

Constituency Commission

Report on European Parliament
Constituencies, 2003

An Coimisiún um Thoghlaigh

Tuarascáil ar Thoghlaigh Pharlaimint
na hEorpa, 2003

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1 Recommendation

- 1 The Constituency Commission recommends that the constituencies for the election in Ireland of members of the European Parliament should be altered from their present formation by the reduction of a seat in each of the Leinster and Munster constituencies and the transfer of the population of County Clare from the Munster constituency to the Connacht-Ulster constituency. The Commission also recommends that the constituencies be renamed as set out in the table below.

The recommended constituencies for the election of thirteen members of the European Parliament are:—

Constituency	Area of Constituency (Counties and Cities)*	Number of Members
Dublin	The counties of: Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal, South Dublin and the city of Dublin.	Four.
East	The counties of: Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Longford, Louth, Meath, Offaly, Westmeath, Wexford and Wicklow.	Three.
North-West	The counties of: Cavan, Clare, Donegal, Galway, Leitrim, Mayo, Monaghan, Roscommon, Sligo and the city of Galway.	Three.
South	The counties of: Cork, Kerry, Limerick, North Tipperary, South Tipperary, Waterford and the cities of Cork, Limerick and Waterford.	Three.

* As specified in Schedule 5 to the Local Government Act, 2001 (No. 37 of 2001).

Statistics relating to the proposed constituencies and a map are in the First Appendix.

2 Background

2.1 The Constituency Commission was established on 9 July 2003 under Part II of the Electoral Act, 1997 to make a report in relation to the constituencies for the election of members to the Dáil and to the European Parliament. This Report contains the Commission's recommendations in relation to the constituencies for the election of members of the European Parliament. As regards this part of its work, the Commission's terms of reference, set out in section 6 of the 1997 Act, are as follows:

In preparing a report in relation to constituencies for the election of members of the European Parliament, a Constituency Commission shall have regard to the following:

- (a) 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;
- (b) there shall be reasonable equality of representation as between constituencies;
- (c)
 - each constituency shall return three, four or five members;
 - the breaching of county boundaries* shall be avoided as far as practicable;
 - each constituency shall be composed of contiguous areas;
 - there shall be regard to geographic considerations including significant physical features and the extent of and the density of population in each constituency; and
 - subject to the above provisions, the Commission shall endeavour to maintain continuity in relation to the arrangement of constituencies.

The Commission's role is advisory. The final determination of the constituencies for the European Parliament is a matter for the Oireachtas to prescribe in legislation.

Commission Membership

2.2 The Hon. Mr. Justice Vivian Lavan, a Judge of the High Court, was nominated by the Chief Justice as Chairman of the Commission. The other members are Mr. Kieran Coughlan, Clerk of the Dáil; Ms. Deirdre Lane, Clerk of the Seanad; Mr. Niall Callan, Secretary General of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government; and Ms. Emily O'Reilly, the Ombudsman.

Developments since 1977

2.3 The history of the establishment of the European constituencies in Ireland can be found in the European Assembly Constituency Commission Report 1977 (Prl. 6626) and in the European Parliament Constituency Commission Report 1993 (Pl. 9901).

*Section 6(4) of the 1997 Act provides that the reference to county boundaries does not include city boundaries or the boundaries between the local government counties of Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal and South Dublin.

The 1977 Commission recommended that Ireland's representation of 15 MEP's be distributed as follows:

Connacht-Ulster	3 seats
Dublin	4 seats
Leinster	3 seats
Munster	5 seats

The 1993 Commission recommended the transfer of a seat from the Munster to the Leinster constituency, while the 1998 Commission did not recommend any change in the formation of the four constituencies or the number of members to be elected in them in its Report (Pn. 5074).

There has, therefore, been no change in the constituencies or the number of members elected from them since the European Parliament elections in 1994. However, the Protocol on the Enlargement of the European Union and the Declaration on the Enlargement of the European Union in the Treaty of Nice provide that, in a European Union of 27 Member States, Ireland will elect 12 MEPs.

The Protocol made provision for the possibility that there might be fewer than 27 Member States in the European Union in 2004 and allowed for a pro-rata distribution of unallocated seats. As neither Bulgaria nor Romania will accede to the European Union in time for the 2004 European Parliament elections, it was decided to allocate their seats to the current Member States and those candidate States that will accede in 2004.

The European Council in Copenhagen in December 2002 confirmed that Ireland will elect 13 MEPs in the 2004 European Parliament Elections. The formal legal basis for this level of representation is the Accession Treaty signed on 16 April 2003.

It is necessary, therefore, to reduce Ireland's representation in the European Parliament from its present level of 15 seats to 13 seats at the 2004 elections.

