An Coimisiún Toghcháin
The Electoral Commission



Post Electoral Event Review

Bye-elections
Dublin Central and Galway West

22 May 2026

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Table of Contents

Foreword	2
Executive Summary	6
PEER Recommendations	8
PEER Scope, Checklist, and Attendance Overview	9
PEER Routes	13
Cás-Staidéar: Eolas agus Seirbhísí i nGaeilge	**17**
Data Analysis	22
PEER Insights	25
Best Practices Observed	28
Special Voting and Postal Voting	30
Case study: No Fixed Address	**33**
Electoral Register Update and Turnout	36
Information Campaign for Dublin Central and Galway West Bye-Elections	38
Transparency and Targeting of Political Advertising	43
Future Priorities	44
Appendices	45
Endnotes	58

Foreword



On 22 May 2026, the people of Galway West and Dublin Central voted in bye-elections to fill two vacant seats in Dáil Éireann. These were the first bye-elections to be held in Ireland in almost five years, and the first to be held since the establishment of An Coimisiún Toghcháin on 9 February 2023.

We took the decision, in exercise of the statutory powers vested in An Coimisiún by s.68 of the *Electoral Reform Act 2022*, to prepare and publish a Post Electoral Event Review (PEER) for the Galway West and Dublin Central Bye-elections, and so advised the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the returning officers appointed in connection with these elections.

The publication of this report marks the conclusion of the sixth such review conducted by An Coimisiún since 2024. As with all previous PEER reports and in line with the legislative provisions governing PEERs, this report places a focus on the assistance provided to electors while voting, in particular electors with disabilities.

This was the first bye-election to be held in Dublin Central since 2009, and the first in Galway West since 1975. The constituencies of Galway West and Dublin Central are very different. Galway West is one of the largest constituencies with an area which is largely rural, while Dublin Central is one of the smallest constituencies and heavily urban.

We were heartened to see voters on opposite sides of the country show a commitment to democratic elections. Members and staff of An Coimisiún observed voting at polling stations from Inishbofin to East Wall, and saw voters take time out of their days to have their voices heard, and to ensure that their communities were fully represented in our nation's parliament.

I wish to thank the two returning officers, the presiding officers, poll clerks and all others who played roles, whether large or small, in the successful running of these elections and for facilitating An Coimisiún as we gathered data for this report. Whether it was hearing of or observing the bus driver who dropped elderly voters to the door of their polling stations, or the polling station staff who hand-drew additional signs to ensure that voters could find the correct entrance, An Coimisiún's staff and I were inspired by the diligent efforts of those who went above and beyond their duties to facilitate the democratic process. It takes a village to run an election, and every local endeavour to ensure the accessibility of our electoral system is beneficial to our democracy.

Dublin Central Bye-Election Polling Stations



Galway West Bye-Election Polling Stations



That these electoral events were confined to two of the State's 43 constituencies offered An Coimisiún the opportunity to concentrate our observations in a manner that had not been possible at previous electoral events. In Dublin Central on polling day we managed to visit all 21 polling stations in one constituency which for the first time gave us a useful and complete picture of one constituency.

We conducted observations at 21 polling stations in Galway West, including in two offshore islands. We also took this unique opportunity to examine the provision of Irish language information and services to voters in the Gaeltacht areas of Galway West. The ability of Irish speakers to engage with the democratic process through the State's first official language is an important matter of accessibility and linguistic rights. Irish-speaking observer pairs visited polling stations in all ten of Gaeltacht na Gaillimhe's Language Planning Areas and were pleased to meet dedicated Irish-speaking presiding officers and polling clerks who ensured that voters could cast their ballot in the language of their choice.

However, our observations do highlight the continued need for enhancements to the electoral accessibility for people with a disability, for Irish speakers and for the wider population. As in previous PEER reports, we set out herein a number of recommendations based on our observations, which are designed to improve and safeguard the integrity and accessibility of the electoral system.

As this marks the coming to an end of just over two years of frequent electoral events, I urge the Minister and election administrators to utilise the time before the next general election to implement the recommendations set out in this report and in the PEER reports which preceded it, and to build on the constructive improvements that have already been made to our electoral system, so that when voters return to the polls, the electoral system upon which our democracy depends is more accessible than ever to the voter.

I hope that the observations and recommendations set out in this report will serve to guide these efforts, and I commend it to the reader.



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




VOTE!
Don't let others speak for you


Cláraigh


An Coimisiún Toghcháin
The Electoral Commission


Get your FREE 'I Voted' sticker here
Wear it with pride today!
I'm a VOTER!




I'm REGISTERED to VOTE!



Executive Summary

Arising from the election of President Catherine Connolly in October 2025, and the resignation of Pascal Donohue TD in November 2025, there was a need to fill the vacancies in the 34th Dáil for the Dublin Central and Galway West constituencies. Under the *Electoral (Amendment) Act 2011*, a writ for a bye-election must be issued within six months of a vacancy arising. The Dáil agreed the writ to fill the vacancy on 22 April 2026, with both bye-elections scheduled for 22 May.

Under the powers in s.68 of the *Electoral Reform Act 2022*, An Coimisiún may, after each electoral event, prepare and publish a report on the administration of that event – a 'Post Electoral Event Review' (PEER). This is the sixth PEER report and the first time one was conducted during a bye-election. While the methodology remained consistent with previous PEERs, in utilising in-person fieldwork, there was no National Election and Democracy Study (NEDS) data collected on this occasion, and a more specific study focussed on turnout was instead prioritised. As the results of the work of An Coimisiún have evolved over time, this PEER also includes a summary of some of the ongoing work by An Coimisiún which was relevant to these bye-elections. This includes progress on the oversight of the electoral register, the implementation of the Transparency and Targeting of Political Advertising regulations, and voter engagement initiatives such as the "I Voted" Stickers. Data on the assessment of polling stations was collected by members and staff of An Coimisiún visiting 42 polling stations in the two constituencies. This included all 21 polling locations in Dublin Central and 21 polling locations across Galway West. 10 of the stations in Galway West were visited as part of the Eolas agus Seirbhísí i nGaeilge case study, one in each of the Galway Gaeltacht's Language Planning Areas (LPAs). Another six were in the Gaeltacht Service Towns of Clifden and Galway City.

As with our previous PEER findings, there was a high level of overall accessibility in polling locations in the two constituencies. Out of the 42 polling locations visited, 38 (90%) were deemed accessible for electors with a disability through primary or alternative entrances. In Dublin Central, where some previously visited locations were revisited, there were notable improvements in areas that were highlighted during earlier observations, including polling station layout and accessibility of parking facilities. Some of the other findings from the PEER checklist for the bye-elections included issues with privacy within and around polling locations, and issues related to the initial reporting of turnout.

Two key recommendations arising from the bye-election PEER reiterate concerns identified in previous PEER reports regarding An Coimisiún's ability to effectively discharge its statutory functions. We again make an argument for amending electoral legislation to ensure a statutory right of access and observation to An Coimisiún staff and members as observers at electoral events. We also recommend that An Coimisiún be notified in advanced of the planned electoral schedule for events such as postal or special voting so that members and staff have sufficient time to be present to observe.

The remaining recommendations focus on ensuring candidates are provided with information on electoral compliance, securing suitable arrangements for the adjudication of the spoiled vote, and guaranteeing that legislation regarding Irish-language signage and services provisions are adhered to.

An Coimisiún would like to thank all those involved in the successful running of these bye-elections in Dublin Central and Galway West. The elections were once again administered efficiently, demonstrating the professionalism of all involved. An Coimisiún would like to recognise the efforts of all those involved. We welcome the enactment of some of the previous PEER recommendations and will continue to monitor and encourage the implementation of the outstanding recommendations.



PEER Recommendations

Recommendation 1:
Ensure that the provisions set out in language legislation regarding Irish-language signage and services are adhered to at all future electoral events by prescribing returning officers as public bodies under the *Official Languages Act 2003*.

Recommendation 2:
The Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage should publish or distribute a *Memorandum for the Guidance of Candidates*, outlining and summarising electoral law provisions, restrictions and rules for candidates.

Recommendation 3:
Count centres should have suitable arrangements and physical space for the adjudication of ballot papers to ensure all candidates have the same opportunity to observe and participate as appropriate.

Recommendation 4:
Implement the previous PEER recommendation to amend electoral legislation to expressly provide for the attendance of An Coimisiún staff and members as observers at polling stations on polling day, count centres, and at the conduct of administrative tasks in association with the administration of an electoral event.

Recommendation 5:
Returning officers should notify An Coimisiún Toghcháin of scheduled electoral administration events at the same time as notifying candidates.

Recommendation 6:
In advance of an electoral event, the Local Authorities should ensure that the electorate figure relevant to that election is the one provided to the Returning Officer and used for calculating turnout, rather than the potentially larger electorate figure from the full polling scheme.

PEER Scope, Checklist, and Attendance Overview

The Post Electoral Event Review (PEER) has become a central publication of An Coimisiún Toghcháin in its role as an oversight body of electoral functions and events, as detailed in s.30 of the *Electoral Reform Act 2022*. This is the sixth PEER report since March 2024. The findings from PEERs are part of An Coimisiún's responsibilities to conduct research on electoral processes, provide advice to Government, promote voter participation, and improve standards in the administration of elections and the electoral register. These findings help connect real voter experiences on polling day with An Coimisiún's broader strategy to strengthen and support Ireland's electoral system.

A central focus of the PEER is the election day operational logistics, alongside an overarching emphasis on voter experiences at various stages of the electoral process. This work has involved examining whether voters, especially those requiring additional support, were adequately informed and assisted throughout the voting process, as well as reviewing the training and resources available to staff and election officials.

Previous PEER reports were focused on having various members of the voting public guide us through their voting experience, enabling us to understand first-hand the practical steps and challenges these individuals may encounter when casting their vote. We have, in accordance with international electoral observation best practice, also had team members attend the issuing of the postal vote and special voting during previous electoral events. We have spoken to and received feedback from individuals at all levels of the voting process, from returning officers to polling clerks to the wider general public about how improvements could be made to the processes. The analysis provided by the PEER demonstrates how improvements can and are being made with each election cycle.

In addition to the requirements of PEER reports as stipulated in Section 68(3) of the 2022 Act, this report also includes an overview of several initiatives and relevant work undertaken by An Coimisiún as it pertains to these bye-elections. This is a reflection of how our work has evolved over time. Given their relevance, we have taken this opportunity to provide an outline on some of these areas. We have summarised some of the work and research An Coimisiún has conducted in relation to the accuracy and completeness of the electoral registers maintained by registration authorities, as specified in Section 69 of the 2022 Act. We have summarised the work completed to support the implementation of the Transparency and Targeting of Political Advertising requirements, as prescribed by the *European Union (Political Advertising) Regulations 2025* (S.I. No. 474 of 2025) which established the national framework for their implementation and enforcement.

Finally, in line with the education function of An Coimisiún as stated in Section 67 of the 2022 Act, we have highlighted the successful "I Voted" sticker pilot initiative designed to promote voter participation and awareness.

For other electoral events to date we have gathered valuable data on voters' experiences through our National Election

and Democracy Study. On this occasion alongside the bye-elections, we have conducted an ambitious, stand-alone empirical research project which focuses specifically on explaining voter turnout. The research has involved face-to-face surveys with a representative sample of eligible voters in Dublin Central and Galway West (conducted in the days immediately following the bye-election), followed by focus groups. It aims to deepen understanding of what explains participation and abstention from voting and gather insights into the circumstances surrounding non-voting and in particular habitual non-voting. This research will be published in early 2027.

Checklist

One of the core instruments that An Coimisiún Toghcháin uses to assess election events is the PEER Checklist. The checklist is a template document used by PEER teams to capture their data and observations during visits to polling stations. The checklist was developed through a combination of international best practices and electoral observation assessment to ensure it reflects both accessibility considerations and sound electoral practices. This included reviewing assessments used by the UK, Estonia and Australia as well as the Accessibility Checklist developed by the Working Group on Disability Voting chaired by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. We have also reflected approaches taken in international electoral observation assessment templates, such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) election-day observation forms.

The checklist is reviewed and updated ahead of each electoral event to ensure it remains relevant and reflects current practices. In some cases, individual questions may be revised, refined, or removed entirely, particularly in response to findings from case studies highlighted in previous PEER reports. These updates allow the checklist to evolve in response to practical experience and emerging insights from earlier observations.

At the same time, there is a strong emphasis on maintaining consistency in the core structure and content of the checklist. This consistency is important because it allows An Coimisiún to track key indicators and compare findings across different electoral events over time. By keeping many of the same questions in place, it becomes possible to measure progress, identify trends, and assess whether changes made to the electoral process are leading to improvements in areas such as accessibility, compliance, and the overall voter experience. The PEER Checklist remained unchanged from the Presidential Election in October 2025.

Overall, the questions are designed to gather consistent information about the polling station and accessibility while also capturing how well the voting process works in practice. They broadly fall into a number of key types. There are basic compliance questions which confirm whether essential requirements are met, such as the presence of staff, materials, signage, and the general operation of the polling station.

