

Vol. 781
No. 36



Tuesday
25 April 2017

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

WRITTEN STATEMENTS AND WRITTEN ANSWERS

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[I] indicates that the member concerned has a relevant registered interest. The full register of interests can be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests/>

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Earl Howe	Minister of State, Ministry of Defence and Deputy Leader of the House of Lords
Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport
Baroness Anelay of St Johns	Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Lord Ashton of Hyde	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Whip
Lord Bates	Minister of State, Department for International Development
Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government, Wales Office
Lord Bridges of Headley	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Exiting the European Union
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Baroness Goldie	Whip
Lord Henley	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions, Whip
Lord Keen of Elie	Advocate-General for Scotland and Ministry of Justice Spokesperson
Baroness Mobarik	Whip
Lord Nash	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education
Baroness Neville-Rolfe	Commercial Secretary to the Treasury
Lord O'Shaughnessy	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health, Whip
Lord Price	Minister of State, Department for International Trade
Lord Prior of Brampton	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Baroness Shields	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office
Lord Taylor of Holbeach	Chief Whip
Baroness Vere of Norbiton	Whip
Baroness Williams of Trafford	Minister of State, Home Office
Lord Young of Cookham	Whip
Viscount Younger of Leckie	Whip

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Written Statements

Tuesday, 25 April 2017

ECOFIN: 21 March 2017

[HLWS606]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: My right honourable friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury (David Gauke) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement

A meeting of The Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) was held in Brussels on 21 March 2017. EU Finance Ministers discussed the following items:

Early morning session

The Eurogroup President briefed Ministers on the outcomes of the 20 March meeting of the Eurogroup. Ministers discussed the current economic situation. The European Commission presented its review of national provisions adopted in compliance with the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union (the Fiscal Compact) conducted in accordance with Article 8 of the Fiscal Compact, which was followed by an exchange of views by Ministers. Austrian Finance Minister Schelling explained his views as regard a proposed fine for the manipulation of debt statistics in Austrian Land of Salzburg, and the Polish delegation, on behalf of the Chairman of the EIB's Board of Governors, outlined the suggested process for the upcoming election of the EIB President."

Reduced VAT rate for electronically supplied publications (e-Publications)

Ministers discussed political issues in relation to the proposal for a Council Directive regarding rates of value added tax applied to books, newspapers and periodicals. The Proposal would give Member States the ability to apply reduced rates or a zero VAT rate to e-Publications and physical publications.

General Reverse Charge Mechanism

Ministers discussed the political issues in relation to the General Reverse Charge Mechanism (GRCM). This is a proposal for an amendment to Council Directive 2006/112/ on the common system of value added tax to allow the temporary application of a GRCM to supplies of goods and services above a certain threshold, with the aim of combatting VAT fraud.

Current financial service legislative proposals

The Council Presidency provided an update on current legislative proposals in the field of financial services.

European Semester 2017:

a) 2017 Country Reports and In-Depth Reviews

b) Implementation of Country-Specific Recommendations (CSRs)

Following a presentation by the Commission, Ministers discussed the Country Reports published by the

Commission on 22 February, including the assessment of CSR implementation and, where relevant, the framework of the Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure. The Czech Republic, Italy and Slovenia were invited to reflect on their experiences of implementing reforms to the business environment, followed by an exchange of views.

Follow-up to the G20 Meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors on 17-18 March 2017 in Baden-Baden

The Presidency and the Commission informed Ministers on the outcomes of the G20 meeting.

Any other business

a) European Defence Fund

The Commission informed Ministers about its European Defence Action Plan, focusing in particular on the launch of a European Defence Fund. This item was delayed from February ECOFIN.

b) Status of implementation of financial services legislation

The Commission informed Ministers on the status of implementation of financial services legislation.

ECOFIN: 7-8 April 2017

[HLWS607]

Baroness Neville-Rolfe: My right honourable friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Philip Hammond) has today made the following Written Ministerial Statement.

An informal meeting of The Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) was held in Valletta, Malta on 7-8 April 2017. EU Finance Ministers discussed the following items:

Working Lunch

The Eurogroup President briefed Ministers on the outcomes of the 7 April meeting of the Eurogroup. Ministers discussed the challenges and opportunities faced by the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), on the basis of the progress made with respect to the Five Presidents' Report, and the Commission's White Paper on the Future of Europe.

Working Session I: Non-performing loans

Ministers were joined by Central Bank Governors to discuss the current situation of non-performing loans (NPLs) in European banks.

Working Session II: Boosting private investment in North Africa and beyond – What role for the EU institutions?

Ministers discussed ways to encourage further private investment in North Africa and beyond, given the importance of these neighbouring regions to the EU. The discussion drew on analysis by Bruegel and included participation from a number of actors in the region including the European Investment Bank (EIB), the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

Working Session III: Tax certainty in a changing environment

In the context of rapid changes in the international tax system and work being conducted by the OECD and the IMF, Ministers reflected on ways to improve tax certainty in support of the EU's attractiveness as a place for doing business.

