

Tuarascáil Athbhreithnithe ar Thoghlaigh Pharlaimint na hEorpa 2023



Review of European Parliament Constituencies 2023

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Introduction by Chairperson

An Coimisiún Toghcháin (An Coimisiún) was established 9 months ago under the Electoral Reform Act 2022 to act as Ireland's independent, electoral commission. We have been given by the statute responsibility for a broad range of new and existing electoral functions which are regarded as central to protecting and promoting democracy in Ireland.

One of our first tasks was the review of our electoral constituencies in the light of the increase in population and the constitutional and statutory criteria. On 30 August 2023 An Coimisiún Toghcháin published our recommendations for the Dáil and European Parliament Constituencies. At the time of that report the number of MEPs remained unchanged at 13 and the Commission recommended no change to the European constituencies. However, following the publication of that report, a European Council Decision on 22 September 2023 allocated an additional seat to Ireland in the European Parliament, increasing the number of seats from 13 to 14 in line with our population growth and EU proportionality rules in the composition of the European Parliament.

So we are again reviewing the European Parliamentary constituency boundaries to have regard to the additional seat. For that purpose, and because we consider that participation in our decision making enhances debate and democratic engagement, we called for submissions. Distinctly conscious of June's European elections on the horizon, and that candidates and their political parties will move quickly to prepare for the upcoming campaign, we have carried out this review within the shortest possible time period under the terms of the Electoral Reform Act 2022, while ensuring the necessary and important consultation period.

As Chair, I must thank a number of people and organisations for their assistance: the Director General and staff of the Central Statistics Office, on whose 2022 Census results this Review rests; the Chief Executive and staff of Tailte Éireann whose mapping expertise has again been called upon; my six Electoral Commission colleagues, and the members of the executive of An Coimisiún Toghcháin, who applied themselves once more to conduct detailed analysis of the options available to meet the constitutional and statutory mandates.

On behalf of An Coimisiún Toghcháin, I commend this recommendation for consideration by the Houses of the Oireachtas.



Ms. Justice Marie Baker, Chairperson,
An Coimisiún Toghcháin.

Review of European Parliament Constituencies



On 30 August 2023 An Coimisiún Toghcháin published its recommendations for European Parliament constituencies under the provisions of section 56 (1) (a) of the Electoral Reform Act 2022. In that report the number of MEPs remained unchanged at 13. The Commission recommended no change to the European constituencies.

However, following the publication of that report, a European Council Decision (EU) 2023/2061 of 22 September 2023 decided the composition of the European Parliament.

In this EU decision Ireland was allocated an additional seat in the European Parliament, increasing the number of seats from 13 to 14.

In section 56 (1) (b) of the Act provision was made for such a scenario in which the number of seats for the European Parliament is changed subsequent to the laying of a constituency report before the Oireachtas and when no Constituency Review report is due before the date of the next European Parliament election – scheduled for June 2024.

The relevant section of the Act is as follows:

56. (1) The Commission shall conduct a review of all constituencies:

(b) following the receipt, by the Commission, of a written direction from the Minister, which shall be made by the Minister where either a Constituency Commission or the Commission has presented a report under section 57, and where—

(i) after such presentation, the total number of members of the European Parliament to be elected in the State specified pursuant to the treaties governing the European Union is different from the total number to which the Constituency Commission or the Commission had regard when preparing its report under section 56,

(ii) the Constituency Commission or the Commission is not due to prepare and present a report under section 56(1)(a) before the date of the next European Parliament election.

The European Council Decision increasing the allocation of seats to Ireland was published in the Official Journal of the European Union on 27 September 2023. In accordance with the Act, on 27 September, 2023 the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage wrote to the Chair of An Coimisiún Toghcháin directing that the Commission conduct a further review of European Constituencies. This Report is the outcome of that review.

As with the Constituency Review for Dáil constituencies, the recommendations of the Commission are advisory. The final determination of the constituencies for the European Parliament is one for the Houses of the Oireachtas to set out in legislation.

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT CONSTITUENCY REVIEW TERMS OF REFERENCE

This section outlines the Commission's approach to the key issues and decisions made in respect of this European Parliament Constituency Review ahead of the June 2024 European elections.

Under section 57 in relation to European Parliament constituencies, the Commission shall have regard to the following:

- the total number of members to be elected in the State to the European Parliament shall be such as may be specified pursuant to the Treaties governing the European Communities. The number is increasing by one, from 13 to 14;
- there shall be reasonable equality of representation as between constituencies;
- each constituency shall return 3, 4 or 5 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 matters, the Commission shall endeavour to maintain continuity in relation to the arrangement of constituencies.

NUMBER OF MEPS AND CONSTITUENCY MAKE-UP

The European Parliament Constituency Review of August 2023 was carried out by the Commission in the context of a process being run by the European Institutions on the overall composition of the European Parliament ahead of the 2024 European Elections.