Another group of questions focus on accessibility and inclusion. These examine how easy it is for all voters, including those with disabilities or additional needs, to access and use the polling station. They

look at issues such as physical access to the building, layout inside the station, availability of supports, and whether voters can move through the process independently and with dignity. This reflects the strong emphasis in PEER reports on improving participation and removing barriers to voting.

The checklist also includes questions on how procedures are carried out on the day as observed by the PEER team. These questions record how staff interact with voters, how the voting process is managed, and whether correct procedures are followed consistently, such as checking voters' identification, issuing ballot papers, and maintaining secrecy of the ballot.

Finally, there is space for the teams to note issues and comments, unusual events, or examples of good practice, to allow for deeper context beyond simple tick-box answers. Together, this range of questions ensure the checklist captures both measurable compliance and the real experience of voting at polling stations. The full checklist can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

Previous recommendations

In the PEER for the Presidential Election in October 2025, recommendations included voter registration by freepost to be available to all electors; updated guidance on the process of classification of invalid ballot papers; and administrative changes related to standardisation and formatting for data reporting. This report was published on 23 April 2026 in line with statutory provision, the day after the confirmation of the bye-election date. Therefore, it is acknowledged that there was limited time to implement or reflect these recommendations before bye-election operations began for 22 May 2026.

It is worth noting that the electoral cycles since March 2024 have been particularly demanding, with a number of electoral events taking place in quick succession across the past two years. This sustained period of activity has understandably limited the opportunity to address all of the recommendations raised in the PEER reports to date. However, with a pause in electoral events now anticipated, there is a valuable opportunity to focus on implementing outstanding actions and give due consideration to any remaining recommendations.

As the PEER is a long-term reflective project, all previously stated recommendations remain valid and in place. We are look forward to them being implemented and intend to conduct a review of their status over the coming period. Any positive changes arising will be noted in future iterations of the PEER.

As previously noted in the PEER reports for the 2024 General Election (published in March 2025) and the 2025 Presidential Election (published in April 2026), An Coimisiún welcomes the inclusion of references to our attendance at polling stations in the 'Manual for Presiding Officers'. However, the previously recommended legislative change to allow for the attendance of An Coimisiún staff and members at all electoral events is still yet to be implemented. This issue was first raised in the first PEER for the Family and Care Referendums, published in September 2024.

Overall, from the table of recommendations included in the Presidential Election PEER published in April 2026, more than 50% of the 22 recommendations have been either fully implemented or are currently progressing as part of ongoing works. These include administrative improvements such as publishing guidance, and updating forms and reporting processes, as well as several measures to support voter access and accessibility.

Attendance

The PEER teams endeavour to inclusively and effectively capture the many perspectives and experiences of voters. Continuing from past practices, we sought attendance at all electoral events occurring during this bye-election through communications with the returning officers and their officials. Given the overall scale of the PEER programme, we once again would like to express our sincere appreciation to the electoral staff who supported and facilitated the work. Their contribution was particularly valuable in the context of the tight timelines associated with the bye-elections, and their flexibility and commitment played a key role in ensuring the process ran smoothly.

In advance of visiting polling stations, An Coimisiún Toghcháin teams received internal training in electoral observation, along with an overview of relevant international best practices to support their work. In line with international best practice, teams of two were dispatched to 42 polling stations, all 21 polling stations in Dublin Central were assigned, as well as 21 stations in Galway West. An Coimisiún members and staff were also present at count centres in Dublin and Galway following the election on 22 May 2026.

Previous PEER reports have included a recommendation on “amending electoral legislation to explicitly provide for the attendance of An Coimisiún staff and members, in an observational role, at polling stations on polling day and during the conduct of administrative activities associated with electoral events.” For the bye-elections, while staff attended as many instances of voting as possible, the absence of this legislative provision has, in practice, limited our ability to attend certain events, particularly where short notice has been involved. The impact of this most notably occurred during the issuing of postal votes and the observation of special voting and is outlined in the relevant section below.

PEER Routes

Polling station selection

Dublin

The notably smaller scale of the bye-elections compared to a general election presented a unique opportunity for An Coimisiún Toghcháin's PEER teams. The geographical area of the single constituency of Dublin Central was small enough to facilitate the teams visiting every polling location on election day. Previously, 12 polling places have been visited by PEER teams in Dublin Central, over four electoral events, since 2024. This meant that we were able to revisit polling locations and compare any changes, improvements or aspects which were the subject of commentary on the PEER forms from the previous visit. This is referenced further in the Data Analysis section.

The completion of visits to all polling locations in Dublin Central has also established a baseline against which any future visits to polling stations within the constituency can be assessed. This will enable An Coimisiún to identify areas where developments have enhanced the voting experience and improved electoral processes as it provides a framework for measuring progress both in terms of the implementation of recommendations and the delivery of local on-the-ground initiatives and improvements.

Dublin Central Bye-Election Polling Stations



An Ghaeltacht

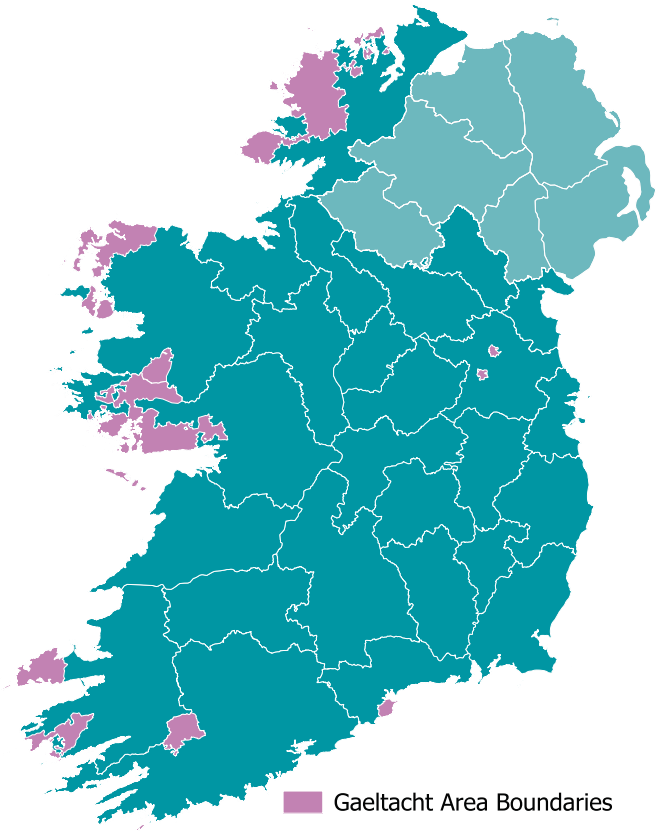
The 2026 Bye-Elections provided An Coimisiún with a unique opportunity to place an enhanced focus on the provision of Irish language information and services, given that Galway West is home to more than half of the State's Gaeltacht residents, and that approximately half of its polling stations are located in Gaeltacht areas.

We added an additional module of questions concerning Irish language information and services to our PEER checklists for staff visiting these Gaeltacht stations. We also amended our PEER checklists for all other stations visited with additional questions focused on the Irish language, in recognition of every voter's right to conduct their business through the Irish language regardless of where they reside.

An Coimisiún Toghcháin has visited Gaeltacht polling stations as part of every PEER, a total of 21 stations across all seven counties in which Gaeltacht areas are located. We took the decision to send three Irish-speaking observer pairs composed of An Coimisiún staff members to ten Gaeltacht polling stations: one in each of Galway West's Language Planning Areas. This brought to 31 the number of Gaeltacht polling station visits conducted by An Coimisiún, of a total of 427 across five polling days (7.3%, noting that approx. 2% of Ireland's population reside in Gaeltacht areas).

Of the 3,440 Electoral Divisions (EDs) in the State, 155 are located entirely or partially within the Gaeltacht.[i] These EDs are located in Cork, Kerry, Waterford, Galway, Mayo, Donegal and Meath. The specific boundaries of the Gaeltacht were defined by the Gaeltacht Area Orders in 1956, 1967, 1974 and 1982.

26 EDs in Galway are located entirely within the Gaeltacht, while another 11 contain townlands that have been designated Gaeltacht status: all within the Dáil constituency of Galway West. Gaeltacht na Gaillimhe covers an area of 1,225km^2, approximately 26% of total Gaeltacht land area.[ii] Galway's Gaeltacht is home to 54,183 people (Census 2022), over 51% of the State's total Gaeltacht population. Gaeltacht na Gaillimhe's population has grown at the last two Censuses.

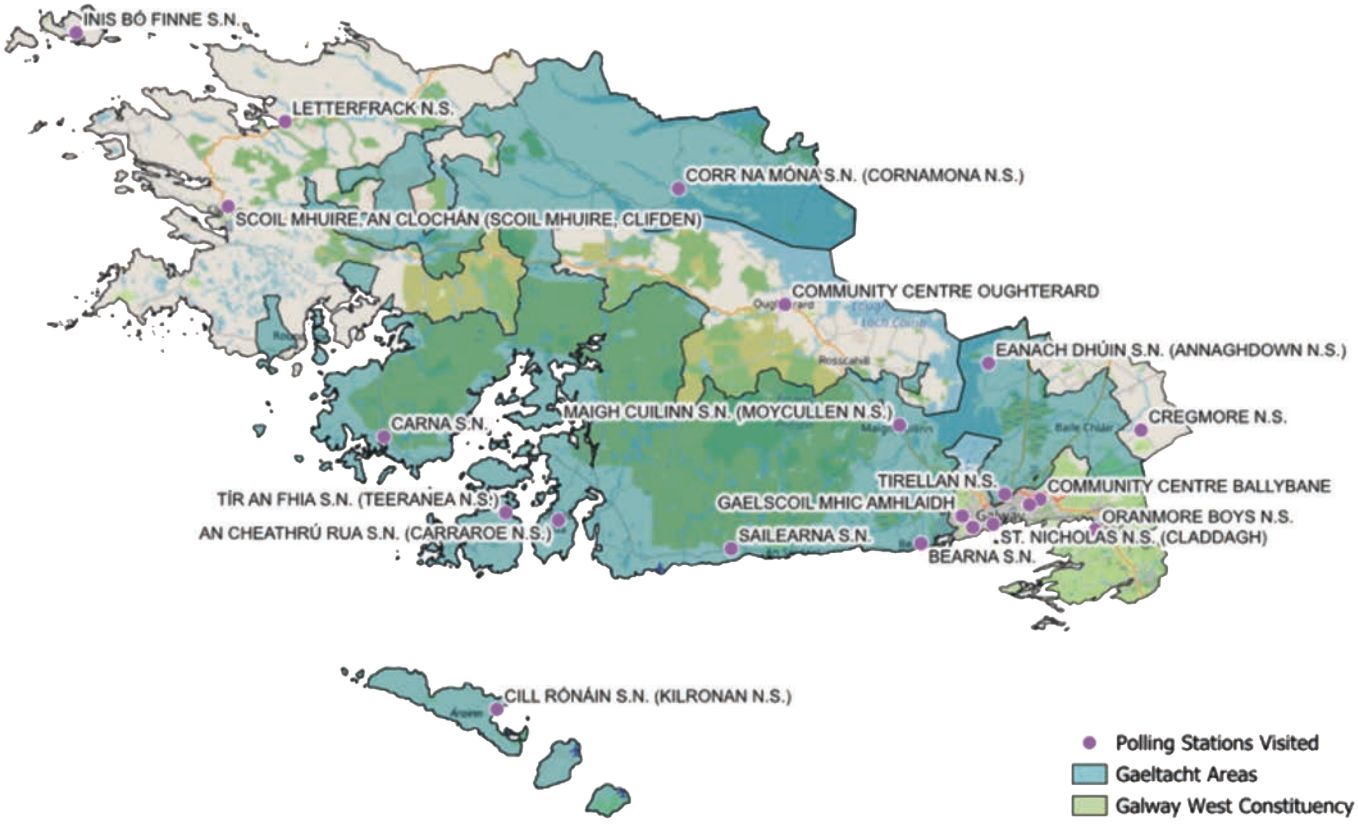


The *Gaeltacht Act 2012* provides the statutory framework for Irish language planning in the State. To this end, the Act divides the Gaeltacht into Language Planning Areas (LPAs). Ten of the 26 LPAs are located in Galway (the Dúiche Sheoigheach agus Tuar Mhic Éadaigh LPA straddles the Galway-Mayo border). An Coimisiún took the decision to conduct observations at a polling station in each of these LPAs on polling day, to ensure that all areas of the Gaeltacht were represented in our findings.
The prevalence of Irish today varies significantly from area to area in Galway, ranging from the highest to the lowest rates of Irish proficiency and daily use among the country's LPAs.

In terms of individual settlements with the highest prevalence of daily Irish speakers, three Galway towns ranked among the top 10 in Census 2022: An Cheathrú Rua in the LPA of the same name was in joint first (69%), Cill Rónáin in Oileáin Árann was seventh (58%), and An Spidéal in Cois Fharraige was ninth (49%). An Cheathrú Rua and Cill Rónáin were visited by An Coimisiún on polling day. Galway City and Clifden are also designated as Gaeltacht Service Towns under the provisions of the 2012 Act, notwithstanding the fact that they are located outside (or in the case of Galway City, predominantly outside) the Gaeltacht. Both Gaeltacht Service Towns were visited by An Coimisiún on polling day.