Any Other Business: IMF and G20 issues

Ahead of the April Spring Meetings in Washington DC, Ministers agreed the EU Terms of Reference for the G20 meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors to be held on 20-21 April, the EU statement to the IMFC, and an updated agreement on EU coordination in the IMF.

Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council: Informal Meeting

[HLWS608]

Lord Henley: My honourable Friend Damian Hinds MP (The Minister of State for Employment) has made the following Written Statement.

The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council met for the Informal Meeting of Ministers on 3rd and 4th April 2017 in Valletta, Malta; I represented the UK. The informal meeting does not tend to include legislative matters, but provides an opportunity for in-depth policy debates. The subjects for discussion are determined by the Presidency, who host the meeting.

The European Commission presented an EU roadmap for “making work pay”, which was the theme of the informal meeting. The Commission set out details of the White Paper on the Future of Europe as well as an update on expected proposals for the European Pillar of Social Rights.

The Presidency led a discussion on skills, emphasising how poor skills lead to social exclusion. Member state interventions highlighted the importance of investing to raise skill levels and improve the quality of jobs.

A plenary discussion was held on the subject of addressing inequalities in the labour market, with a focus on the challenges of responding to digitalisation, the rise in self-employment, new types of employment, and demographic change.

The Presidency gave a presentation on “moving away from benefit dependency – a Maltese perspective”, setting out how work has to be incentivised over benefits and how activation is critical. The Social Protection Committee chair outlined a framework of six key themes, including the balance between activation and income support; the provision of individualised support; and the availability of affordable services.

The final plenary of the informal considered the labour market as a vehicle for social inclusion. Member states emphasised the importance of activation for the long-term unemployed, as well as the role of access to child and social care.

Written Answers

Tuesday, 25 April 2017

Evening Standard: Charitable Donations

Asked by **Lord Myners**

To ask Her Majesty's Government how much matched funding HM Treasury has transferred to Evening Standard charity appeals since May 2010. [HL6326]

Lord Ashton of Hyde: The Office for Civil Society has granted £2.2m of direct funding for the London Community Foundation's 'Dispossessed Fund' since 2010.

This fund is also supported by the Evening Standard, with nearly £18 million raised in total so far. This fund has supported hundreds of community groups across the capital to build social infrastructure in areas of poverty, help communities take control of issues that are affecting them and to tackle specific problems such as gang culture among young people.

Garden Communities

Asked by **Baroness Doocey**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what criteria they used to select the 14 new garden villages which will receive government support, from the 51 expressions of interest received; and on what criteria the Fair Oaks garden village was rejected. [HL6657]

Asked by **Baroness Doocey**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they made of developments at Longcross, Woodham New Town and Deepcut in reaching their decision on the 14 new garden villages. [HL6659]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: All expressions of interest were measured against the assessment criteria as set out in the Government prospectus "Locally-Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities" published March 2016

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508205/Locally-led_garden_villages_towns_and_cities.pdf

They include, for example: the likelihood of timely progress and accelerated delivery; the strength of quality, innovation and design in the proposal; and the strength of local leadership and support.

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Locally - led garden villages, Towns and Cities [170425 Locally-led garden villages towns and cities HL6657 + HL6659.pdf]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-04-05/HL6657>

Higher Education: Ethnic Groups

Asked by **Lord Boateng**

To ask Her Majesty's Government to what figures they have access on the representation of UK-domiciled black and Asian ethnic minorities in comparison to UK population averages amongst (1) UK-domiciled students, and (2) academic staff, in (a) Russell Group, and (b) non-Russell Group, universities. [HL6587]

Asked by **Lord Boateng**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the work of (1) the Higher Education Academy, and (2) the Higher Education Statistics Agency, in relation to equal opportunities in higher education for black and Asian UK-domiciled students in (a) undergraduate studies, and (b) post-graduate studies. [HL6588]

Asked by **Lord Boateng**

To ask Her Majesty's Government when they last met UK Vice-Chancellors to discuss (1) the proportion of admission offers made to UK-domiciled black and other ethnic minority students, and (2) the number of black and Asian UK-domiciled citizens appointed to academic posts in UK universities. [HL6589]

Lord Nash: Widening access and success for students from disadvantaged backgrounds is a priority. This Government is committed to increasing BME (Black and Minority Ethnicity) participation in higher education (HE) by 20% by 2020. We want to ensure that everyone with the potential has the opportunity to benefit from HE, irrespective of their background or gender.

Our most recent guidance to the Director of Fair Access placed a strong emphasis on increasing the number of BME students in HE by 2020 and to address disparities in outcomes (retention, degree attainment and progression to employment/ further study) for students from BME backgrounds. HE publicly-funded providers are subject to maximum fee caps for undergraduate courses. Those wishing to charge higher fees must have an access agreement agreed with the Director. HE publicly-funded providers without an access agreement can charge up to £6,000 for a full-time course in 2017/18 or up to £6,165 if they have a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) rating of 'Meets Expectations'. HE publicly-funded providers with an access agreement can charge up to £9,000 for a full-time course in 2017/18 or up to £9,250 if they have a TEF rating of 'Meets Expectations'.

