Government determines Garda numbers. The number of supervisory and management positions are similarly strictly controlled. It is important that a proper command and control structure is in place in the Garda organisation to allow for effective deployment, supervision and management. The proliferation of specialist policing sections which are essential to meet the demands in evolving crime areas such as fraud, human trafficking and computer crime investigation, to name a few, has resulted in the stripping of front line services and supervision to deliver these services.

AGSI, as the Association representing front line supervisors and first line Managers, is acutely aware of the importance of effective oversight and direction. We are concerned that the slow pace of promotions has resulted and will continue to result in Gardaí being unsupervised. Many Garda units/sections are now operating without direct supervision. This is a serious issue for AGSI and our members and the staff they supervise. Supervision is essential to ensure that the initial steps taken at the scene of a crime ensure the greatest possible opportunity for a successful investigation. It is important that all stages of an investigation are monitored and timely advice and instruction provided. Supervision ensures those issues that should be prioritised to safeguard the public and the community are identified and acted on. Far too often Sergeants are required to supervise Garda members at stations removed from where they are employed.

This is unsatisfactory from a supervisory/management perspective. It also exposes our members to the real threat of disciplinary action for failing to adequately supervise, even though the possibility of providing supervision was diminished due to geographic distance.

AGSI appeals to the Minister for Finance to provide sufficient funds to allow Garda Management to promote sufficient numbers of Sergeants and Inspectors across the country to deliver adequate supervision at the point of operation.





# INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE

## *Equipping Members with Adequate Resources to Deliver a New Policing Model*

**There have been dramatic changes in the delivery of policing in Ireland even in the last 12 months. Specifically, over 100 Garda Station have closed and the number of Districts reduced through District Amalgamations.**

The savings made from such closures must be reinvested in providing adequate infrastructure to deliver a modern policing service.

### **1. INVESTMENT IN FLEET**

- The Garda fleet attrition rate is one vehicle per day. The men and women in An Garda Síochána are required to drive vehicles with up to 500,000 kms on the clock. For the most part these are standard family cars and are neither designed nor equipped for policing purposes.
- In other jurisdictions where such family cars are used, they are provided through leasing arrangements. Such arrangements are typically provided at a lesser cost to the organisation.
- Government should encourage An Garda Síochána to consider the ‘leasing’ of patrol vehicles as an alternative option to deal with the costs of purchasing and maintaining the Garda fleet.

### **2. IMPROVE CURRENT ACCOMMODATION PROVISIONS**

- The Garda accommodation standards are low by comparison with other public sector accommodation. With the exception of a handful of new stations built in later years, many men and women in An Garda Síochána are expected to work from stations which are not acceptable places of work. For example, a new Wexford station has been ‘promised’ for over 30 years. It still has not been built. A site was bought and is ready to go. Similarly Kevin Street in Dublin is a hoarded site, which must be built as a matter of urgency.
- Modern accommodation for prisoners detained by An Garda Síochána need to be provided. Facilities in use in other jurisdictions include nominated divisional or regional detention centres where all facilities necessary for the safe and secure detention of arrested persons are provided. Such facilities do not exist in An Garda Síochána at District, Divisions or Regional level. This must be rectified as a matter of urgency.

If our members are to effectively deliver the model of policing required by Government and Garda Management then An Garda Síochána must be funded accordingly. The level of public support we enjoy was based on a rural policing model that has been changed. Public confidence is going to slip if we cannot deliver on the needs of communities. Therefore Government needs to invest in the mechanisms that allow to us to deliver effective policing.

AGSI contends that the practice of closing rural stations be discontinued and if additional funding is necessary to maintain a community presence that this funding is made available to Garda management.

# INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE CONT.

## *Equipping Members with Adequate Resources to Deliver a New Policing Model*

People in Ireland value safety and security in their home and their community. They have a legitimate expectation that the Government will protect them through the police service. They expect they will receive justice should misfortune visit them in form of crime against them, their family or property. The business community has a similar expectation. They provide employment, contribute to the well-being of the communities in which they operate and make significant financial contributions to the State.

