



Comhshaol, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil Environment, Community and Local Government

Commission to review Dáil and European Constituencies Established

Mr. Phil Hogan, T.D., Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, today (27 July 2011), made an order establishing a Constituency Commission under the Electoral Act 1997 to review the Dáil and European constituencies.

In accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Act, the Chief Justice, following consultation with the President of the High Court, has nominated The Hon. Mr. Justice John Cooke to be a member and the chairperson of the Commission. The Act provides that the other members of the Commission are:

- the Clerk of the Dáil, Mr. Kieran Coughlan;
- the Clerk of the Seanad, Ms. Deirdre Lane;
- the Ombudsman, Ms. Emily O'Reilly; and
- the Secretary General of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government; Ms. Geraldine Tallon.

The Commission is required to report to the Chairman of the Dáil no later than 3 months after the publication by CSO of the final population results.

The terms of reference of the Commission were recently amended by the Electoral (Amendment) Act 2011. The revised terms of reference provide that a Constituency Commission will now recommend Dáil constituencies based on a reduced number of TDs between a minimum of 153 and a maximum of 160. Previously, the range was 164 to 168. The number of members of Dáil Éireann recommended by a Commission will still be subject to the limits set out in the Constitution.

This provision for a reduced number of TDs delivers on the Government's commitment to lead by example and start change at the top. Real, tangible reform is being achieved which will make the political system leaner and more efficient for citizens.

Provisions of the Constitution relating to the revision of Dáil constituencies are reproduced in the attached Appendix, together with the terms of reference of the Commission prescribed in the 1997 Act.

Appendix

Constitution of Ireland

Article 16

The National Parliament

16. 2. 1° Dáil Éireann shall be composed of members who represent constituencies determined by law.
- 2° The number of members shall from time to time be fixed by law, but the total number of members of Dáil Éireann shall not be fixed at less than one member for each thirty thousand of the population, or at more than one member for each twenty thousand of the population.
- 3° The ratio between the number of members to be elected at any time for each constituency and the population of each constituency, as ascertained at the last preceding census, shall, so far as it is practicable, be the same throughout the country.
- 4° The Oireachtas shall revise the constituencies at least once in every twelve years, with due regard to changes in distribution of the population, but any alterations in the constituencies shall not take effect during the life of Dáil Éireann sitting when such revision is made.
- 5° The members shall be elected on the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote.
- 6° No law shall be enacted whereby the number of members to be returned for any constituency shall be less than three.

Electoral Act 1997

Part II

Constituency Commission

Section 6

6. (1) It shall be the function of a Constituency Commission to make a report in relation to the constituencies for—
- (a) the election of members to the Dáil, and
 - (b) the election of representatives to the European Parliament.
- (2) In preparing a report under subsection (1)(a) a Constituency Commission shall, in observing the relevant provisions of the Constitution in relation to Dáil constituencies, have regard to the following:
- (a) the total number of members of the Dáil, subject to Article 16. 2. 2 of the Constitution, shall be not less than 153 and not more than 160;
 - (b) each constituency shall return three, four or five members;
 - (c) the breaching of county boundaries shall be avoided as far as practicable;
 - (d) each constituency shall be composed of contiguous areas;
 - (e) there shall be regard to geographic considerations including significant physical features and the extent of and the density of population in each constituency; and
 - (f) subject to the provisions of this section, the Commission shall endeavour to maintain continuity in relation to the arrangement of constituencies.
- (3) In preparing a report under subsection (1)(b) a Commission shall have regard to the following:
- (4) the total number of representatives to be elected in the State to the European Parliament shall be 15 or such other number* as may be specified for the time being pursuant to the treaties governing the European Communities;
 - (4) there shall be reasonable equality of representation as between constituencies; and
 - (4) the matters specified in paragraphs (b) to (f) of subsection (2).
- (4) The reference in subsection (2)(c) to county boundaries shall be deemed not to include a reference to the boundary of a county borough or any boundary between any two of the administrative counties standing established by virtue of Part II of the Local Government (Dublin) Act, 1993.

*currently 12

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