For 2017/18, access plans agreed by the Director means HE providers will spend more than £833 million on measures to improve access and student success for students from disadvantaged backgrounds including minority ethnic groups - up significantly from £404 million in 2009.

Recent research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies shows that BME groups are more likely to participate in HE than white British people. They also have relatively

higher participation rates at the most selective institutions, taking into account prior attainment, student characteristic and other factors. The entry rate for English 18 year olds from state schools increased for all ethnic groups in 2016. The entry rates are the highest ever recorded for each group, with the largest increases for pupils in the Asian ethnic group (1.9 percentage point increase to 43%) and the Mixed ethnic group (1.2 percentage point increase to 33%) while the lowest entry rate was for pupils in the White ethnic group (0.9 percentage point increase to 29%).

As autonomous organisations, HE providers are responsible for their own admissions policies and procedures. DfE Ministers have had no meetings with Vice-Chancellors to discuss admissions offers.

In addition, subject to Parliament, the Higher Education and Research Bill will:

- Establish a new regulator for higher education in England, the Office for Students, which will have a statutory duty to consider the need to promote equality of opportunity for students as it relates to access and participation in higher education.

- Introduce a Transparency Duty which will shine a light on university admissions and performance requiring providers to publish application, offer, acceptance, drop-out and attainment rates of students broken down by ethnicity, gender and socio-economic background.

- Introduce a new Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which will ensure institutions are incentivised to provide excellent teaching outcomes for all of their students including those from BME and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Regarding the appointment of black and Asian UK-domiciled individuals to academic posts, I commend the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education's Diversifying Leadership Programme, which is tackling under-representation of BME staff in leadership roles in higher education.

I also commend the Equality Challenge Unit's Race Equality Charter, which is awarded to recognise the advancement of minority ethnic staff and students in higher education through representation, progression and success for all.

Homelessness: Greater London

Asked by Lord Kennedy of Southwark

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment have they made of the affect on homeless families from London of being housed significant distances outside the capital away from their friends and families. [I] [HL6532]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: Local authorities must secure accommodation within their own district so far as is reasonably practicable. Where it is not possible to secure accommodation within their district and an authority has secured accommodation outside their

district, the authority is required to take into account the distance of that accommodation from the district of the authority. Authorities should try to secure accommodation that is as close as possible to where an applicant was previously living. Councils must also take into account the impact a change in location would have on a household, including the possible disruption to peoples' jobs and children's schooling.

The Department collects data on the number of out of district placements, by local authority, under the interim duty to accommodate whilst making enquiries etc. and under the duty to secure temporary accommodation whilst awaiting settled accommodation. This is available in (attached)Table 775 at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

The Answer includes the following attached material:

Table 775 [170406 Copy of
Statutory_Homelessness_and_Prevention_and_Relief_Live_Table
s_201612- HL6532.xls]

The material can be viewed online at:
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2017-04-03/HL6532>

Housing: Construction

Asked by Baroness Golding

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to protect purchasers of newly built homes from defects resulting from faulty building by developers. [HL6599]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: A new home is not just the largest monetary purchase most people ever make, it is also one of the largest emotional commitments as people look to provide a safe, good quality home for them and their families. It is therefore vital that as housing supply increases, the quality of new build homes continues to improve, and I am aware of last year's report by the All Party Parliamentary Group for Excellence in the Built Environment, *More Homes, Fewer Complaints*, which looked at these issues. Building inspectors check to ensure that building regulations' requirements are met on new homes, but it is the house builders' responsibility to ensure new homes are built to the right standards.

Where something goes wrong, house builders and warranty providers should fulfill their obligations to put this right. The Consumer Code for Homebuilders is an industry-led scheme which gives protection and rights to purchasers of new homes, ensuring that new homebuyers are treated fairly and are fully informed about their purchase. A new Code was introduced on 1 April.

Asked by Baroness Golding

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to appoint an ombudsman to address the standard of newly built homes. [HL6600]

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: A new home is not just the largest monetary purchase most people ever make, it is also the largest emotional commitment as people look to provide a safe, good quality home for themselves and their families. It is therefore vital that as housing supply increases, the quality of new build homes continues to improve so as to avoid some of the issues highlighted in the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Excellence in the Built Environment's report.

I am aware of the report's recommendations, including that for a new homes ombudsman.

Syria: Military Intervention

*Asked by **Baroness Cox***

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the answer by Baroness Anelay of St Johns on 20 March (HL Deb, col 10), in what ways they provide practical support to rebel fighters in Syria. [[HL6593](#)]

Baroness Anelay of St Johns: We provide some groups in the moderate opposition, who are standing up to both the tyranny of Assad and the terrorist threat from Daesh, with political and practical support. This includes communications, medical and logistics equipment, including equipment to protect against chemical weapons attacks.

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