



# Borderwise:

## Government & Public Administration

### Introduction

This information sheet aims to provide a general overview of how government and public administration operate in the Republic of Ireland (ROI).

### Government in the South

The Constitution of Ireland sets out the form of government and outlines the fundamental rights of citizens. There are three main organs of government –

#### 1. The Executive

The Executive which is generally referred to as the Government which comprises the Taoiseach and Ministers.

#### 2. The Legislature

The Legislature is the Houses of the Oireachtas - the Dáil and Seanad (Senate) which together constitute the Houses of the Oireachtas.

#### 3. The Judiciary.

The Judiciary (the judges in the Courts) interprets and applies the law and is independent of the other two branches of government

The Taoiseach is the head of the Irish Government. He or she is nominated by the Dáil and formally appointed by the Irish President. The Taoiseach then nominates the other members of the Government and gives each of them a Department of State.

### Local Government

There are 114 directly elected local authorities in ROI and local elections are held at least every five years in Ireland. Local Government has a dual role. In addition to providing a demographic representation of local communities it is also responsible for providing a range of services including water and waste collection. Contact details for all local authorities are available at:

[www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie)

### Who is eligible to vote in elections and referenda?

You are entitled to vote in elections in the ROI if you meet the following conditions and if your name is on the electoral register:

- Irish citizens can vote in every election and referendum
- British citizens may vote at Dáil, European and local elections
- Other EU citizens may vote at European and local elections
  - Non-EU citizens can vote at local elections only

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To be eligible to be included on the Register of Electors, you must:

- be at least 18 years old on the day the Register comes into force (15 February)
- have been ordinarily resident in the State on 1 September in the year preceding the coming into force of the Register

## Local Authorities

There are 29 County Councils in Ireland with a total of 753 members. The number of Councilors that can be elected to each County Council depends on the size of the county's population. The County Council has jurisdiction or control throughout its administrative area.

## Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is a statutory office whose main function is to investigate complaints from members of the public who feel that they have been unfairly treated by certain public services. These services are government departments and offices, local authorities, the Health Service Executive and An Post. Further information can be obtained by telephoning: +353 1 639 5600 or alternatively by visiting the website: [www.ombudsman.ie](http://www.ombudsman.ie)

## Equality

It is illegal to discriminate in employment and the provision of services on a number of grounds - gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, religion, race and membership of the Traveller community. The equality legislation is implemented by the Equality Authority, the Equality Tribunal and the Courts. Further information can be obtained by telephoning (01) 417 3333 or alternatively by visiting the website: [www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie)

## Official Languages Commissioner

The Official Languages Commissioner is a statutory office whose main function is to monitor and ensure compliance by public bodies with the provisions of the Official Languages Act 2003. The Act aims to promote the use of Irish for official purposes. Further information is available at: [www.coimisineir.ie](http://www.coimisineir.ie)

## Freedom of Information (FOI)

The freedom of information legislation obliges public bodies to make information about themselves publicly available and gives individuals the right to access various information. Virtually all public authorities are covered by the legislation. The Information Commissioner investigates complaints about non-compliance with the FOI legislation and generally promotes a freedom of information culture in the public service. Further information is available at: [www.oic.gov.ie](http://www.oic.gov.ie)

## Contact Details

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