Language Planning Area	% Irish Speaker	% Daily Speaker[iii]
Ceantar na nOileán	**95**	**62**
An Cheathrú Rua	**90**	**58**
Oileáin Árann	**85**	**57**
Conamara Láir	**85**	**50**
Cois Fharraige	**82**	**43**
Dúiche Sheoigheach agus Tuar Mhic Éadaigh	**65**	**11**
Maigh Cuillinn	**63**	**6**
Bearna agus Cnoc na Cathrach	**58**	**5**
An tEachréidh	**54**	**2**
Oirthear Chathair na Gaillimhe	**44**	**3**
Ireland	**40**	**1.4**

Galway West Bye-Election Polling Stations



Cás-Staidéar: Eolas agus Seirbhísí i nGaeilge

> *It is a fundamental right that the Irish language community should be able to use the Irish language and be accommodated fairly in their language of choice while exercising their democratic rights during elections and referendums.*[iv]

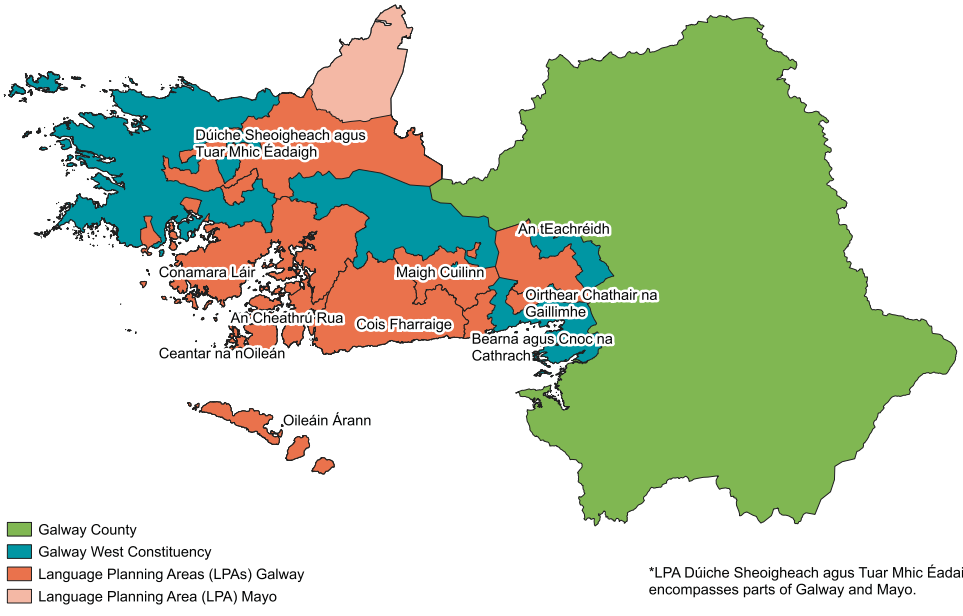
Regulations and Guidelines

The *Official Languages Act 2003* (as amended) and associated regulations govern the provision of Irish language services by public bodies, with a view to ensuring and improving the availability of Irish language services across the State, with enhanced provisions for Gaeltacht areas. This legislation was further strengthened by the *Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021.*

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and local authorities are subject to the provisions of the Act, meaning that areas such as the register of electors and polling information cards are subject to the Act's regulations. However, returning officers, who take charge of election signage, public notices and staffing in their constituencies, are **not** prescribed as public bodies under the Act, and are independent in the performance of their duties per the *Electoral Act, 1992*.

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage noted in their *Memorandum for the Guidance of Returning Officers* that all official signage and public notices at polling stations should be bilingual. The Memorandum further noted that all signage and notices at Gaeltacht polling stations should be in Irish only, and that all special presiding officers, presiding officers and poll clerks appointed to Gaeltacht polling stations should be *"competent to carry out their duties in Irish."* This only applied to the Galway West Bye-election, as there are no Gaeltacht areas in Dublin Central.

Galway, Galway West and Galway Language Planning Areas (LPAs)



*LPA Dúiche Sheoigheach agus Tuar Mhic Éadaigh encompasses parts of Galway and Mayo.

An Coimisinéir Teanga has, in light of complaints made by members of the public at successive electoral events and *"deficits... in the provision of services for the Irish language community"*, raised with the Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht the matter of prescribing returning officers on the schedule of public bodies under the Official Languages Act for future electoral events.[v] The PEER team engaged with Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga whilst preparing this case study, and we wish to thank An Coimisinéir and his staff for their cooperation.

Signage and Public Notices

The *Official Languages Act* stipulates that signage placed by or on behalf of a public body anywhere in the State must be displayed in both Irish and English, or in Irish only. Regarding bilingual signage:

(a) the text in the Irish language shall appear first,
(b) the text in the Irish language shall not be less prominent, visible, or legible than the text in the English language,
(c) the lettering of the text in the Irish language shall not be smaller in size than the lettering of the text in the English language,
(d) the text in the Irish language shall communicate the same information as is communicated by the text in the English language, and
(e) a word in the text in the Irish language shall not be abbreviated unless the word in the text in the English language, of which it is the translation, is also abbreviated.

As noted earlier, these provisions were included in the *Memorandum for the Guidance of Returning Officers*, notwithstanding the fact that returning officers are not currently prescribed under language legislation.

Whilst conducting our observations on polling day, regard was given to official signage placed at the entrance of and on the approach to each of the 42 polling stations visited, as was done for all previous PEERs. On this occasion, particular attention was also paid to the language or languages displayed on these signs.

In Dublin Central, all signage observed on the approach to and entrance of 19 of the constituency's 21 polling stations was in compliance with the guidelines regarding bilingual signage. At another station, all signage was bilingual, but the Irish text was not always above and as prominent as the English text. At only one station was an example observed of English-only signage. We commend the work of the Dublin Central Returning Officer and his staff to ensure that Irish-language signage guidelines were largely adhered to at this election.



Figure A

At stations **outside** of the Gaeltacht in Galway West, all official signage observed was bilingual and the Irish text was as large and prominent as the English text, however in only one instance was the Irish text above the English. In addition to this, none of the stations had directional signage outside of the station to indicate where the entrance was, and some stations had

no notice at the entrance to indicate that it was a polling station.



Figure B

We note that, even if returning officers were to be prescribed under the Act, the Act does not compel public bodies to amend signage that places the English text above the Irish, so long as the signage is otherwise compliant with the Act's provisions. Nonetheless, these regulations should be borne in mind when producing election signage in the future.



Figure C

At the ten Gaeltacht polling stations visited, most signage observed was bilingual rather than Irish-only, contrary to the guidance received from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. As with the other stations in Galway West, the Irish text was generally as prominent as the English text but not placed above the English (figures A & B). In two instances, polling station staff had taken the initiative to make additional Irish-only signage to be placed near the entrance (see figures C & D). These efforts are to be commended.

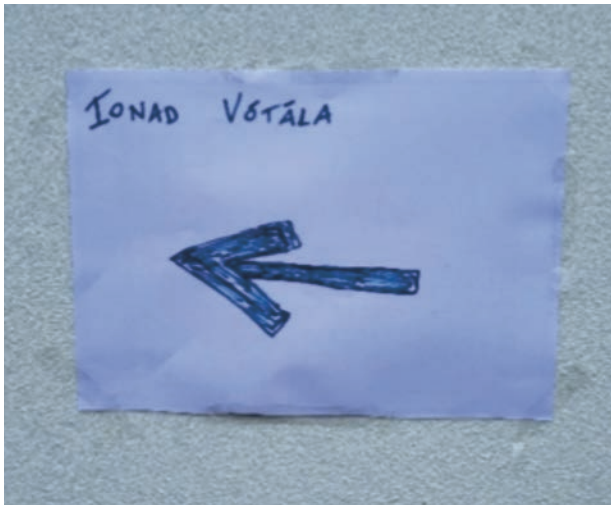


Figure D

While noting that the majority of this signage was not in keeping with the Department's guidelines for Gaeltacht areas in also including English, we also recognise from an accessibility standpoint that certain voters residing in the Gaeltacht may feel, understandably, that they would benefit from bilingual rather than Irish-only signage. This may be particularly pertinent in areas where Irish is no longer the primary language of the community, although we note that all Gaeltacht areas are granted the same status under law regardless of current language use within communities.

At all 42 polling stations visited across the two constituencies, the *Electoral Offences and Evidence of Identity* posters were on display, and the large-print *Notice of Ballot Paper* was displayed in all stations bar one. All of these notices were in a standard bilingual format (including in the Gaeltacht), bar one Gaeltacht polling station where notices within the room itself were folded in such a way that only the Irish text was visible.

Language Planning Area	% of voters observed speaking Irish in the polling station
Conamara Láir	100
Oileáin Árann	100
An Cheathrú Rua	90
Cois Fharraige	90
Ceantar na nOileán	80
An tEachréidh	0
Bearna agus Cnoc na Cathrach	0
Dúiche Sheoigheach & Tuar Mhic Éadaigh	0
Maigh Cuillinn	0
Oirthear Chathair na Gaillimhe	0

Use of Irish in Polling Stations

While conducting their observations at Gaeltacht polling stations, the observer pairs enquired about the availability of Irish language services for voters, at the desk(s) at which An Coimisiún's staff were observing the voting process. Pairs also observed the use of Irish by electors that cast their vote during the approx. 30-minute period spent at each station, in order to observe the provision of Irish language services on the ground.

Mirroring the Census figures listed on pg. 15, clear differences emerged between LPAs in terms of the observed use of Irish by voters in polling stations. While this is by no means a definitive measure of the prevalence of the Irish language within these communities, it provides some sense of where Irish language services are most availed of in Galway West's polling stations. An Coimisiún believes that it should be every elector's right to vote in their choice of Irish or English, and these figures suggest that there is significant demand for Irish language services in several areas of this constituency.

Notably, the five LPAs that reported the highest rates of Irish language proficiency in Census 2022, and of daily Irish speakers, were the same five LPAs in which most (and in some cases all) observed voters spoke Irish in the polling station.

In all five of these polling stations, both the presiding officer and poll clerk were proficient Irish speakers and seamlessly facilitated the voting process for Irish-speaking electors. An Coimisiún's observer pairs were heartened by the ease and comfort with which electors were enabled to exercise their franchise through Irish at these stations, which is a testament to the professionalism and skill of the election staff. We would like to commend the work of these staff, and of the Galway West Returning Officer, for ensuring that these voters could vote in the language of their choice.

At the five remaining Gaeltacht polling stations, no voters were observed speaking Irish: although staff at some stations noted that they had observed voters speaking Irish earlier on polling day. In one of these stations, both staff members at the observed desk reported that they were Irish speakers. In three stations, some staff members reported that they could not speak Irish, but at least one staff member with proficiency in Irish was on hand to assist any Irish-speaking voters. In one station, An Coimisiún's observer team was unable to locate an Irish-speaking staff member at the time they visited. We have highlighted this to the returning officer.

Overall conducting this case study highlighted commendable work by the returning officer and her staff to facilitate Irish speakers' voting rights. While any deficits in this regard identified in this case study were relatively confined, nonetheless we would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the importance of all Gaeltacht residents being given the option of conducting their business through Irish.

Future Electoral Events

As mentioned above, An Coimisiún notes that returning officers are not currently required to adhere to the provisions of the *Official Languages Act 2003*, even in Gaeltacht areas.

In the spirit of the language legislation, in recognition of the guidance to returning officers from the department, and in order to protect the rights of Irish speakers and Gaeltacht residents nationwide, An Coimisiún recommends that the provisions set out in language legislation regarding Irish-language signage and services be adhered to at all future electoral events.

To this end, we recommend that Government consider prescribing returning officers as public bodies under the *Official Languages Act 2003*. We recommend that every effort be made to adhere to the provisions of language legislation at future electoral events, including by those who are not prescribed under the Act.

Recommendation 1:
Ensure that the provisions set out in language legislation regarding Irish-language signage and services are adhered to at all future electoral events by prescribing returning officers as public bodies under the Official Languages Act 2003.



Marian Chambers Higgins Returning Officer for Galway West and her count team in the Galway Lawn Tennis Club - Photo supplied by Susan Mahon.

Data Analysis

Dublin Comparison

As previously discussed, this bye-election created a rare opportunity to return to polling locations in Dublin Central that had previously been visited by our teams during other electoral events. Of the 21 polling locations in Dublin Central, 12 had previously been visited by PEER teams. We were able to note the changes and improvements implemented by the polling station staff that addressed some of the concerns noted by the PEER teams previously.

In four out of the 12 locations a lack of accessible parking had been noted during previous electoral events. Upon the return visit from PEER teams for the bye-elections there were now assigned parking spaces or signs erected to reserve spaces for voters with disabilities.

