

INTRODUCTION TO REGISTERING A POLITICAL PARTY

The Register of Political Parties is prepared and maintained by the Registrar of Political Parties, an office previously held by the Clerk of the Dáil. Since the establishment of An Coimisiún Toghcháin, the Electoral Commission, on 9 February 2023 the Registrar is now the Chief Executive of An Coimisiún Toghcháin, Mr Art O’Leary.

An election candidate who is a member of a registered political party may have their party name and emblem appear on ballot papers. If an election candidate is a member of a party which is not registered, he or she will appear as ‘non-party’ on the ballot paper.

To be eligible for registration, a political party must satisfy the Registrar of Political Parties that it meets the requirements of the Act. This introduction aims to give some guidance as to what those requirements are and how to meet them.

The Register of Political Parties

The detail contained in the Register in respect of each party registered includes:

- Party name
- Party emblem
- Address of headquarters
- Names of officers authorised to authenticate candidates for election
- Parts of the State in which the party is organised to run candidates
- Elections for which the party is organised to run candidates
- Membership of group in the European Parliament/ European Political Party (if applicable)
- Details of accounting units and responsible persons

Requirements

The Electoral Reform Act 2022 sets out the conditions to be satisfied by parties who apply for registration. An application form is available from the office of the registrar of Political Parties.

Name

A party name cannot be longer than 6 words, and cannot be identical to the name of another registered party, or so similar to it that there is a risk of confusion. The name of any party that is registered as a local or regional party must reflect its geographical sphere of activity.

Emblem

A party emblem must not be obscene or offensive, or likely to be confused with the emblem of another registered political party. A party emblem may contain only such words (if any) as would be allowed in the name of a political party.

European Parliament Group/European Political Party

In order to register an affiliation with a political group in the European Parliament or a European Political Party, a party must have an MEP member who is a member of that European Parliament political group or European Political Party.

Organisation

- The party must be organised to contest Dáil, European and/or Local elections in the State or in a specified part of the State
- The party must be governed by written rules, such as a constitution, or a memorandum of association. Evidence that the written rules have been adopted by the party will be required. Certain matters must be provided for in the rules including:
 - o That the party hold an annual or other periodic meeting or conference, and
 - o That the business of the party is to be conducted by an executive body elected by the party (special care should be taken about the practicalities of this in the context of a new party)¹
- Details must be provided of the officers authorised to certify candidates for election
- Details must be provided of Accounting Units of the party and the 'responsible person' in respect of each such unit².

Membership

Requirements for membership depend on the type of political party that it is sought to register. Parties applying to register must demonstrate the following membership:

Registering to contest Dáil or European elections across the State:

- At least one member who is a sitting Teachta Dála (TD) or Member of the European Parliament (MEP)

or

300 adult members, at least half of whom are registered to vote

¹ Political parties must have their accounts audited in accordance with the Electoral Acts, and the accounts to be audited must first have been approved by the party executive.

² These matters largely arise out of how donations to political parties are regulated. An '*accounting unit*' will usually be the party headquarters or a party branch (there may well be others). The '*responsible person*' is the person in charge of complying with the rules about donations; usually it will be the party treasurer, or a branch treasurer, but again there can be variations depending on how the party is organised.

Registering to contest Dáil or European elections in a specified part of the State only:

- At least one member who is a sitting Teachta Dála (TD) or Member of the European Parliament (MEP)

or

100 adult members, at least half of whom are registered to vote

Registering to contest Local elections only:

- At least three members who are sitting Members of a local authority

or

100 adult members, at least half of whom are registered to vote.

The Registrar will require certification of the membership of a new political party, in accordance with the Electoral Acts. In the case of sitting politicians, the Registrar will require that those politicians certify that they are members of the new party. In the case of recorded membership lists, the Registrar will require that such lists be certified by a statutory auditor, that is (generally) an accountant who is entitled by law to audit company accounts.

General

Applications for registration can be made by completing and returning the Application Form available from the office of the Registrar of Political Parties or from the Commission's web site www.electoralcommission.ie. The Registrar may require additional information in order to assess the application of a political party. Every political party requiring registration has a statutory duty to provide any such information to the Registrar.

Appeals

Decisions of the Registrar in respect of

- the registration of new political parties
- the registration of emblems
- applications for amendments of party details in the Register, or
- cancellation of party registration

can be appealed to an Appeal Board. Appeals must be made in writing to the Chairperson of An Coimisiún Toghcháin by 12 noon on the 21st day after the publication in *Iris Oifigiúil* of the decision appealed from.

Keeping the Register up to date

If at any time there are changes to the details recorded in the register, political parties are required under the Electoral Reform Act to notify the Registrar in order that the Register can be amended to reflect those changes. This can be done by using the [application form](#) available from the office of the Registrar, the Chief Executive of An Coimisiún Toghcháin or from the Commission's website www.electoralcommission.ie.

From time to time the Registrar will contact each registered political party to confirm that it wishes to remain registered. This will be undertaken at least once a year. A failure to respond to such correspondence may result in the cancellation of a party's registration, removal of party details from the Register, and publication of an official notice in *Iris Oifigiúil*.

Time Limits for Elections

If a decision of the Registrar in respect of registration, amendment or cancellation is made

- after the date of issue of the writ or writs for a Dáil election, or
- after the date of the relevant ministerial order for a Local or European election,

the decision will not have effect for the particular election called.

Art O'Leary,

Registrar of Political Parties,

Chief Executive,

An Coimisiún Toghcháin, the Electoral Commission,

Dublin Castle,

Dublin 2.