Irish Legislation

2.4 Elections in Ireland to the European Parliament are governed by the European Parliament Elections Acts 1992 to 2002 which provide for elections on the single transferable vote system in multi-member constituencies. The provision concerning the revision of constituencies is set out in section 15(2) of the European Parliament Elections Act 1997, as follows:—

- (2) The Minister shall, having considered any report presented on statutory authority to each House of the Oireachtas recommending any alteration in the constituencies for which candidates shall be elected under this Act to be representatives in the Parliament, and not later than the first day of December 2003 and at least once in every ten years thereafter, submit to the Oireachtas proposals for a review of the said constituencies."

The existing European constituencies are defined in the Third Schedule to the European Parliament Elections Act 1997, as follows:

European Constituency	Number of members
Connacht-Ulster	3
Dublin	4
Leinster	4
Munster	4

Support services

- 2.5 The Franchise Section of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government provided the necessary support services to the Commission. We wish to record our appreciation of the prompt and efficient service provided by our Secretary, Peter Greene, and by Gabriel O'Duffy and the other staff of the Section. We also wish to express our appreciation of the support which we received from the Director General of the Central Statistics Office and the Chief Executive Officer of the Ordnance Survey.

3 Consideration of Possible Arrangements

Submissions received by the Commission

- 3.1 The Commission invited written submissions by way of advertisements in the daily newspapers on 24 July, “Foinse” on 27 July and in “Iris Oifigiúil” on 1 August 2003. The Commission also invited submissions from each member of the European Parliament, the Dáil and the Seanad, the political parties registered under section 25 of the Electoral Act, 1992 and the returning officers for the existing European constituencies.

Thirteen submissions were received in relation to the European constituencies and were considered by the Commission. The persons and organisations who made submissions are listed in the Third Appendix. The Commission wishes to record its appreciation of the care that went into the preparation of the submissions.

Nine submissions were in favour of retaining four European constituencies, viz. one 4-seat and three 3-seat constituencies. Different views were expressed in relation to the areas that might be transferred to the Connacht-Ulster constituency to equalise representation. Some submissions favoured transferring County Clare, while others favoured one or more of Counties Louth, Longford or Westmeath. Some submissions proposed that, in addition, Counties Waterford and/or North and South Tipperary should be transferred to the Leinster constituency. Other submissions suggested different changes in each of the four constituencies. Some submissions recommended three constituencies (viz. either one 5-seater and two 4-seaters or two 5-seaters and one 3-seater). Others contained proposals outside the Commission’s terms of reference requiring three, four or five-seat constituencies.

Equality of representation

- 3.2 The Commission’s terms of reference require that there should be reasonable equality of representation as between constituencies. The degree of equality which can reasonably be achieved is limited by practical consideration, notably the small number of seats available for distribution (now 13) and the comparatively large blocks (primarily the counties) which are used for adjustment purposes. This approach is in line with the provision in the terms of reference that breaches of county boundaries should be avoided, as far as practicable. The Commission noted that previous Commissions recommended constituencies involving variations from the national average population per member ranging from -11.16% to +8.44% in 1977; from -11.12% to +9.05% in 1993; and from -10.39% to +9.44% in 1998.

Arrangements for constituencies — 13 members

- 3.3 The position of the existing constituencies, vis-a-vis the national average population per member based on fifteen seats, is as follows:—

European Constituency (seats)	2002 Population	2002 Population per member	Variation from 2002 national average population per member, based on 15 seats
Connacht-Ulster (3)	711,010	237,003	% -9.25
Dublin (4)	1,122,821	280,705	+7.49
Leinster (4)	982,758	245,690	-5.92
Munster (4)	1,100,614	275,153	+5.36
Total (15)	3,917,203	261,147*	

* National average population per member, based on fifteen seats.

Based on numerical equality of representation between constituencies, each of the 13 MEP's elected in 2004 should represent an average 2002 population of 301,323. Applying this national average to the existing constituencies, all of them would be over-represented. The variations from the 2002 national average population per member based on 13 seats would be Connacht-Ulster, -21.35%; Dublin, -6.84%; Leinster, -18.46%; and Munster, -8.68%.

The Commission examined the following options for constituencies based on thirteen seats:

- (1) Adjustments to the existing four constituencies to take account of the reduced number of seats and population change since 1996;
- (2) Other combinations such as —
 - one 3-seat constituency and two 5-seat constituencies
 - one 5-seat constituency and two 4-seat constituencies
- (3) Constituencies based on National Plan regions.