There were also improvements reported on the internal layout accessibility in at least three locations where it had been previously noted that the layout may cause an issue, with either changes to the distribution of polling desks or improvements to entrance locations and accessible ramps.

We'd like to commend the returning officer and staff for these observed improvements.

Accessibility infrastructure

Section 94 of the *Electoral Act, 1992*, which was amended in 1996, explicitly notes that buildings used for polling stations must be wheelchair accessible. As highlighted both historically and for this bye-election, a vastly significant majority of polling stations are compliant with this requirement. However, there are many aspects to accessibility (which we have endeavoured to reflect in the checklist) such as entrances, internal layout, parking and so on. The overall level of accessibility of a polling station depends on how it performs on all these indicators. Some polling stations may be inaccessible because they are extremely deficient in one of these areas, while others might be lacking in several areas to a lesser degree with a cumulatively negative impact on accessibility.

Of the 42 polling stations six (15%) had a primary entrance that presented accessibility complications. Of these, two polling stations provided alternative accessible entrances, this reduces to four (10%) polling stations where our PEER teams had accessibility concerns regarding the entrance. In terms of accessibility infrastructure, an accessibility ramp was present at 34 (81%) of the polling stations, of the eight (19%) polling stations at which a ramp was absent, six had a level entrance instead. Two polling stations were considered inaccessible without additional assistance due to the absence of a suitable ramp.

At six (15%) polling stations, accessibility complications related to internal layout were reported by observers, these complications resulted primarily from limited internal space and concerns for privacy at high-volume voting times. While voters with disabilities could technically access voting facilities, however, these conditions could result in difficulties or delays.

As regards accessible voting specifically, a low-level voting facility was reported at 41 (98%) polling stations. At four (10%) polling stations this was a desk with a privacy screen/ in a private area, and at 37 this was low-level voting compartment.



Low-level voting facilities were absent from one station. An Coimisiún welcomes the strong overall compliance with accessibility requirements at polling stations and notes that the continued rollout of modern voting compartments may support the achievement of full compliance.

Some of the polling stations were noted as having small or tight spaces, so while not inaccessible, may have been difficult for several people with disabilities or wheelchairs to access voting at the same time. This is particularly relevant considering that some wheelchair organisations like the Irish Wheelchair Association (IWA) organise group transport for the members to assist with voting. Other issues that may have an impact on voters included raised ballot boxes that may make it difficult for wheelchairs users to reach the slot. Some of the temporary ramps were noted as being steep or having a lip to get over, which may require additional assistance. It should also be noted that PEER teams in some cases did observe polling station staff providing that extra assistance where possible, however this could lead to delays during busy periods. Due to the locations of several stations, parking was an issue with a lack of facilities particularly in Dublin Central.

Individually, these issues may have only a limited impact on overall accessibility and may not, in themselves, prevent voters from accessing or using the polling station. However, as voters navigate the polling environment, a series of seemingly minor obstacles may collectively reduce accessibility, potentially affecting comfort, independence, and ease of participation for those with additional access requirements.

Voting aids for electors with disabilities

A ballot paper template (BPT) was available for use at all polling stations. Voting with the use of the BPT was unobserved during the review, however, observers were advised of the BPT's use at one Dublin Central polling station. Voting by those with intellectual, learning, sensory or developmental disabilities was unobserved during the review as was voting with the assistance of a companion.

Additional Findings

In terms of voting process information, the *Electoral Offences and Evidence of Identity* posters were present at all polling stations; however, the large-print ballot paper appeared to be absent from one polling station. At all of the 41 polling stations at which voting was observed, ballot papers were embossed with the official mark and electors were marked off the register. Voting was not observed on the day by the PEER teams at the remaining polling station.

Guidance issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) advises presiding officers to request identity documents from one in four voters. At 29 polling stations (69% of the 41 where voting was observed) identification was requested from voters during the visit. Only four (40%) of the ten Gaeltacht area polling stations were observed requesting identification from voters.

It is understandable that where electors are very well known to polling staff and in particularly in more rural areas there may be a reluctance to ask for identification but it is important that there is consistency nationally in the application of the guidelines.

A full table of the statistical findings from the PEER checklist can be found in Appendix 2.

PEER Insights

In addition to the statistical findings captured through the PEER checklist, teams are also given space to share supplementary comments, observations and feedback of their experiences at polling locations. These insights offer further context to the voting experience and highlight areas that may not be fully reflected in the quantitative data. Some of these comments and observations are summarised below.

Privacy and Electioneering

Issues related to privacy were reported at in at least three polling stations, where individuals were either using mobiles phones, had multiple people in booths, or were discussing what vote to cast. In separate incidents at two locations, observers were advised of an unauthorised person outside the station recording voters entering the polling station. Members of the public had already alerted An Garda Síochána to this matter, by the time our PEER teams arrived, and the individual had moved on with no further disturbances.

Section 147 of the *Electoral Act, 1992* provides that election posters should not be on the grounds of or within 50 metres of the curtilage of the polling station. However, the PEER teams recorded 12 instances or 29% of the polling locations across the two constituencies that had posters that did not comply with this. We commend the Dublin Central Returning Officer for coordinating the removal of posters in breach of these provisions and would support further clarification and communication around responsibility for enforcing compliance. Additionally, the teams noted that there were alternative forms of canvassing at five polling locations or 12% of locations across the two constituencies, with canvassers reported at one polling station within the curtilage.

There were several notifications of campaign imagery and stencils of a bye-election candidate sprayed onto the ground, often directly outside polling stations in Dublin Central. In some locations the returning officer coordinated with An Garda Síochána and the local authorities to supervise the removal.

Given these incidents, An Coimisiún note the importance of all candidates and their agents being thoroughly informed on election compliance. We recommend that information packs or direct links to guidance compliance should be included in candidate notification to reduce the possibility that a candidate unknowingly violates *Electoral Act* restrictions.

Recommendation 2:
The Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage should publish or distribute a *Memorandum for the Guidance of Candidates*, outlining and summarising electoral law provisions, restrictions and rules for candidates.

Administration

Staff in some stations noted that additional posters would be helpful, including notices prohibiting the use of mobile phones in voting booths and signs providing general guidance on the administration of the ballot. Some staff noted some small stationary items were missing or not included which would make the process easier, such as scissors or rulers.

Mostly notably there was feedback from station staff regarding the new stamping instrument. We had been advised that a change in stamp was necessary due to challenges in maintaining and replacing the previous versions. We understand that in deciding to replace the stamp there was consultation and engagement with returning officers. As noted in the 2025 Presidential PEER, there had been a trial of a new stamping instrument in Cork South-West and Cork North-Central during that election. At the time, some feedback suggested that the embossing was less noticeable than a perforation on the ballot paper; however, the overall response was positive.

Feedback on the new stamping instruments from polling staff was less positive during these elections. Several of them suggested the mark was less visible than with the previous instruments. Some mentioned that the instruments themselves were sticking or difficult to use which slowed down the process. The issue of visibility was also mentioned by staff at the count. The visibility of the mark is also relevant to the adjudication of invalid ballots. As only authorised count staff are allowed to handle ballots, the verification of the embossed mark may be difficult to assess by candidates and their agents who are observing from a distance.

There are often challenges in instituting change and it is possible some of the issues experienced were a result of the transition to the new stamping instrument although the returning officer had provided a training video to assist polling staff with using the new stamp correctly.

Over time the issues raised may reduce as users become more familiar with the new instruments. However, it is recommended that the performance of the new instruments be kept under review and potential improvements and innovations be considered taking account of best practice in other countries.

Invalid Votes

The PEER report for the Presidential Election in October 2025 noted that there had been a higher than usual percentage of invalid ballots during that election. Spoiled or invalid votes are classified into four different categories: want of official mark; first preference not clearly indicated, including unmarked ballot papers; first preference indicated for more than one; and writing or mark calculated to identify the voter.

Statistics published for the October 2025 Presidential Election showed that 13% of overall ballot papers were deemed invalid, which was a significant increase on the number of invalid ballot papers in previous elections. However, there was a fall in ballot papers deemed invalid due to ‘want of official mark’. For the Presidential Election in Dublin Central this was 11 votes (0.04%) and in Galway West this was 37 votes (0.07%).

In the May 2026 bye-elections, ballot papers deemed invalid due to ‘Want of Official Mark’ for Dublin Central and

Galway West rose to 25 votes (0.1%) and 43 votes (0.09%) respectively.

While these numbers are reasonably low as a proportion of overall votes cast as mentioned in previous PEERs, observing votes which are 'spoilt' due to a failure to stamp the ballot paper is regrettable for everyone involved in the voting process. While we recognise that mistakes can occasionally be made, every effort should be made to reduce the number of mistakes.

The adjudication of the spoiled votes is an important part of the count process. An Coimisiún representatives were present in the count centres for the announcement and adjudication of potential invalid votes. It was noted that in at least one of the count centres the area selected for the process was crowded and no microphone was used which made it difficult for some candidates and observers to see and hear proceedings clearly. Candidates or representatives with a better view of the proceedings appeared to have more opportunities to raise queries in relation to potential invalid votes than those positioned further away. An Coimisiún would recommend in future that more structured arrangements are made in advance for a dedicated location where candidates and observers can clearly see and hear the reasoning behind the classification of votes as invalid to ensure that candidates have equal opportunity to raise questions or challenges.

Recommendation 3:
Count centres should have suitable arrangements and physical space for the adjudication of ballot papers to ensure all candidates have the same opportunity to observe and participate as appropriate.

Best Practices Observed

Despite the relatively small scale of bye-elections compared to larger elections, the returning officers in both constituencies as well as other groups, found ways to trial and test innovations that could be applied to future electoral events. Bye-elections in particular can serve as excellent pilot evaluation for new innovations that may improve the voting process for the electorate. Some of the initiatives as seen by An Coimisiún teams are detailed below.

Additional Signage in Galway

An Coimisiún PEER teams noted two initiatives in Galway where signs were displayed in polling locations to provide voters with further information related to election administration.

The first involve a clear information page attached to ballot boxes at polling locations. These contained details including the returning officer, the presiding officer, the supervisory presiding officer, as well as the constituency and location. This clear presentation of information helps voters identify the correct polling location and identifies the relevant contacts they may need to engage with initially to resolve any issues.

The second initiative noted by the PEER observer teams was a clear colour coded chart that displayed the different voter eligibility codes and showed which elections these codes were allowed to vote in. This resource provided a quick and accessible reference for both voters and polling staff, helping to resolve questions regarding voter eligibility efficiently.

An Coimisiún supports initiatives that make the voting process simpler, more accessible, and more efficient for everyone



Figure E

involved, however the location of materials should be considered carefully to mitigate any potential privacy or accessibility risks which might arise by number of voters congregating to read information materials.

Information Cards in Dublin

Although election administration is a complicated process, the overwhelming majority of people access their vote without difficulty. However, there are occasionally unforeseen issues that can arise. These issues can cause notable delays or the possibility of not being able to vote.

To assist with some of these issues, across polling stations in Dublin Central, place cards were printed by the Dublin City Sherriff's Office with the freephone number of the Dublin City Council Franchise Unit. This unit looks after the administration of the register and had staff on hand to address problems that people may have during the voting process. This included helping people find the correct polling station, the correct table in the polling station and confirm that they are registered to vote. There were also a number of issues raised on the day through the freephone number that required a follow-up, such as adding, removing, or editing the

registry which could not be done while the system was locked for polling day. The Franchise Unit were able to note any issues and provide additional support or information at a later date.

An Coimisiún welcomes initiatives such as these information cards, which contribute to the transparency of electoral administration and encourage individuals to engage with electoral officials to ensure information remains up to date so that any concerns can be addressed promptly.

Local Link and Transport

An Coimisiún acknowledge that not all voting experiences are the same, therefore we are committed to encouraging practices that making voting easy and accessible to all.

An Coimisiún convenes a working group representing groups experiencing barriers to voting to inform our forthcoming education and public engagement strategy. One of the issues raised during several of these meetings was transportation to and from polling stations, particularly for disadvantaged groups or individuals who may need additional assistance. Some organisations such as the Irish Wheelchair Association already operate shared transportation on election day but understandably this is only available to their members. For other groups the physical barrier to coordinating transport to the polling location may be too great to overcome.

This is why it was so encouraging that An Coimisiún PEER teams observed a Local link driver supporting voter accessibility by transporting elderly voters to the entrance of the polling station. While complications around feasibility and logistics for free transport at a larger scale remain, An Coimisiún recognises the importance of local community members undertaking individual initiatives such as this that positively impact election participation.

Voter.ie

The *Electoral Reform Act 2022* provides for the development of a national shared database of electoral register information. In order to begin this process, Dublin City Council (DCC) was prescribed as the designated registration authority to establish, manage and maintain the new national shared database, known as the Local Government Electoral Registration System (LGERS). The LGERS Project Board formally met for the first time in September 2021 and by October 2026 all local authorities migrated their registration data to a new national database. This work is detailed in An Coimisiún first *Oversight of the Electoral Registers Report* (see Electoral Register Update and Turnout pg. 36).