Currently
Ireland has
13 MEP's
which are
allocated across
3 constituencies,
as per Table 1.

The agreement reached by the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers sees a final composition of the Parliament, which allocates one additional MEP to Ireland, bringing our total representation to 14 MEPs. This decision was confirmed by the European Union in the Official Journal on 27 September 2023. Currently Ireland has 13 MEPs which are allocated across 3 constituencies, as per Table 1.

Table 1: The current European Parliament constituencies

Existing constituency	Area	Number of MEPs 2022
Dublin	The counties of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal and South Dublin; and the city of Dublin.	4
Midlands-North-West	The counties of Cavan, Donegal, Galway, Kildare, Leitrim, Longford, Louth, Mayo, Meath, Monaghan, Roscommon, Sligo and Westmeath; and the city of Galway.	4
South	The counties of Carlow, Clare, Cork, Kerry, Kilkenny, Laois, Offaly, Tipperary, Wexford and Wicklow; and the city of Cork, and the city and county of Limerick and the city and county of Waterford.	5

RECOMMENDATION

With the extra seat allocated to Ireland, the Commission recommends the transfer of the counties of Laois and Offaly from the South constituency to the Midlands-North-West constituency, and the addition of one seat to that Midlands-North West Constituency to make it a 5 seat constituency.

The constituency population transferred from the South constituency to the Midlands-North West constituency is 91,877 in Co. Laois and 83,150 in Co. Offaly, making a combined total population transfer of 175,027. The Commission considers that this recommendation provides exceptionally good equality of representation across the country, with very good variances that are close to zero per cent.

While previous European Parliament Constituency Reviews have seen total variance ranges of between

16% and 21% for example in 1977, 1993, 1998, 2003, 2007, and 2012, this recommendation sees a total variance range of 1.99% - from the highest +1.10% in the South constituency to the lowest -0.89% in the Dublin constituency. The variance in the Midlands- North-West constituency will be -0.39%

Each constituency will return 4 or 5 members, no county boundaries are breached and each constituency is composed of contiguous areas.

There is also significant continuity in this recommendation as the existing Dublin constituency remains unchanged, and the total population transferred is comparatively small.

Having considered these options and the submissions made to it, the Commission recommends that the arrangement most in keeping with its terms of reference and in particular providing continuity would be that of

the transfer of the counties of Laois and Offaly from the South constituency to the Midlands-North-West constituency, and the addition of one seat to that Midlands-North-West constituency to make it a 5 seat constituency.

With the extra seat allocated to Ireland, the Commission recommends the transfer of the counties of Laois and Offaly from the South constituency to the Midlands-North-West constituency.