The Commission concluded that option (1) above would be the most appropriate, having regard to its terms of reference, which include the requirement to endeavour to maintain continuity in the arrangement of constituencies.

In considering where the necessary seat reductions should be made in the existing constituencies to equalise the level of representation throughout the country, the Commission noted that the seat allocation cannot be reduced in Connacht-Ulster, which has the highest level of over-representation based on both fifteen and thirteen seats, because it is already a 3-seater. If a seat were removed from each of the Leinster and Munster constituencies, which have the next highest

levels of over-representation, based on 13 seats, the position of the four constituencies would be as follows:—

European Constituency (seats)	2002 Population	2002 Population per member	Variation from 2002 national average population per member, based on 13 seats
Connacht-Ulster (3)	711,010	237,003	% -21.35
Dublin (4)	1,122,821	280,705	-6.84
Leinster (3)	982,758	327,586	+8.72
Munster (3)	1,100,614	366,871	+21.75
Total (13)	3,917,203	301,323*	

* National average population per member based on thirteen seats.

With the removal of a seat from both Leinster and Munster, two constituencies have representation levels that are seriously out of line from the national average, viz. Munster with a variation of +21.75% and Connacht-Ulster with a variation of -21.35%. To achieve equality of representation between these two constituencies, it would be necessary to transfer approximately 195,000 population from Munster to Connacht-Ulster, i.e. the population of Counties Clare and North Tipperary and part of Limerick city.

If the population of County Clare alone (103,277) were transferred between the two constituencies, the position would be as follows:

European Constituency	Revised 2002 population	Revised population per member	Variation from national average population per member, based on 13 seats
Connacht-Ulster plus Clare (3)	814,287	271,429	% -9.92
Munster minus Clare (3)	997,337	332,446	+10.33

The Commission noted that, if the population of County Clare is transferred between the two constituencies, the variations from national average population per member in the four revised constituencies are similar to the variation ranges accepted by previous Commissions.

Recommendation

- 3.4 Having carefully weighed all the relevant circumstances and the submissions made to it, the Commission concluded that the arrangement most in keeping with its terms of reference would be the reduction of a seat in each of the Leinster and Munster constituencies and the transfer of the population of County Clare from the Munster to the Connacht-Ulster constituency. The

Commission also recommends that the constituencies be renamed as Dublin, East, North-West and South.

VIVIAN LAVAN
Chairman

KIERAN COUGHLAN

DEIRDRE LANE

NIALL CALLAN

EMILY O'REILLY

P. Greene
Secretary to the Commission
29 September 2003

First Appendix

Table A — Statistics relating to proposed constituencies, based on 13 seats

European Constituency (seats)	2002 population	Population per MEP	% variation from 2002 national average population per member, based on 13 seats
Dublin (4)	1,122,821	280,705	% -6.84
East (3)	982,758	327,586	+8.72
North-West (3)	814,287	271,429	-9.92
South (3)	997,337	332,446	+10.33
Total (13)	3,917,203	301,323*	