Individuals, communities and business need to know that if criminal acts are committed against them that the Garda organisation have the people, resources and skills to allow them to investigate and prosecute in a proper, professional and timely way. Recent cutbacks in the Garda organisation and the slow pace of promotion have impacted on the Garda organisation's ability to meet the needs, expectations, entitlements and demands of the public. Without adequate people, appropriate training, resources and infrastructure it is becoming more difficult to provide the public with the professional police service they expect and deserve.

Station closures over the past number of years have reduced the Organisation's links with communities. While moves towards modernisation are welcomed by AGSI, this move was ill conceived, politically expedient and failed to accommodate the views, concerns and input from this Association. The net affect can only result, in AGSI's view, in a loss of valuable community contact, a loss of local knowledge and vital intelligence, and reduced confidence in the Garda organisation.

Delivering a service across a wide geographic area to dispersed communities requires appropriate resources at local level. The policing model developed to support the station closure programme did not take account of the requirement for significant investment in the Garda fleet to allow rural communities to be adequately serviced in the absence of stations.

*The mobility of criminals has not been matched by the mobility of the Garda organisation.*

Funds are not currently available to even provide a mountain bike service in some towns because suitable personal protective equipment cannot be afforded. The existing policy of removing from service vehicles which reach 300,000 km (changing to 500,000 kms) is welcomed from a safety perspective. However, the absence of an appropriate fleet replacement policy means that the current attrition rate of approximately one car per day from the fleet greatly outstrips supply. 213 vehicles were purchased last year. This situation is unsustainable.

The capability of providing a country wide police service is diminished as a result of a reduced Garda fleet. Vehicle sharing across operational units in one station might seem like a workable solution. However, it is essential that front line uniformed Gardaí can provide a response service at the same time that Detective or Drugs Gardai conduct investigations or carry out covert operations. These two activities should also be capable of running in tandem with an effective roads policing function. In many cases these services cannot all be provided simultaneously due to absence of adequate vehicles. Fleet deployment must be dictated by operational demand. The current deployment model appears to be a fire brigade service replacing end of life vehicles or damaged vehicles.



# INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE CONT.

## *Equipping Members with Adequate Resources to Deliver a New Policing Model*

This is unsatisfactory and unsustainable. The people most affected by an insufficient Garda fleet are the public. An insufficient or inappropriate fleet means the Garda response may not be as effective as it could be.

### **GARDA COMMUNICATION CAPABILITY**

The implementation of the TETRA Radio Communications project has improved the communication infrastructure and the security of radio communications within the Garda organisation. However the rollout of this technology has resulted in an increased drain on financial resources to meet contractual obligations. This has meant the capacity of the Garda organisation to invest in other key technical infrastructure has been diminished. Innovative ICT solutions, readily available to other modern police organisation, are not currently available or planned for the Garda organisation due to the lack of an appropriate budget.

Timely and accurate information is essential to assist the Gardaí deliver certain aspects of their service particularly the disruption and dismantling of criminal and subversive activities. It also plays an important part in routine crime investigation, information led policing operations and roads policing. Information management systems as a policing aid are well developed across the globe. Unfortunately the Garda organisation is constrained in its ability to develop and improve in this regard due to their commitment to the maintenance of the TETRA radio network which absorbs significant amounts of the Garda ICT budget.

Developing and improving the capacity of the PULSE system, and implementing new support ICT tools have ceased. Existing budgets prevent innovation and development and hinder the Garda organisations ability to respond effectively in a changing technical environment.

*AGSI calls on the Minister for Finance to provide sufficient ring fenced finance to support Garda key resource infrastructure in the area of fleet and ICT projects.*

Investment in these areas will greatly improve the Garda organisations ability to deliver an effective police response to the public.