AN COIMISIÚN TOGHCHÁIN - CONSTITUENCY REVIEW 2023

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT CONSTITUENCIES

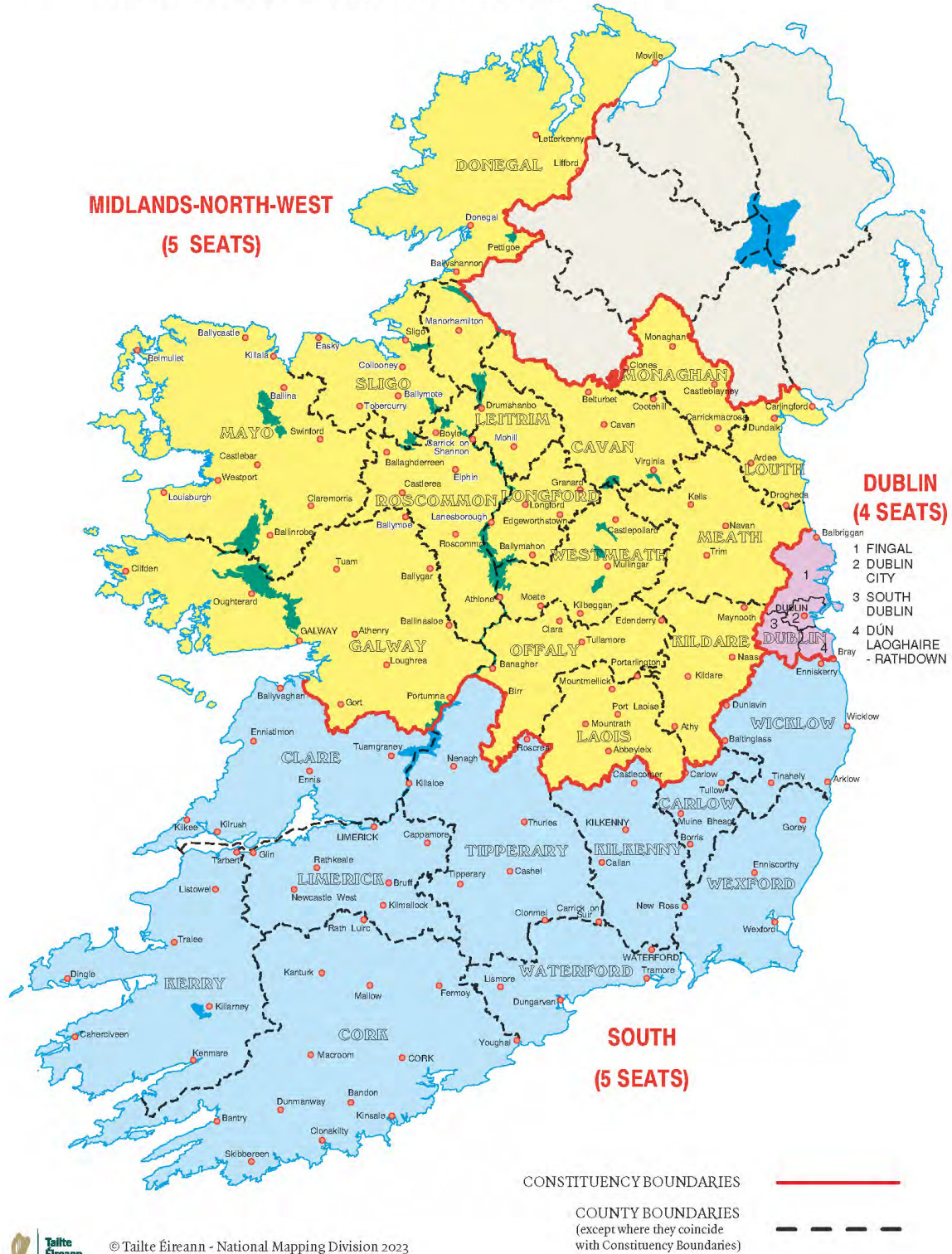


Table 2: The recommended European Parliament constituencies

Reccomended European Parliament constituency	Area	MEPs	2022 Population	2022 Population per MEP	% variance per MEP
Dublin	The counties of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal and South Dublin; and the city of Dublin.	4	1,458,154	364,539	-0.89
Midlands-North-West	The counties of Cavan, Donegal, Galway, Kildare, Leitrim, Longford, Louth, Mayo, Meath, Monaghan, Roscommon, Sligo and Westmeath; and the city of Galway. The counties of Laois and Offaly are transferred from the South constituency.	5	1,831,741	366,348	-0.39
South	The counties of Carlow, Clare, Cork, Kerry, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Wexford and Wicklow; and the city of Cork, and the city and county of Limerick and the city and county of Waterford.	5	1,859,244	371,849	+1.10
Total		14	5,149,139	367,796	Range: 1.99



Submissions

On 29 September 2023 the Commission began a one month consultation process for the European Parliament Constituency Review. This included advertisements in national newspapers, notices on our website (www.electoralcommission.ie) and social media posts. At the end of this month the Commission received 23 submissions all of which were considered by the Commission during their deliberations.

In addition to new submissions received as part of this process the Commission contacted all of those who made submissions to the previous review between 9 February and 10 May. These submissions were made in the context of a lack of certainty around the allocation of seats to Ireland for the next European Parliament. During the course of that previous review of the European Parliament constituencies carried out by An Coimisiún, the Parliament's Constitutional Affairs Committee was considering a proposal to allocate an additional one, or possibly two seats, to Ireland in the next Parliament.

Arising from that development, the Commission sought further public submissions on the new proposals in a series of public notice advertisements during the period 9-16 April. All of those who made submissions as part of the Constituency Review that was published on 30 August 2023 were contacted by the Commission and asked if they wanted their initial submission now considered as part of this new review of European constituencies, or if they wished to make a new submission. Eight of those who had submitted to the previous review requested that their submissions be considered as part of this review. The Commission reviewed all of these submissions during their deliberations.

A number of submissions received raised concerns around European Parliament constituency magnitude and size. These issues will be included in the research that the Commission is undertaking with regard to Dáil constituencies that was outlined in the Constituency Review published in August 2023.

LIST OF SUBMISSIONS

Political Parties (National)

The Labour Party
Fine Gael
The Green Party
Sinn Féin

Political Parties (Local)

Comhairle Dáilceantair
Uibh Fhailí Fianna Fáil
(Miriam Uí Cheallacháin)

Elected Representatives

Senator Malcolm Byrne
Deputy Cathal Crowe T.D.

Individuals

Liam Ahern
Edmond Byrne
John Byrne
Tom Cassidy
Denis Cahalane
John Colgan
Jason Fitzharris
Brendan Heneghan
Frank Hynes
Adam Hunt
Paul Mahon
Keith Mills
William Quill
Stephen Spillane
Richard Talbot
Craig Williamson



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