

Modernisation of the Electoral Registration Process

Short consultation document

Background and context

The Government has decided that work should commence on modernisation of the voter registration process. The goal is a more efficient, user-friendly system that will be easier for people to engage with and for administrators to manage, while also being absolutely secure.

Proposals

1. Simplification of forms and process
2. A rolling register or continuous registration
3. Optional online registration and secure self-service
4. Moving to individual registration only
5. Enabling a single national register database with unique identifiers
6. Moving to verified identity using PPSNs
7. Data sharing to maintain accuracy and comprehensiveness

Key Proposal No. 1: Simplification of forms and process

There are currently multiple different forms in use for the electoral register. Under this proposal this would be reduced to one or two forms with which to register or amend a record, and will be clear and user friendly. Similar streamlining of forms for postal votes or special voting arrangements will be considered.

Key proposal No. 2: A rolling register or continuous registration

This proposal would create a single “live” electoral register. It would mean that individuals could inspect the register at any time and submit updates or changes, whenever necessary, up to 14 days before any polling day. The day after polling day, the register would re-open and then be continuously updated until 14 days before the next polling day and so on.

Key proposal No. 3: Optional online registration and secure self-service

Online registration would allow people to choose to manage their own registration and updating of details. There will still be a paper process for anyone who prefers that.

To ensure that people are who they say they are when they use the online system, we need to use secure identity verification technology. People already use MyGovID for some State services online, e.g. Social Welfare services. MyGovID is available to anyone with a Public Services Card. 2.7 million people already have one so this option will be available to them.

Key proposal No. 4: Moving to individual registration only

Individual registration would mean that each person wishing to be entered onto the register or make any changes to their record would need to complete their own individual form.

Currently a household form allows one person to complete the form on behalf of everyone at a given address for entry onto the draft register. While convenient for some – e.g. parents registering their adult children - it causes a number of issues in terms of data privacy, accuracy and identity verification. For example, in rental properties, some may not be included on forms. This has important impacts on the register’s accuracy and completeness.

Key proposal No. 5: Enabling a single national register database with unique identifiers

At present, each local authority prepares its own electoral register. This proposal would involve compiling registrations from the 31 local authorities’ registers into a modern, secure central database. This would mean:

- Standard processes for all Local Authorities in how they manage and store data

- Each person on the register would get a unique register number, making it easier to find their individual record when they want to change their registration details. It would reduce the chance of errors during updates, for example, change of address.
- It would be easier for local authorities to avoid creating duplicate entries.

Key Proposal No. 6: Moving to verified identity using PPSNs

Currently the public can perform checks on the register by inspecting the draft register, and by An Garda Síochána checking forms and ID documents for entry to the supplement.

This proposal would mean that when a person wants to be included on the register, or update their details they could give their PPSN. This would allow a basic check against an existing public sector database (e.g. the PPSN database) to make sure that the name, address, nationality, date of birth provided on the form match the information stored on the PPSN database and aren't already on the register. PPSNs would not be part of the register or appear on the register.

Key Proposal No. 7: Data sharing to maintain accuracy and comprehensiveness

Information from an annual door-to-door or postal canvas can get out-of-date very quickly.

Data sharing for the electoral register can mean two things:

- Sharing data between local authorities – this will improve how they communicate and will make sure that people moving between counties can trust that their information is correctly updated
- Data sharing between different organisations for the purposes of updating the register – for example, by allowing for the register to be checked against the PPSN database. Other types might include allowing people to change their address on the register at the same time as they change it for motor tax purposes, for example.

Information sharing would be minimal. The register only uses select pieces of information – confirmation of identity (possibly PPSN check); age; citizenship and address/Eircode.

Other proposals being considered

1. Allowing provisional registration for young people aged 16-17, e.g. through a schools programme, with registration automatically becoming active on their 18th birthday.
2. Specific provision for people with no fixed address e.g. people experiencing homelessness, to ensure a standard procedure across the country.
3. Provision for anonymous registration for people whose safety may be at risk if their details are public on the register, e.g. where court ordered protections exist.
4. Removal of provision for the edited register which is used infrequently in any case but may no longer be an appropriate use of data connected with the electoral register.

Combined benefits of the proposals

- Registration in a way that works for everyone – online or on paper
- A clear and simple process – one form, one process, one register – all year round
- A single, secure database to enable cross-local authority checks while protecting data
- Balancing security and ease of access to protect the integrity of our registration process
- Building an electoral register that is secure, comprehensive and accurate
- Data sharing in the future – subject to clear standards, limits and safeguards

Make a submission

Help us enhance these proposals by giving us your views. Tell us what you think about the individual proposals or your overall views on the proposals.

Questions you might want to consider are:

- Do you consider the likely overall impact or the impact of an individual proposal to be beneficial?
- Do you see risks in some or all of the proposals and how these might be lessened?
- How would these proposals impact you, taking account of any recent experiences of yours with the register?

The electoral registration process affects all of us and so your views on any aspect of the process and its potential improvement are welcome.

You can give us your views:

- By email (in Microsoft Word format please) to: registerreform@housing.gov.ie
- In writing, posted to: Electoral Registration Project Consultation, Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Custom House, Dublin 1, D01 W6X0

It should be noted that in the interests of transparency, all written submissions received will be made publicly available on the Department's website. [View privacy statement](#)