*We would ask that Government give consideration to increasing the Garda Budget to give regard to adequately up skill our members who are filling the skills and resources gaps left vacant as a result of retirements.*

**From our own research we know that there is also a particular need for Welfare Training for members who are struggling due to financial and or workload issues.**

AGSI has supported the change and modernisation agenda drawn up under the Croke Park Agreement. In fact with the support of this Association and our sister organisations, An Garda Síochána delivered significant sustainable savings under the GRACE initiatives and with the implementation of new rosters and operational practices. However, change and modernisation must be supported by an appropriate training programme. Additional legislation is routinely passed by Government and new legislation results in additional powers and responsibilities for the Garda organisation.

## **TRAINING**

Training is a key element in ensuring the highest quality of service and delivery is achieved. Training ensures a smooth transition from current practices to new ones. It also ensures legislation is correctly interpreted and implemented. Unfortunately training budgets are the first casualty in many organisations' fiscal rectitude strategy. AGSI believe this approach is fundamentally flawed within a police organisation, particularly where misinterpretation of legislation or police policies could impact on the rights of citizens.

*Meeting the training needs of Gardaí at all ranks is essential if the Garda organisation is to aspire to achieve its strategic goal of delivering a professional service.*

Unfortunately the removal of some training programmes and the diminution of the continuous professional developmental service within the Garda organisation, a direct result of budget cuts, is impacting directly in this area.

The public expects and deserves a well-trained, competent and professional Garda organisation.

The reduced Garda budget over recent years has seen training almost abolished with the Garda organisation. Some Garda Managers view the introduction of the Garda Portal, a repository of information, as a training forum.

This approach by Garda Management is exposing the Garda organisation and individual members to enormous risk. The risk of misuse of police powers or misinterpretation of legislation or new practices can only be mitigated through appropriate training. In this regard it is important that adequate funds are invested in training. Publication of information within a large dispersed organisation cannot be considered a substitute for training.

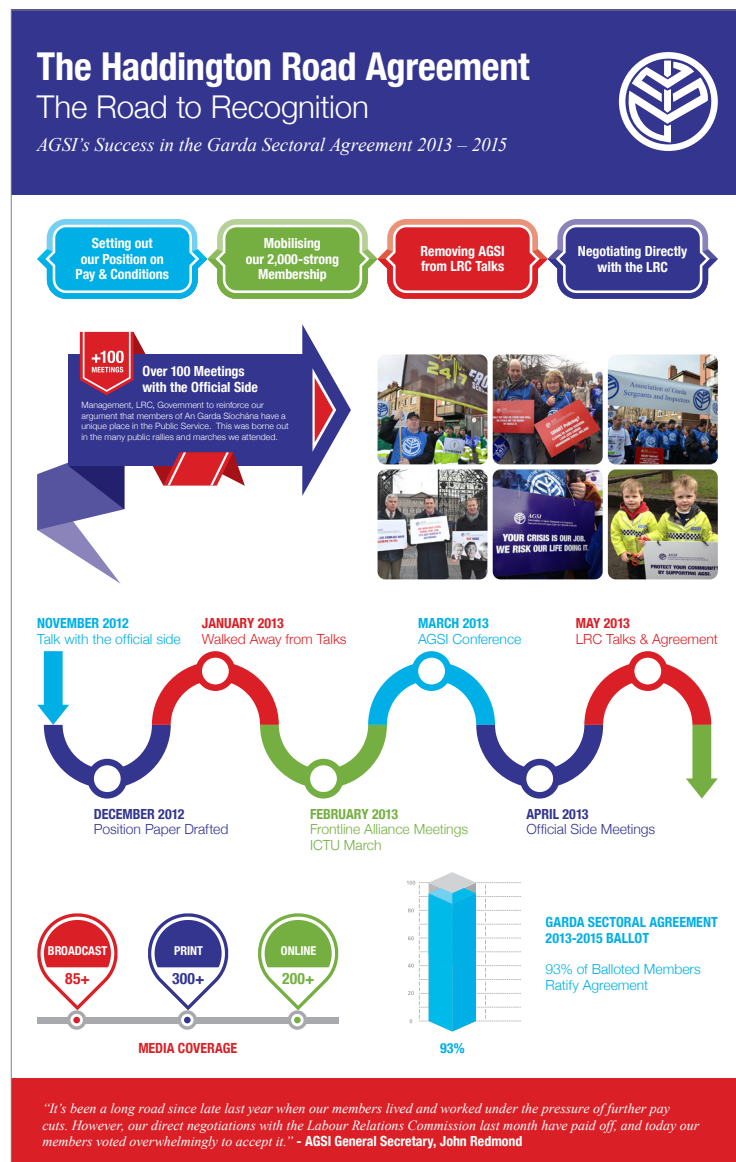
# WELFARE AND RIGHTS CONT.