The first iteration of this was launched on 26 May 2026 when the four Dublin local authorities successfully migrated to the new Voter.ie system. The other 27 local authority electoral registers are migrating to the new database in five tranches, with migration due to be completed by the end of the year.

An Coimisiún recognise this critical first step towards more robust registers, which will greatly assist in ensuring the accuracy of registrations in the future, and facilitate better management and maintenance of the electoral registers by each local authority.

Special Voting and Postal Voting

Under the powers provided for the preparation and publication of PEERs, section 30(2) of the *Electoral Reform Act 2022* states that *"The Commission shall have all such powers as are necessary or expedient for, or incidental to, the performance of its functions."*

As noted in previous PEER reports, legislative provisions are required to explicitly permit the attendance of An Coimisiún's staff and members at polling stations and count centres. This need for clarification is particularly important in light of an apparent conflict between this provision and section 82(2) of the *Electoral Act, 1992*, as applied by section 41(2) of the *Presidential Elections Act, 1993*, which provides that *"No person other than the special presiding officer and the member of the Garda Síochána shall be present when the special voter is voting pursuant to this section."*

An Coimisiún reiterates the need for legislative provisions to formally provide for attendance of its members and staff at polling stations, count centres and other locations where electoral administration occurs. This is also in line with recommendations made by ODIHR in its review of the Presidential Election (see text box below).

Recommendation 4:
Implement the previous PEER recommendation to amend electoral legislation to expressly provide for the attendance of An Coimisiún staff and members as observers at polling stations on polling day, count centres, and at the conduct of administrative tasks in association with the administration of an electoral event.

In making this recommendation, An Coimisiún is cognisant that there may be additional privacy needs for certain more vulnerable voters such as some special voters in nursing homes, hospitals and care institutions where such access is not appropriate beyond public areas.

For this bye-election, as was done for previous electoral events, An Coimisiún reached out to the relevant returning officers to attend occurrences of the issuing of the postal vote, as well as the administration of the special vote.

Postal Voting

As noted in previous PEER reports, An Coimisiún has observed the issuing of postal votes at every electoral event since 2024. The findings highlighted in the PEER report following the General Election of November 2024, noted that the relatively short timeframe between the announcement of an election and polling day can create challenges for certain aspects of election administration.

In particular, the report noted that compressed election timelines can affect the ability of some eligible voters to apply for and receive postal votes. This is especially relevant for individuals who may only become aware of their need to vote by post once the election date has been announced, such as those required to travel for work or other unforeseen commitments.

Short notice election periods can also place pressure on the logistical arrangements required for overseas voting, reducing the time available for ballot papers to be distributed and returned through Ireland's embassies

and diplomatic missions abroad. As a result, these time constraints have the potential to impact both voter access and the efficient administration of the postal voting process. These and other issues are currently being considered as part of research on postal voting being conducted for An Coimisúin by International IDEA (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) and due for publication in 2027.

The compressed timeframe between the issuing of the writ of election and polling day can also place practical limitations on participation in certain aspects of the electoral process, including the observation of key administrative activities such as the issuing of postal votes.

Shortly after the issuing of the writ, An Coimisiún contacted the offices of each returning officer to make arrangements to attend the issuing of postal votes. However, given the tight statutory timelines and the need for these processes to be completed promptly to avoid any subsequent delays in ballot distribution and return, the issuing of postal votes had either already taken place or was scheduled to occur imminently. As a result, there was insufficient time to arrange observation attendance.

Consequently, An Coimisiún was unable to observe the issuing of postal votes for either of the bye-elections. While the expedited nature of these processes is understandably necessary to ensure that postal voters receive and return their ballot papers within the available timeframe, it can reduce opportunities for external observation and oversight of certain election administration activities. We are mindful of the significant workload already placed on returning officers, and their staff in the administration of electoral events. However, there are a number of relatively minor procedural adjustments that could help to improve coordination and consistency across the range of departments, agencies, and offices involved in election administration.

One such measure would be the inclusion of An Coimisiún in the notification process when correspondence is issued to candidates. Ensuring that An Coimisiún is notified would support greater awareness of key election administration activities, facilitate more effective oversight and engagement where appropriate, and help to ensure consistency of information across relevant stakeholders. Such an approach would represent a modest administrative adjustment while contributing to improved cooperation, transparency, and coordination throughout the electoral process.

Recommendation 5:
Returning officers should notify An Coimisiún Toghcháin of scheduled electoral administration events at the same time as notifying candidates.

ODIHR Report

In July 2026, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) published their Election Assessment Mission (EAM) final report for the Irish Presidential Election that was held on 24 October 2025. The report examined the electoral process's compliance with OSCE commitments, other international obligations and democratic election standards, as well as applicable national legislation. In line with ODIHR's methodology, and as ODIHR state in the report they did not *'observe election day proceedings in a systematic or comprehensive manner and visited a limited number of polling stations.'*

Overall, the report noted and commended the establishment of An Coimisiún Toghcháin and the general compliance of the electoral process with international standard practices.

The report had several recommendations relating to expanding transparency, removing barriers to access voting, and improving campaign finance oversight. Notably the report highlighted in their priority recommendations the need for formally consolidating the current electoral legislation and amending this legislation to explicitly guarantee the access of citizen and international observers to all aspects of the electoral process, in line with Ireland's international commitments.



Case study: No Fixed Address

An Coimisiún recognise that barriers to voting come in a variety of forms, these can be physical barriers on the day of voting but can also include situational or administrative barriers. We are dedicated to highlighting the experiences of voter groups that may experience disenfranchisement.

A report by FEANTSA[vi], a federation of non-profit organisations who support homeless people in Europe, identified registration as a primary obstacle to participation in the democratic process for those without a fixed address, for example, those resident in temporary accommodation. In order to register to vote, a person is generally required to provide their registration authority with a fixed address. This enables the registration authority to confirm entitlement to vote, as enfranchisement is conditional on 'ordinary residence'. The provision of a fixed address also ensures the accuracy of the register, preventing duplicate or obsolete entries, facilitating the assignment of polling districts, and enabling the registration authority to contact voters with election information.

In the absence of a fixed address, registration authorities commonly use a 'reference address' to facilitate inclusion on the register – in Ireland before the introduction of the *Electoral Reform Act 2022*, this process was informally administered by registration authorities, risking inconsistent implementation in establishing an alternative address for the purposes of registration. The *Electoral Reform Act 2022* introduced a uniform process for the registration of those without a fixed address.

Under s.84 of the Act, a person without a fixed address at the time of applying to register to vote is entitled to complete a Declaration of Circumstances (ERF2 Form[vii]) to explain their reasons for using a reference address; application forms are available at registration authority offices and online at Voter.ie. On the declaration, the applicant is expected to provide an address at which they wish to be considered ordinarily resident; this address may be an address in emergency accommodation, or a non-residential address at which they receive emergency services. Election administration is dependent on the address of ordinary residence as it determines the polling district and the constituency in which the applicant will vote on polling day.

In processing the application, general registration procedures, including identity verification and eligibility verification, apply. The only procedural difference is that the ordinary residence condition is waived. Applicants are expected to demonstrate a connection with the address at which they wish to be considered ordinarily resident and a processing officer is entitled to consider the appropriateness of the proposed address.

In addition to including an address at which they wish to be considered ordinarily resident, applicants are afforded the option to include an address at which they are capable of receiving post – this may be different from their address of ordinary residence. Inclusion of a postal address ensures that the registration authority is able to provide the voter with election information, for example, their polling information card (PIC). If an applicant is unable to provide a postal address, the registration authority will arrange for them to collect election information at the local authority offices.

A useful precursor to the implementation of the alternative registration process was the introduction of An Post's Address Point[viii] service. Operationalised in 2019, Address Point allows a person to generate a postal address based on their local post office – this provides a collection point for their post and an address for administrative purposes, for example, registering with a medical practitioner. As regards voter registration, Address Point provides an additional address option for those without a fixed address, particularly those that are reluctant to use emergency accommodation services.

Indications are that use of this alternative registration process is limited. Of the 11,546 adults in emergency accommodation in December 2025 after the presidential election, only 4.51% (521) appeared on the registers under this category. An obvious explanation for this involves the challenges faced by being in emergency accommodation where other basic administrative issues may need to be prioritised. Additional explanations centre on voting entitlement and various institutional, socio-economic, and socialising factors. An in-depth examination of these voting predictors is included in An Coimisiún's Review of Electoral Participation and Inclusion.[ix] In December 2025, only 5,734 adults in emergency accommodation were eligible to vote in the presidential election where enfranchisement is restricted to citizens, meaning just over 9% of those in emergency accommodation who were eligible to vote in the presidential election used this process to register. (It is important to emphasise that this is an approximate indicator that references emergency accommodation only.)

An Coimisiún will continue to research this topic to develop a fuller understanding of the issues facing this voter group. We are committed to working with stakeholders, representative organisations, and government agencies and departments to identify factors that may limit participation in the democratic process.

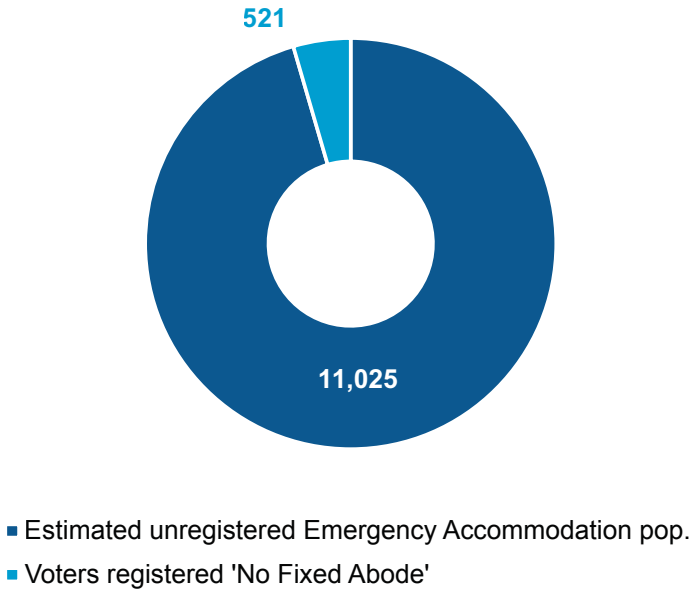


Figure F

Total Number of 'No Fixed Abode' Voters on the Register by Registration Authority

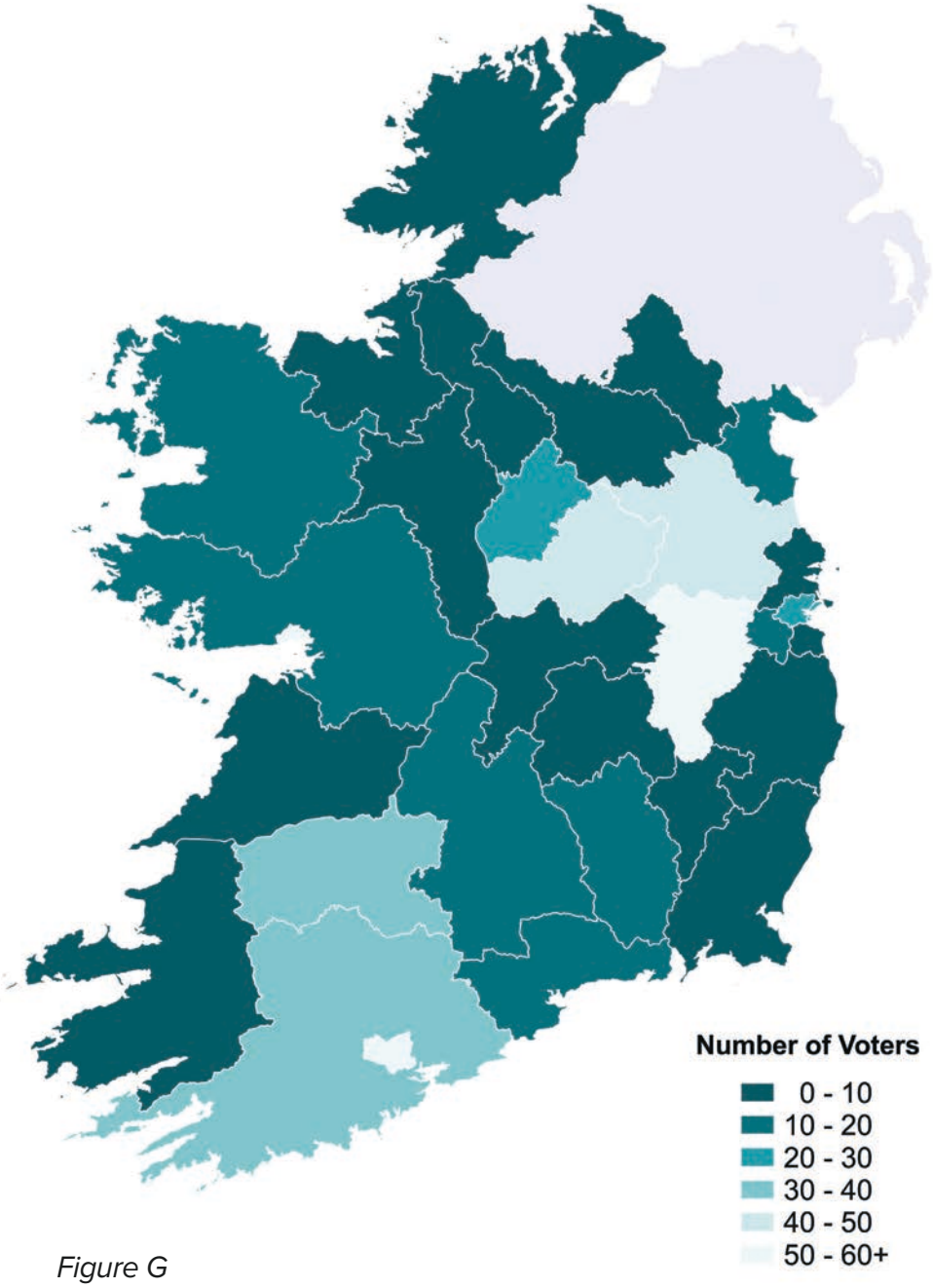


Figure G

Electoral Register Update and Turnout

The *Electoral Reform Act 2022* provides for a range of reforms to electoral registration including rolling, online registration and enabling the use of PPSNs when registering to vote. Another key component of the modernisation process, enabled under the Act was the development of a national shared database of electoral register information. The project to develop this database - the Local Government Electoral Register System (LGERS) project - is being led by Dublin City Council (DCC) and involves all local authorities.