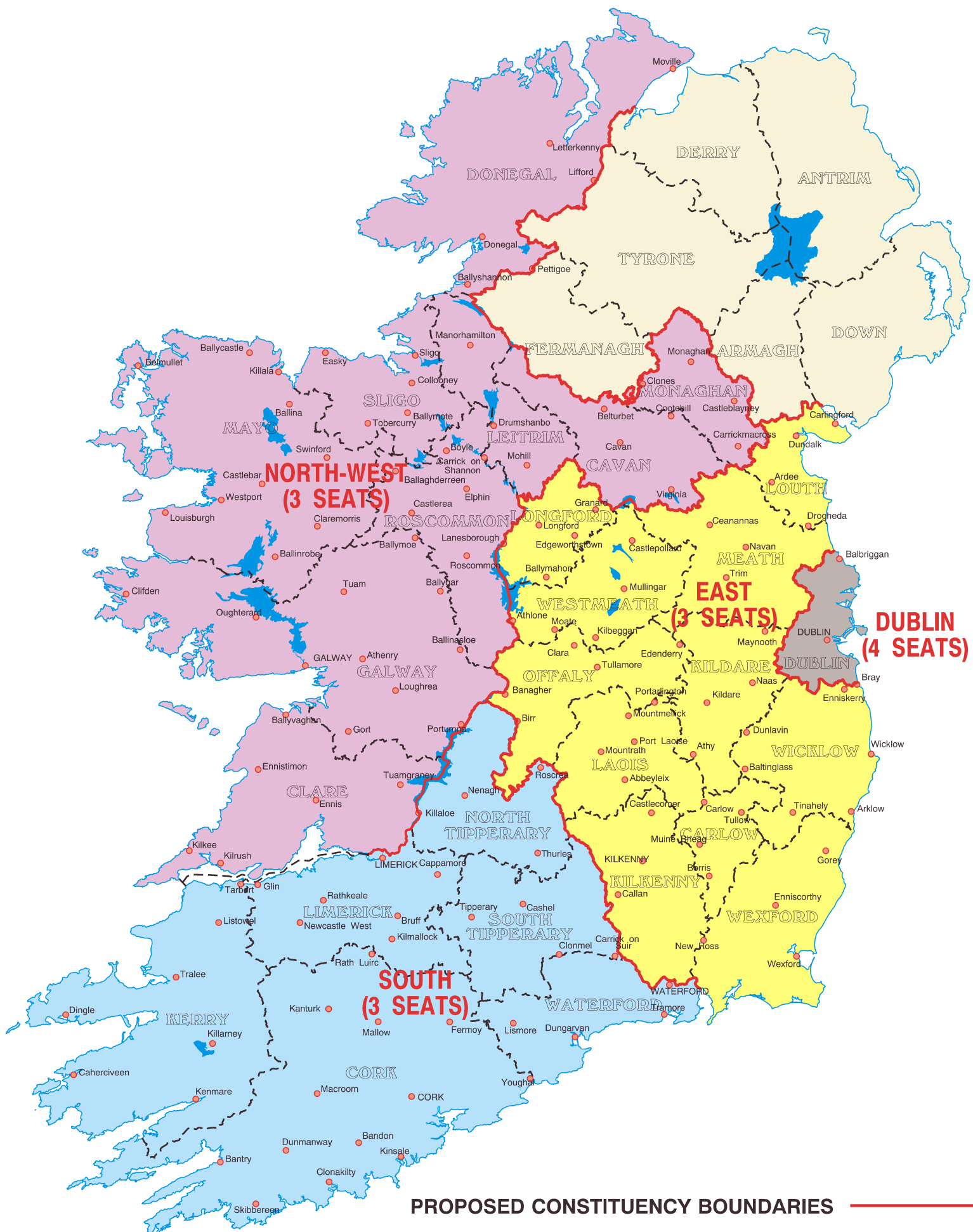
*National average population per member, based on thirteen seats.

Table B — Statistics relating to existing constituencies, based on 15 seats

European Constituency (seats)	2002 Population	2002 Population per MEP	% variation from 2002 national average population per member, based on 15 seats
Connacht-Ulster (3)	711,010	237,003	% -9.25
Dublin (4)	1,122,821	280,705	+7.49
Leinster (4)	982,758	245,690	-5.92
Munster (4)	1,100,614	275,153	+5.36
Total (15)	3,917,203	261,147*	

* National average population per member, based on fifteen seats.

MAP OF PROPOSED EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT CONSTITUENCIES, 2003



PROPOSED CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES ———

COUNTY BOUNDARIES - - - - -

(except where they coincide with Constituency Boundaries)

Second Appendix

2002 Population of each County and City

Local Government Area	2002 Population
County	
Carlow	46,014
Cavan	56,546
Clare	103,277
Cork	324,767
Donegal	137,575
Dublin	627,040
of which	
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	191,792
Fingal	196,413
South Dublin	238,835
Galway	143,245
Kerry	132,527
Kildare	163,944
Kilkenny	80,339
Laois	58,774
Leitrim	25,799
Limerick	121,281
Longford	31,068
Louth	101,821
Mayo	117,446
Meath	134,005
Monaghan	52,593
North Tipperary	61,010
Offaly	63,663
Roscommon	53,774
Sligo	58,200
South Tipperary	79,121
Waterford	56,952
Westmeath	71,858
Wexford	116,596
Wicklow	114,676
City	
Cork	123,062
Dublin	495,781
Galway	65,832
Limerick	54,023
Waterford	44,594
Total	3,917,203

Third Appendix

Persons and organisations from whom submissions were received

Mr. L. Aylward, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture and Food.

Mr. F. Butler, 13 Villa Park Road, Navan Road, Dublin 7.

Mr. G. Concagh, 34 Clonkeen Road, Dun Laoghaire.

Mr. M. J. Deane, Glenamoy, Ballina.

Fianna Fail.

Fine Gael.

Green Party/Comhaontas Glas.

Mr. B. Laird, 20 Greenlawns, Skerries, County Dublin.

Mr. M. Murphy, 27 Ailsbury Park, Dublin 4.

Mr. G. O'Dubhthaigh, Waterworks, Lee Road, Cork.

Progressive Democrats.

Mr. J. Sheridan, Little Road, Dromiskin, Dundalk.

Sinn Féin.