## Pay and Conditions

*AGSI call on the Minister for Finance to recognise that without continuous improvement and training the public cannot receive a professional service. In order that the public expectation is met we call on the Minister to refrain from further budget cuts to the Garda vote.*

AGSI welcomed the opportunity to be able to directly negotiate with the LRC in the framing of the Garda Sectoral Agreement 2013 – 2015. We intend to continue working collaboratively to ensure that Agreement is implemented.

*Our commitment to An Garda Síochána and the role of policing in society is at the forefront of all our activities as a staff representative association. We are proud of the Garda organisation and the service it delivers, but services must be maintained for the public.*



**For many years civilian staff have augmented An Garda Síochána, traditionally in administrative role on clerical duties. In the last number of years in An Garda Síochána we have seen civilian staff being employed as heads of Units and Sections. AGSI has embraced these changes in work practices and the relationship between our members and civilian staff at all levels is a solid and productive one.**

It is a concern to AGSI that a focus seems to have been targeted towards an unfair assumption that members of An Garda Síochána are working in back offices all over the country when they should be 'on the beat'. Certainly, there may be tasks which are being carried out by Gardaí which could be carried out effectively by civilian staff. AGSI believe such suitably skilled civilian personnel should be recruited as soon as possible. We have been assured on many occasions that support staff would be provided but have yet to see this happen in any real way. Government must provide funding to allow civilian support staff to be provided. The moratorium on recruitment must be lifted to allow suitably skilled staff who are capable of delivering the support necessary to Garda operations. It is not acceptable to reassign staff from other agencies to assist in the policing function where these people are not suitably skilled to undertake the roles assigned to them.

There is little doubt that the 'Review of An Garda Síochána' will examine civilianisation in An Garda Síochána. AGSI looks forward to having an input in that Review.

# REFORM OF AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA

*A Consultative Approach*

**AGSI looks forward to the consultation process which will be put in place to set up the independent review mechanism, provided for under the Haddington Road Agreement. We also look forward to engaging proactively and positively in the review process.**

This Association has been at the forefront of change in An Garda Síochána. As front line Supervisors and first line Managers our members are an important stakeholder and a key influencer in any change process. This Association and our members have engaged actively from the early days of the introduction of PULSE to the modern changes under the Croke Park Agreements. Not least of these changes was the major change to working arrangements under the revised Garda Roster.

*AGSI worked closely with the Implementation Body to ensure the changes under Croke Park were delivered. While suffering remuneration reductions of c. 25%, AGSI and the other Representative Associations delivered the new rostering arrangement. This change is widely regarded as a leading example of one's organisations' ability to deliver on its commitments under the negotiated pay agreements.*

The Implementation Body set up under the Croke Park Agreement has been disbanded. This is a retrograde step in the eyes of AGSI. This Body could have continued its work with the same level of success as previously, and in the event of disagreed issues, the LRC could have acted as arbiter.

The Haddington Road Agreement commits AGSI to engagement in the 'Review of An Garda Síochána' and we look forward to working with Garda Management and others in carrying out this Review.