The database is a vital piece of electoral infrastructure and will enable greater accuracy of the electoral registers by facilitating cross-checking of data across local authorities, thereby reducing the potential for duplicate entries.

In May 2025, An Coimisiún published the first *Oversight of the Electoral Registers Report* which outlined how the electoral registers are managed, the impacts of the changes introduced by the *Electoral Reform Act 2022*, and the management and accuracy of the electoral registers. The report also set out a series of recommendations to support improvement of the accuracy of the electoral registers by the next electoral cycle. These recommendations included sufficient prioritisation and resourcing for management and maintenance of the electoral registers by local authorities and audits of electoral register accuracy. An Coimisiún will produce its next Oversight Report by end-2026 which will provide details of the work undertaken to improve the quality of the electoral registers through the LGERS project.

Significant work has been carried out by all local authorities throughout 2025 and 2026 to ready their electoral registers for migration to the new national electoral register database, Voter.ie. This includes cleansing electoral register data of inaccuracies and duplicates, standardisation of data formatting and ensuring consistent use of Irish in addresses and townlands. Under the *Electoral Reform Act 2022*, local authorities are required to make three documented attempts to contact an elector before removing them from the electoral register. There were some initial reported challenges, however, with a small number of individuals unaware that they had been removed from the register. In one instance, residents of a building scheduled for demolition were not aware that their registration status had changed.

The data cleansing work being undertaken by local authorities is vital for the integrity of the electoral registers and electoral processes. Our engagements with the local authorities indicate they ensure proper procedures are followed before removing electors from the registers, particularly in advance of an electoral event. However, it is important that there is ongoing engagement with the public on the part of local authorities, the department and An Coimisiún to ensure that they are aware of their rights and responsibilities with regard to registration.

Electorate Figures and Turnout

The electorate for the Dublin Central and Galway West bye-elections, and indeed any other bye-elections are based upon all of those eligible to vote in Dáil elections, namely those electors who are aged 18

or over on polling day, who are Irish or UK citizens, who are ordinarily resident in the constituency, and who have registered to vote before the voter registration deadline, which in the case of these bye-elections was 5 May.

This very specific electorate figure contrasts with a much wider full 'polling scheme' electorate figure which represents a 'whole of electorate' figure that would also include people who are registered to vote, but who may not be eligible to vote in a Dáil election (or bye-election). This would include for example 'L' voters who are eligible to vote only in local elections where the citizenship requirements are different.

Citizenship determines the electoral events at which a person aged over 18 may vote:

- Irish citizens can vote in Dáil, Presidential, Local, European Parliament and Limerick mayoral elections and referendums,
- British citizens can vote in Dáil, local and Limerick mayoral elections,
- EU citizens can vote in European, local and Limerick mayoral elections,
- all others can vote in local and Limerick mayoral elections (if eligible) only.

The final turnout figures published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in respect of the bye-election specific electorate for the two constituencies in the period after the voter registration deadline had passed was:

- Dublin Central bye-election electorate – 57,619 with a total poll of 25,045 representing a turnout of 43.47%.
- Galway West bye-election electorate – 103,772 with a total poll of 48,176 representing a turnout of 46.42%

However, An Coimisiún Toghcháin noted that electorate figures published by the returning officers as part of their normal returns cited the full 'polling scheme' figure. This polling scheme electorate figure published by the returning officers in advance of polling day and throughout the count process was based on the larger "local" electorate. This figure was interpreted inadvertently by some analysts as the more limited bye-election specific electorate.

Ultimately as turnout is calculated with reference to the electorate, we observed reporting in the media and by other sources that turnout was lower than the actual figures subsequently published by the Department after the election. For example, in the case of Dublin Central the reported turnout was below 40% an approximately 4% difference between the reported and actual turnout figures.

It should be noted that the discrepancy in turnout being highlighted here is solely related to the polling schemes published and not influenced by separate electoral register issues highlighted in our *Oversight of the Electoral Registers Report.*

Recommendation 6:
n advance of an electoral event, the Local Authorities should ensure that the electorate figure relevant to that election is the one provided to the Returning Officer and used for calculating turnout, rather than the potentially larger electorate figure from the full polling scheme.

Information Campaign for Dublin Central and Galway West Bye-elections

A core function of An Coimisiún Toghcháin under the *Electoral Reform Act 2022* is to provide, to the public, information on electoral processes (including referendums) and to encourage participation, by the public, in the electoral and democratic processes of the State.

This commitment is further set out in our Statement of Strategy 2024-2026 which outlines a tailored approach to educate and raise awareness amongst the electorate to engage in electoral events.

Bye-elections phased campaigns

These two bye-elections were our first bye-election outings and so our approach to such a geographically confined election and specific electorate needed a novel approach to our public information campaign. The dual objective was to ensure our campaign was targeted specifically at the eligible electorate while also recognising that such bye-elections are also of significant national political interest.

Ahead of polling day for the two bye-elections, An Coimisiún delivered a targeted localised campaign to inform and engage the public about the election and the need to be registered and to vote.

The communications and public engagement campaign was one of the most geographically localised campaigns from An Coimisiún and ran in specific phases right up to and including polling day on the 22 May. Phases of the campaign focused on voter registration (until the 5 May voter registration deadline) and then on voter information and activation.

Marketing activities in the two constituencies

We continue to amplify our key message that 'Your Vote is Your Voice' as a consistent thread running through all of our campaigns since 2024. What made this campaign different was that this message was shaped into a localised campaign for each of the two constituencies.

Our bilingual public information marketing campaign was delivered across radio, cinema, newspapers, out of home, digital, audio and social media advertising.

With such a focused electorate in each of the two constituencies, we leaned heavily into the use of local out-of-home advertising (such as billboards, digital advertising formats in shopping centres and other areas of high footfall) and we advertised in local cinemas within the constituencies for geographical impact. We created tailored cinema 'voter voices' adverts for each constituency and only played them in cinemas located within the constituencies.

Meeting people across the constituencies

As always, we sought to go to where people were in the two constituencies. This saw An Coimisiún staff carry out shopping centre campaign days in Dublin's Ilac shopping centre and the Jervis shopping centre focused on voter registration.

In Dublin Central we also carried out school visits and spoke to students in TU Dublin and, on the day before polling, An Coimisiún staff were out on the streets of the capital reminding people in Dublin Central (and Galway West) to use their vote.

In Galway West, the May bank holiday weekend saw us promoting Ireland's first ever voter pop-up shop in Eyre Square. Teams from An Coimisiún spoke to groups from the Galway Traveller Movement in Ballybane and Youth Work Ireland in Westside. We also spoke with students in the University of Galway and to first time voters in Galway secondary schools.

With Galway West hosting Ireland's largest Gaeltacht, An Coimisiún also paid a particular focus on speaking to and registering students in Irish-language schools in Carna and An Cheathrú Rua. We also carried out a number of media engagements in Irish on Raidió na Gaeltachta and on RTÉ TV Nuacht and with TG4.

An Coimisiún also provided an easy-to-read accessible guide to bye-elections for people who may have literacy or other accessibility requirements.

Media, Digital and Social Media engagement

Representatives of an An Coimisiún Toghcháin took part in a combined total of 21 media engagements across the campaign period. An Coimisiún spokespersons appeared across local and national radio including RTE's Morning Ireland, Galway Bay FM, Q102, Connemara Community Radio and regional and national print outlets including the Irish Times and Galway City Tribune.

- 3 national and regional TV appearances
- 15 radio interviews
- 3 print and online articles

From the above figures, 4 broadcasts were in Irish and 17 in English.

Our website (electoralcommission.ie) was updated specifically to provide easily



accessible information about the bye-election. This included a specific bilingual bye-elections page and a range of FAQs added to the site and updated through the campaign. These pages received over 20,000 views. We also encouraged people to act early and to check their constituency using their Eircode to see whether they were eligible to vote using our 'Find My Constituency' online tool.

Our social media programme was delivered with a range of video and static posts providing information about voter deadlines, voter information, our campaigning activities, showing the sample ballot papers and a range of other organic content. Social media advertising was also delivered to users in the two constituencies.

Campaign Innovations

With these bye-elections being a first for An Coimisiún we were keen to try out new approaches and methods of campaigning and public awareness raising.

Galway's Eyre Square hosted Ireland's first ever pop-up voter registration shop over the May bank holiday weekend. A highly visible and branded location saw a team of An Coimisiún staff registering voters and helping people to update their registration details ahead of the deadline. Activities included a Galway Bay FM outside-broadcast from the location, trad music and voter registration/ updates delivered on-site with i-pads.

This work contributed to an increase in awareness about the bye-elections and in voter registrations.



Two cafés in Galway and one in Dublin partnered with An Coimisiún to distribute 5,000 coffee cups in each carrying our branded message and a QR voter information code printed on the cup. This coffee partnership allowed us to cater to a very locally resident audience in each of the constituencies.

An Coimisiún also identified partnerships with content creators who had particular connections to, and followings in the local constituencies, namely Michael Fry (Dublin Central focused), Nuala Gorham (Galway-West focused) and How to Gael (bilingual Galway and Dublin focused). Content from these creators focused on voter registration and encouraging voter turnout in their own distinctive styles and often with a touch of humour.

"I Voted" Stickers

An Coimisiún Toghcháin's Communications and Electoral Operations teams developed a pilot initiative for the May 2026 Dublin Central and Galway West bye-elections aimed at enhancing voter engagement and creating a positive voting experience at polling stations.

The pilot involved the voluntary distribution of stickers to electors after casting their vote. The stickers were available in both Irish ("Is Vótálaí mé!") and English ("I'm a Voter!"). Thanks to the support of the two returning officers, the stickers were distributed across eight polling stations in Dublin Central and one of the largest polling stations in Galway City.

The pilot provided an opportunity to assess public interest in voter recognition initiatives and to explore how small engagement measures can help encourage participation, and raise election awareness within local communities, both online and offline. The use of promotional materials, such as stickers, was raised in both public consultation working groups for the education and engagement strategy. International experience indicates that people sharing pictures of the stickers on social media or being seen wearing their stickers while being out and about, can positively remind and inspire other potential voters to take part in the democratic process.

A total of 100,000 bilingual stickers were printed, along with display posters, and distributed to the participating polling stations. These were placed with the assistance of polling station staff at an unmanned table at the entrance to the stations to encourage voters to take a sticker as they left the building after voting.

Of the 29,700 stickers distributed across eight polling stations in Dublin Central, 52% (14,760) of stickers were taken, leaving 14,940. In Galway West, of the 7,200 stickers, 44% (3,221) of stickers were taken, with 3,979 being returned. The stickers were seen to be an effective low-cost way of raising awareness regarding the bye-elections. Additionally, the leftover sheets of stickers will be reused for future educational, public engagement events or subsequent elections.

Social media and anecdotal evidence show the stickers were well-received. Screengrabs from TikTok and Instagram showed candidates, organisations, and high-profile social media accounts amongst others proudly displaying and promoting their 'I'm a Voter' stickers. National and local media showed significant interest in the bye-

election roll-out of these stickers. On polling day RTÉ headlined its RTÉ News App and it's RTÉ News website page with the image of the stickers and referenced their use in the bye-elections. Articles were also published by the Press Association. Local outlets such as Galway Bay FM asked about the use of the stickers in interviews with An Coimisiún staff.

Additionally, political actors, polling station presiding officers, media commentators and voters praised the initiative, with many noting that voters were making unprompted requests for them. Anecdotally, staff also noted that the Irish language stickers seemed to be more popular than the English stickers, in both bye-election constituencies. Feedback from staff at several polling stations where the stickers were not available indicated that a number of voters enquired about their availability and expressed an interest in receiving one after voting.

