

# Electoral Commission review of European Constituency Boundaries

## Submission from the Fine Gael Party

We welcome the opportunity to make a submission, and take this opportunity to wish the members of the Electoral Commission well in their work.

In considering the basis for our submission, we are mindful of the Commission's Terms of Reference, in particular:

- 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, which has recently been revised to 14, following a decision of the European Council
- each constituency shall return 3, 4 or 5 members
- the breaching of county boundaries should be avoided, as far as practicable
- each constituency shall be composed of contiguous areas
- there shall be regard to geographic considerations
- maintaining continuity in relation to the arrangement of constituencies

## Population growth

According to the final figures from Census 2022, the national population has grown by 8.1%, since Census 2016. This rate of growth is reflected evenly across the existing European Constituencies::

Constituency	2016	2022	Change	% change
Dublin	1,347,359	1,458,154	110,795	8.2%
Midlands/NW	1,523,517	1,656,714	133,197	8.7%
South	1,890,989	2,034,271	143,282	7.6%
	<b>4,761,865</b>	<b>5,149,139</b>	<b>387,274</b>	<b>8.1%</b>

That being the case, the Electoral Commission is faced with conditions similar to those considered by the last Constituency Commission, when boundaries were reviewed in 2018, but must allocate an additional seat.

## Revised representation - 14 seats

We considered the option of having four constituencies, organised on a provincial basis; whilst the variances in population per MEP arising in Dublin and Leinster are acceptable, those in Connacht/Ulster and Munster are well into double figures:

Region	2016	2022	Seats	Pop/MEP	Variance
Connacht/Ulster	847,442	905,439	3	301,813	-18%
Dublin	1,347,359	1,458,154	4	364,539	-1%
Leinster	1,287,044	1,412,200	4	353,050	-4%
Munster	1,280,020	1,373,346	3	457,782	24%
	<b>4,761,865</b>	<b>5,149,139</b>	<b>14</b>		

We looked at including in Connacht/Ulster a variety of Counties which are contiguous to that constituency (Clare, Longford and Westmeath, Laois and Offaly, Louth, Meath) and found that in no case was it possible to avoid one constituency ending up with a variance in double figures, with the exception of the option including Co. Meath; however, in that case, Co. Louth would be isolated from the rest of Leinster, which would breach the terms of reference, and moving both Louth and Meath also results in a significant variance of +15%. (See Appendix 1)

On that basis, we feel that retaining the existing configuration of constituencies, with limited changes, is most compatible with the terms of reference.

Essentially, Midlands North-West and South each has more population than their current seat allocation can support; as South is already a five seat constituency, it needs to lose some territory to Midlands North-West, and that constituency should gain the additional seat.

There are two viable options to consider – moving Co. Clare, or alternatively, Counties Laois and Offaly; we viewed the possibility of moving Tipperary as not practical on geographic grounds.

Moving Clare to Midlands North-West generates variances which are acceptable, but means breaching a provincial boundary, which can be avoided.

Constituency	2022	Seats	Pop/MEP	Variance
Dublin	1,458,154	4	364,539	-0.89%
Midlands/NW +C	1,784,652	5	356,930	-2.95%
South -C	1,915,454	5	383,091	4.16%
	<b>5,158,260</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>368,447</b>	

Moving Counties Laois and Offaly make more sense, as Leinster is already split between two constituencies, and the resulting variances represent the optimum equality of representation.

Constituency	2022	Seats	Pop/MEP	Variance
Dublin	1,458,154	4	364,539	-0.89%
Midlands/NW +LO	1,831,741	5	366,348	-0.39%
South -LO	1,859,244	5	371,849	1.10%
	<b>5,149,139</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>367,796</b>	

# Appendix 1

Consideration of constituencies on a provincial basis, and the impact of moving various counties from Leinster and Munster to Connacht/Ulster

## Co. Clare

Region	2016	2022	Seats	Pop/MEP	Variance
Conn/Uls + Clare	966,259	1,033,377	3	344,459	-6%
Dublin	1,347,359	1,458,154	4	364,539	-1%
Leinster	1,287,044	1,412,200	4	353,050	-4%
Munster - Clare	1,161,203	1,245,408	3	415,136	13%
	<b>4,761,865</b>	<b>5,149,139</b>	<b>14</b>		

## Counties Longford and Westmeath

Region	2016	2022	Seats	Pop/MEP	Variance
Conn/Uls + LWM	966,276	1,035,340	3	345,113	-6%
Dublin	1,347,359	1,458,154	4	364,539	-1%
Leinster - LWM	1,157,401	1,269,228	3	423,076	15%
Munster	1,280,020	1,373,346	4	343,337	-7%
	<b>4,751,056</b>	<b>5,136,068</b>	<b>14</b>		

## Counties Laois and Offaly

Region	2016	2022	Seats	Pop/MEP	Variance
Conn/Uls + LO	1,010,100	1,080,466	3	360,155	-2%
Dublin	1,347,359	1,458,154	4	364,539	-1%
Leinster - LO	1,124,386	1,237,173	3	412,391	12%
Munster	1,280,020	1,373,346	4	343,337	-7%
	<b>4,761,865</b>	<b>5,149,139</b>	<b>14</b>		

## Co. Louth

Region	2016	2022	Seats	Pop/MEP	Variance
Conn/Uls + L	976,326	1,045,142	3	348,381	-5%
Dublin	1,347,359	1,458,154	4	364,539	-1%
Leinster - L	1,158,160	1,272,497	3	424,166	15%
Munster	1,280,020	1,373,346	4	343,337	-7%
	<b>4,761,865</b>	<b>5,149,139</b>	<b>14</b>		

### Co. Meath

Region	2016	2022	Seats	Pop/MEP	Variance
Conn/Uls + MH	1,042,486	1,126,265	3	375,422	2%
Dublin	1,347,359	1,458,154	4	364,539	-1%
Leinster - MH	1,092,000	1,191,374	3	397,125	8%
Munster	1,280,020	1,373,346	4	343,337	-7%
	<b>4,761,865</b>	<b>5,149,139</b>	<b>14</b>		

### Counties Louth and Meath

Region	2016	2022	Seats	Pop/MEP	Variance
Conn/Uls + L, MH	1,171,370	1,265,968	3	421,989	15%
Dublin	1,347,359	1,458,154	4	364,539	-1%
Leinster - L, MH	963,116	1,051,671	3	350,557	-5%
Munster	1,280,020	1,373,346	4	343,337	-7%
	<b>4,761,865</b>	<b>5,149,139</b>	<b>14</b>		