While difficult to quantify success through social media and anecdotal evidence, An Coimisiún Toghcháin's Communications and Electoral Operations Teams believe that a high sticker pick-up rate and strong feedback mean this initiative has real potential for future elections. The main challenge going forward if considered appropriate would be ensuring a smooth roll-out, without placing any additional unnecessary administrative burden on returning officers or polling station staff.



Transparency and Targeting of Political Advertising

Regulation (EU) 2024/900 on the Transparency and Targeting of Political Advertising (TTPA) came fully into effect on 10 October 2025, introducing new transparency requirements for political advertising across the European Union. At its simplest, the Regulation is intended to ensure that members of the public can recognise political advertising and access information about who is responsible for it and how it has been funded. Political advertisements are required to have a label containing information about the sponsor of the advert and the event it is in relation to, along with a website link or QR code to where a more detailed transparency notice can be accessed.

The 2026 bye-elections provided the first significant opportunity for An Coimisiún, as the regulator, to observe implementation of the new framework during a live electoral event. Similarly, many candidates and parties were engaging with the Regulation for the first time. Monitoring of political advertising activity took place across both constituencies and consisted of in-person assessment of campaign materials, inspection of print media adverts and tracking website advertising.

At first observation, a significant proportion of candidates made well-intentioned and commendable efforts to comply with the Regulation. However, several candidates did not make any effort to label their materials or make transparency notices available. Through communicating with candidates and parties, and providing guidance to stakeholders, a significant improvement was made across the bye-election period, with the core obligations of the Regulation broadly satisfied by the majority of candidates.

Post-election, a series of constructive feedback sessions were held for candidates and parties to share their experiences and the information provided by these sessions will inform An Coimisiún's TTPA engagement and knowledge-sharing strategy in the coming months.

Overall, the bye-elections demonstrated significant movement towards compliance while identifying challenges around awareness, preparedness and the detailed technical application of the new requirements.

Future Priorities

At the time of drafting and publication of previous PEER reports, there was typically an upcoming electoral event for which planning and preparatory work had already commenced. At present, however, there is no electoral event anticipated in the short term, with the next scheduled nationwide polls being the Local and European Elections in 2029. This provides An Coimisiún with an opportunity to reflect on lessons from recent electoral events and to advance the key priorities identified for the next electoral cycle.

An Coimisiún are currently developing a number of strategies and policies, implementation of which will be a significant focus in the period ahead. A new education strategy is being developed and is expected to be published by the end of the year. It includes a focus on improved voter experience and engagement; capacity development; various forms of education; and awareness of An Coimisiún Toghcháin. We are also currently developing a new Research Programme for 2027-2030, and are engaging in a consultation process to gather stakeholders' opinions on the direction of our research and the identification of future research projects.

To complement these reviews and strategies, An Coimisiún will review its approach to conducting PEERs including taking account of experience to date and international best practice. We will revise the checklist by evaluating existing questions, engaging with stakeholders, and using the existing statistical analysis to identify opportunities for refinement. In the Presidential PEER report, we reviewed the implementation of PEER recommendations to date. As part of An Coimisiún's ongoing programme of work, we will continue to monitor the progress of cumulative PEER recommendations.

We will engage with the Minister for Housing, Local Government, and Heritage and the Franchise Unit in his department, as well as relevant stakeholders such as the returning officers, and County and City Councils to ensure that the recommended improvements and developments will continue to be implemented.

We will also use this time in between electoral events to review best practice in other countries particularly through our participation in electoral observation missions and election visitor programmes and consider whether there are approaches or innovations which could be applied to Ireland to further enhance our system of electoral observation.

Having the opportunity to conduct PEERs over the three years since our establishment has provided An Coimisiún with a valuable overview of the current state of play with electoral administration in Ireland. It has given insights into the scale of work involved in the delivery of elections and the level of dedication and expertise of those involved. We believe that the improvements to the system we have observed over successive PEERs have highlighted the value of PEERs as an oversight mechanism. We hope that we will notice significant improvements when we return to polling stations for the next round of PEERs and look forward to doing so.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - PEER Checklist

An Coimisiún Toghcháin
The Electoral Commission

SECTION A: Observer Team	
A1. Team Number	
A2. Time of Arrival	
A3. Time of Departure	
SECTION B: Polling Station Identification	
B1. Polling Station Name	
B2. Polling Booth Number	
B3. Number of Polling Booths in Polling Station	
B4. Polling Station Presiding Officer	
B5. Polling Station Selection Criteria	☐ Gaeilge Cás-Staidéar ☐ General

SECTION C: Opening | Complete Only if Present at Opening		
C1. **Timing** | Was the polling station open for voting at the appointed time of 07:00?	Yes ☐	No ☐
→ Comments:		
C2.1 **Ballot Box** | Was the ballot box demonstrated to be empty to those that were present at the time of opening?	Yes ☐	No ☐
C2.2 **Ballot Box |** Was the ballot box demonstrated to be securely sealed to those that were present at the time of opening?	Yes ☐	No ☐
→ Comments:		

SECTION D: Exterior		
D1.1 **Signage** | Is there directional signage present on the approach route to the polling station?	Yes ☐	No ☐
D1.2 **Signage** | Is an official notice indicating "polling station", displayed at the entrance to the polling station?	Yes ☐	No ☐
D1.3 **Signage (Irish)** | Are all official signs and notices outside the polling station bilingual?	Yes ☐	No ☐
D1.4 **Signage (Irish)** | Does the Irish text on these signs and notices appear above the English text?	Yes ☐	No ☐
D1.5 **Signage (Irish)**| Is the Irish text as large and as prominent as the English text?	Yes ☐	No ☐
→ Comments:		

An Coimisiún Toghcháin
The Electoral Commission

SECTION D: Exterior (Continued)	
D2.1 **Canvassing** | Are there any election posters in evidence within 50 meters of the curtilage of the polling station?	Yes ☐ No ☐
D2.2 **Canvassing** | Are there any alternative forms of canvassing e.g. leafleting in evidence within 50 meters of the curtilage of the polling station?	Yes ☐ No ☐
→ Comments:	
D3.1 **Car Parking** | Are there adequate car parking facilities?	Yes ☐ No ☐
D3.2 **Car Parking** | Is there designated accessible car parking for people with disabilities near the main pedestrian entrance to the polling station?	Yes ☐ No ☐
→ Comments:	

SECTION E: Exterior (Electors with Disabilities)	
E1.1 **Hazards |** Are there any steps or steep changes in level outside the polling station?	Yes ☐ No ☐
E1.2 **Hazards |** Are there any other observable hazards or obstacles on the approach to the polling station?	Yes ☐ No ☐
→ Comments:	
E2.1 **Wheelchair Use (External)** | Is the primary entrance to the polling station generally accessible for wheelchair users?	Yes ☐ No ☐
E2.2 **Wheelchair Use (External)** | Is there a sign indicating that the entrance is accessible?	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐
E2.3.1 **Wheelchair Use (External)** | Is there a wheelchair ramp available?	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐
E2.3.2 **Wheelchair Use (External)** | If there is a wheelchair ramp is it permanent (i.e. built-in to the entrance)?	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐
E2.3.3 **Wheelchair Use (External)** | If there is a wheelchair ramp is it temporary (i.e. portable/ removable)?	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐
E2.4 **Wheelchair Use (External)** | If the primary entrance is inaccessible is there an alternative accessible wheelchair entrance (e.g. side entrance)?	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐
→ Comments:	

An Coimisiún Toghcháin
The Electoral Commission

SECTION F: Interior	
F1.1 **Layout** | Is the layout in the polling station adequate for the conducting of the poll e.g. sufficient space, sufficient lighting etc.?	Yes ☐ No ☐
F1.2 **Layout** | Is the layout in the polling station intuitive and conducive to the flow of the polling process e.g. entrance, identification, voting, exit etc.?	Yes ☐ No ☐
F1.3 **Layout** | Is the layout in the polling station conducive to the security of the ballot box (publicly visible and in a secure area)?	Yes ☐ No ☐
F1.4 **Layout** | Is the layout in the polling station conducive to the secrecy of the voting process (private space)?	Yes ☐ No ☐
→ Comments:	
F2. **Staffing** | Are staff in the polling station identifiable and positioned in areas where they are visible to electors?	Yes ☐ No ☐
→ Comments:	
F3.1 **Emergency** | Are there emergency exits in the polling station?	Yes ☐ No ☐
F3.2 **Emergency** | If yes, are the emergency exits signposted?	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐
→ Comments:	

SECTION G: Interior (Electors with Disabilities)	
G1. **Layout |** Is the layout suitable for electors with physical disabilities e.g. entryways, corridors, voting compartments etc.?	Yes ☐ No ☐
G2.1 **Wheelchair Use (Internal)** | Is the interior accessible to wheelchair users in terms of layout e.g. turning space and an absence of obstacles?	Yes ☐ No ☐
G2.2.1 **Wheelchair Use (Internal)** | Is there a low-level voting space?	Yes ☐ No ☐
G2.2.2 **Wheelchair Use (Internal)** | Is this a low-level voting compartment?	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐
G2.2.3 **Wheelchair Use (Internal)** | Is this a low-level table with a screen?	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐
G2.3 **Wheelchair Use (Internal)** | Is the ballot box accessible to wheelchair users (e.g. placed at an accessible height ≈ 1 metre from ground)?	Yes ☐ No ☐
→ Comments:	

An Coimisiún Toghcháin
The Electoral Commission

SECTION H: Voting Procedures		
H1.1 **Posters** | Are the *Electoral Offences* and *Evidence of Identity* posters on display?	Yes ☐	No ☐
H1.2 **Posters** | Is a *Large-Print Notice of Ballot Paper* displayed?	Yes ☐	No ☐
H1.3 **Posters** | Are these posters displayed in both Irish and English?	Yes ☐	No ☐
→ If no, please specify: English Only ☐ Irish Only ☐		
H2. **Materials |** Are any of the essential election materials missing from the polling station?	Yes ☐	No ☐
→ If yes, please specify: ☐ Ballot Boxes ☐ Ballot Papers ☐ Register of Electors ☐ Balancing List/ Supplement to the Register ☐ Stamping Instrument ☐ Guidance to Presiding Officers ☐ Pens/Pencils		
→ Comments:		
H3. **Identification** | Were any electors asked to provide ID on being issued with a ballot paper during the time of the review? [Non-Mandatory]	Yes ☐	No ☐
→ Comments:		
H4.1 **Ballot Paper** | Were ballot papers 'stamped' with the official mark *on being issued* to electors?	Yes ☐	No ☐
H4.2 **Ballot Paper** | Were the names of electors marked off the Register of Electors on being issued a ballot paper?	Yes ☐	No ☐
→ Comments:		
H5.1 **Voting** | Did the voting compartments enable electors to vote in secret?	Yes ☐	No ☐
H5.2 **Voting** | Was there only one elector in a voting compartment at a time, unless accompanied by a voting companion?	Yes ☐	No ☐
H5.3 **Voting** | Were any electors observed engaging in 'selfies' or other forms of prohibited photography?	Yes ☐	No ☐
→ Comments:		

An Coimisiún Toghcháin
The Electoral Commission

SECTION I: Voting Procedures (Electors with Disabilities)	
I1.1 **Vision Impairment** | Are Ballot Paper Templates (BPTs) available for electors with a vision impairment?	Yes ☐ No ☐
I1.2 **Vision Impairment** | Are any issues with the use of the BPTs observable e.g. difficult to use?	Yes ☐ No ☐
I1.3 **Vision Impairment** | Are any visually impaired electors observable using the 'Freephone' facility to aid in voting?	Yes ☐ No ☐
→ Comments:	
I2. **Deaf/Hard of Hearing** | Are there any provisions to aid those who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing with a hearing impairment e.g. a Loop System (sound system) for hearing aids?	Yes ☐ No ☐
→ If yes, please provide further detail:	
I3. **Non-Physical Disabilities** | Did you observe electors with intellectual, learning, sensory or developmental disabilities receiving assistance from poll staff (e.g. assistance with voting or general assistance)?	Yes ☐ No ☐
→ Comments:	
I4.1 **Voting Companion** | Was voting with the assistance of a voting companion in evidence?	Yes ☐ No ☐
I4.2 **Voting Companion** | If yes, was the oath or affirmation issued to the voting companion by the Presiding Officer? [*Non-Mandatory]	Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A ☐
→ If yes, please provide further detail:	

SECTION J: Eolas agus Seirbhísí Gaeilge	
J1.1 **Seirbhísí Gaeilge** | Are all polling station staff (at the desks observed) able to conduct their duties through Irish?	Yes ☐ No ☐
J1.2 **Seirbhísí Gaeilge** | Can at least one of the polling station staff (at each desk observed) conduct their duties through Irish?	Yes ☐ No ☐
J1.3 **Seirbhísí Gaeilge** | If not, is a staff member available in the polling station to facilitate Irish speakers?	Yes ☐ No ☐
→ Comments:	
J2.1 **Úsáid Teanga** | Did you observe electors speaking Irish in the polling station?	Yes ☐ No ☐
J2.2 **Úsáid Teanga** | Approximately what percentage of electors spoke Irish in the polling station?	
→ Comments:	

An Coimisiún Toghcháin
The Electoral Commission

SECTION J: Persons Present

J1. **Polling Station Staff |** Please indicate the staff present in the polling place at the time of review:

Staff	Present	Staff Numbers Present
Presiding Officer	☐	_____
Supervisory Presiding Officer	☐	_____
Poll Clerk	☐	_____

→ Comments:

J2.1 **Authorised Persons** | Were there personation agents present in the polling station at the time of the review?	Yes ☐	No ☐
→ If yes, please provide further detail:		
J2.2 **Authorised Persons** | Were there any issues with regard to unauthorised persons present in the polling station at the time of review?	Yes ☐	No ☐
→ Comments:		
J3. **Communication** | Did you discuss any issues with the Presiding Officer e.g. the absence of materials or the lack of a low-level voting compartment?	Yes ☐	No ☐
→ Comments:		

SECTION K: Innovation & Improvement

K1. **Initiative** | Were there any initiatives or measures implemented at a local level by Returning Officers or Presiding Officers that aided in the efficiency or integrity of the electoral process?	Yes ☐	No ☐
→ If yes, please provide further detail:		

An Coimisiún Toghcháin
The Electoral Commission

SECTION L: Additional Comments

If you have any additional comments regarding the accessibility of the polling station or the administration of the poll in general, please outline them below:

Appendix 2 - PEER Checklist Statistical Analysis

Percentages represented in this table are based on the responses received from the checklists. “N/A” may indicate that the question was either not applicable to the polling station concerned or that no response was recorded. As some questions were not relevant to all polling stations, such as for the Irish Language case study, the total number of responses for individual questions may vary, and therefore percentages may not always reflect an overall total of the 42 polling stations.

	PEER Checklist Question	% YES	% NO	% N/A
D1.1	Signage Directional	48%	52%	0%
D1.2	Signage Official Notice	88%	12%	0%
D1.3	Signage Irish Bilingual	83%	17%	0%
D1.4	Signage Irish Above	48%	52%	0%
D1.5	Signage Irish Prominence	83%	17%	0%
D2.1	Canvassing Postering	29%	71%	0%
D2.2	Canvassing Other	12%	88%	0%
D3.1	Car Parking General	69%	31%	0%
D3.2	Car Parking Accessibility	50%	50%	0%
E1.1	Hazards Steps	17%	83%	0%
E1.2	Hazards Other	10%	90%	0%
E2.1	Wheelchair Use Primary Entrance	86%	14%	0%
E2.2	Wheelchair Use Signage	50%	50%	0%
E2.3.1	Wheelchair Use Ramp Available	81%	19%	0%
E2.3.2	Wheelchair Use Ramp Permanent	69%	31%	0%
E2.3.2	Wheelchair Use Ramp Temporary	12%	88%	0%
E2.3.2	Wheelchair Use Level Entrance	15%	85%	0%
E2.3.2	Wheelchair Use Ramp Absent	5%	95%	0%

	PEER Checklist Question	% YES	% NO	% N/A
E2.4	Wheelchair Use Alternative Access	5%	7%	88%
F1.1	Layout Adeqaute Conditions	95%	5%	0%
F1.2	Layout Flow Of Voting	93%	7%	0%
F1.3	Layout Security	100%	0%	0%
F1.4	Layout Secrecy	90%	10%	0%
F2.	Staffing	100%	0%	0%
F3.1	Emergency Exit Present	93%	7%	0%
F3.2	Emergency Exit Signage	90%	10%	0%
G1.	Layout Accessibility	86%	14%	0%
G2.1	Wheelchair Use Space	95%	5%	0%
G2.2.1	Wheelchair Use Low-Level Voting Space	98%	2%	0%
G2.2.2	Wheelchair Use Low-Level Compartment	88%	12%	0%
G2.2.2	Wheelchair Use Low-Level Desk W/ Screen	7%	93%	0%
G2.2.2	Wheelchair Use Low-Level Desk W/Out Screen	2%	98%	0%
G2.2.2	Wheelchair Use Low-Level Voting Absent	2%	98%	0%
G2.3	Wheelchair Use Ballot Box	90%	10%	0%
H1.1	Posters Offenses & Identification	100%	0%	0%
H1.2	Posters Large-Print Ballot Paper	98%	2%	0%
H1.3	Posters Irish Bilingual	98%	2%	0%
H2.1	Materials Absent	5%	95%	0%
H3.	Identification	74%	24%	2%
H4.1	Ballot Paper Stamped	98%	0%	2%

	PEER Checklist Question	% YES	% NO	% N/A
H4.2	Ballot Paper Electoral Register	98%	0%	2%
H5.1	Voting Compartment Secrecy	95%	5%	0%
H5.2	Voting Compartment One Elector	88%	10%	2%
H5.3	Voting Photography	2%	95%	2%
I1.1	Vision Impairment Bpt Available	100%	0%	0%
I1.2	Vision Impairment Issues	0%	55%	45%
I1.3	Vision Impairment Freephone	0%	76%	24%
I2.	Deaf/ Hard Of Hearing Loop System	2%	98%	0%
I3.	Non-Physical Disabilities	0%	83%	17%
I4.1	Voting Companion Assistance	2%	98%	0%
I4.2	Voting Companion Oath	0%	2%	98%
J2.1	Authorised Persons Personation	5%	95%	0%
J2.2	Authorised Persons Issues	5%	95%	0%
J1.1	Seirbhísí Gaeilge All Staff	50%	50%	0%
J1.2	Seirbhísí Gaeilge Any Staff	90%	10%	0%
J1.3	Úsáid Teanga Language Use	50%	50%	0%
J1.3.1	Úsáid Teanga 0%	50%	50%	0%
J1.3.2	Úsáid Teanga 80%	10%	90%	0%
J1.3.3	Úsáid Teanga 90%	20%	80%	0%
J1.3.4	Úsáid Teanga 100%	20%	80%	0%

Appendix 3 - Index of Polling Stations Visited

1. Dublin Central

Polling Station		Address
1	All Saint's Vicarage Road	30 Phibsborough Rd, Phibsborough, Dublin 7, D07 Y9T3.
2	Christ the King N.S.	Annaly Road, Cabra East, Dublin 7, D07 X950.
3	Deaf Village Ireland	Ratoath Road, Cabra West, Dublin 7, D07 V4KP.
4	Drumcondra N.S.	Church Avenue, Drumcondra, Dublin 9, D09 VY58.
5	Gardiner Street Convent N.S.	Belvedere Court, Dublin 1, D01 H9C5.
6	Glasnevin N.S.	Botanic Avenue, Glasnevin, Dublin 9, D09 TW63.
7	Holy Child Pre-School	Lower Seán McDermott Street, Dublin 1, D01 F228.
8	North Strand Church Parish Hall	Waterloo Avenue, North Strand, Dublin 3, D03 C422.
9	O'Connell Primary School	North Richmond Street, North Circular Road, Dublin 1, D01 H9X5.
10	Paradise Place Educate Together N.S.	Paradise Place, Upper Dorset Street, Dublin 7, D07 HF10.
11	Scoil Chaoimhín	Marlborough St, North City, Dublin 1, D01 YT29.
12	Sean O'Casey Community Centre	18-26 St. Mary's Rd, East Wall, Dublin 3, D03 AY74.
13	Stanhope Street N.S.	Manor Street, Stoneybatter, Dublin 7, D07 DY60.
14	St. Columba's N.S.	Iona Road, Glasnevin, Dublin 9, D09 YX46.
15	St. Finbar's N.S.	Kilkieran Rd, Cabra West, Dublin 7, D07 A522.
16	St. Gabriel's N.S.	Cowper St, Stoneybatter, Dublin 7, D07 CX50.
17	St. Laurence O'Toole C.B.S.	1 Seville Place, North Wall, Dublin 1, D01 A439.
18	St. Patrick's B.N.S.	Millbourne Avenue, Drumcondra, Dublin 9, D09 H008.
19	St. Paul's C.B.S.	North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7, D07 P529.
20	St. Peter's N.S.	Saint Peter's Road, Phibsborough, Dublin 7, D07 F75C.
21	St. Vincent's Primary C.B.S.	St. Philomena's Road, Glasnevin, Dublin 11, D11 HX78.

2. Galway West

The 10 stations (highlighted in green) were visited as part of the Eolas agus Seirbhísí i nGaeilge case study, one in each of the Galway Gaeltacht's Language Planning Areas (LPAs). Another six were located in the Gaeltacht Service Towns of Clifden and Galway City (highlighted in blue).

Polling Station		Address	LPA
1	An Cheathrú Rua S.N.	An Cheathrú Rua, Co. na Gaillimhe, H91 T4C2.	An Cheathrú Rua
2	Bearna S.N.	Bearna, Co. na Gaillimhe, H91 X2X8.	Bearna & Cnoc na Cathrach
3	Carna S.N.	Carna, Co. na Gaillimhe, H91 D2H5.	Conamara Láir
4	Cill Rónáin S.N.	Cill Rónáin, Inis Mór, Co. na Gaillimhe, H91 ED89.	Oileáin Árann
5	Community Centre, Ballybane	Castlepark Road, Ballybane, Galway, H91 VP6D.	Baile Seirbhíse Gaeltachta
6	Community Centre, Oughterard	Main Street, Oughterard, Co. Galway, H91 XA8R.	
7	Corr na Móna S.N.	Corr na Móna, Co. na Gaillimhe, F12 WV77.	Dúiche Sheoigheach & Tuar Mhic Éadaigh
8	Cregmore N.S.	Cregcarragh, Claregalway, Co. Galway, H91 YD28.	
9	Eanach Dhúin S.N.	Eanach Dhúin, Cor an Dola, Co. na Gaillimhe, H91 C963.	An tEachréidh
10	Gaelscoil Mhic Amhlaigh	Lána an Mhuilleora, Cnoc na Cathrach, Gaillimh, H91 FV4D.	Baile Seirbhíse Gaeltachta
11	Inis Bó Finne S.N.	Middlequarter, Inishbofin, Co. Galway, H91 KV48.	
12	Letterfrack N.S.	Letterfrack, Co. Galway, H91 H603.	
13	Maigh Cuilinn S.N.	Church Road, Moycullen, Co. Galway, H91 HF10.	Maigh Cuilinn
14	Mervue Boys N.S.	Walter Macken Road, Mervue, Galway, H91 YD58.	Baile Seirbhíse Gaeltachta

Polling Station		Address	LPA
15	Oranmore Boys N.S.	Maree Road, Oranmore, Co. Galway, H91 Y763.	
16	Sailearna S.N.	Na hAille, Indreabhán, Co. na Gaillimhe, H91 PW35.	Cois Fharraige
17	Scoil Einde, Dr. Mannix Rd.	Dr Mannix Road, Salthill, Galway, H91 Y725.	Baile Seirbhíse Gaeltachta
18	Scoil Mhuire, An Clochán	Racecourse Road, Clifden, Co. Galway, H71 HY04.	Baile Seirbhíse Gaeltachta
19	St. Nicholas N.S., Claddagh	Saint Dominick's Road, The Claddagh, Galway, H91 DX57.	Baile Seirbhíse Gaeltachta
20	Tír an Fhia S.N.	Tír an Fhia, Leitir Móir, Co. na Gaillimhe, H91 YF90.	Ceantar na nOileán
21	Tirellan N.S.	Arda Thír Oileáin, Bóthar Áth Cinn, Gaillimh, H91 X853.	Oirthear Chathair na Gaillimhe

Endnotes

[i] Census 2016 Boundary Files, https://www.cso.ie/en/census/census2016reports/census2016boundaryfiles/.

[ii] Údarás na Gaeltachta, Galway | The Gaeltacht | Our Language & the Ghaeltacht | Údarás na Gaeltachta

[iii] % of total population who reported that they spoke Irish daily outside of the education system. Data was not collected regarding the language use of children below the age of 3 as part of Census 2022, thus none of them were recorded as daily Irish speakers.

[iv] An Coimisinéir Teanga, Tuarascáil Bhliantúil 2025, pg.27 https://www.coimisineir.ie/userfiles/files/new%20sub/Coimisin%C3%A9ir%20Teanga%20Tuarasc%C3%A1il%20Bhliant%C3%BAil%202025.pdf?lang=EN

[v] An Coimisinéir Teanga, Tuarascáil Bhliantúil 2025.

[vi] Voting rights for people experiencing homelessness https://www.feantsa.org/files/Themes/Participation/2024/Barriers_to_political_participation_for_homeless_people_must_be_removed_0606.pdf#page=2&zoom=100,0,969

[vii] Application Forms https://www.voter.ie/download

[viii] Address Point https://www.anpost.com/AddressPoint

[ix] An Coimisiún's Review of Electoral Participation and Inclusion https://www.electoralcommission.ie/app/uploads/2026/08/27082026-Research-Report-Review-of-participation-and-inclusion.pdf

Notes

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