

## Joint proposal

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This joint proposal is the result of a close co-operation between **Iulen Tazueco Manrique** (1.1 and 2.1) and **Santiago Sáinz Caparroso** (1.2, 1.3, 2.2 and 2.3) on a common interest: democratic institutions improvement under a double approach, constitutional and international. Holding both of us a Spanish citizenship, we have been familiar with English-speaking countries institutions, a valuable complement to our existing knowledge regarding mainland European paradigms.

On the one hand, **Iulen Tazueco Manrique** holds a bachelor's degree in law and business at University of Zaragoza and a master's degree in political Analysis at the Open University of Catalonia. He is currently finishing a PhD in Constitutional Law at University of Zaragoza. After studying a year abroad at IT Tralee (Ireland), he has developed an interest in the Irish PR-STV system, having dealt with two of its features up to date: a master's dissertation on Irish constituencies redistricting, which was translated into English and presented at the PSAI Annual Conference in October 2022; and an ongoing thesis on the Single Transferable Vote, intending to be a framework for its possible implementation in Spain.

On the other hand, **Santiago Sáinz Caparroso** is an specialist on Humanitarian Response in Conflict and Disaster at Harvard, with specific studies on green fiscal policy, climate change, international development and Human Rights at UNITAR and other International Organizations, and a special focus on environmental fiscal policies and the impact of economic activities on climate, sustainable development and the effects of climate on Human Rights.

Both authors agree that the former's Irish constitutional insight and the latter's international approach to sustainable development appliances to elections offers An Coimisiún a rich set of proposals; and express their wish to collaborate in case research projects and contributions are taken into consideration.

# 1. What is your view on the proposed research strands? Are there amendments or additions you would suggest?

## 1.1. Electoral law, electoral systems and electoral infrastructure

Compared to mainland Europe states, Ireland is best known for its comprehensive set of electoral rules concerning equality of representation. Sections 30(1)(b) and (c) of the Electoral Reform Act 2022 have made An Coimisiún responsible for the reapportionment and redistricting operations, which are essential to comply with a core constitutional principle. Much progress has been made since O'Donovan v Attorney General [1961], which paved the way for a more objective, less partisan electoral map. Nevertheless, there are grounds for further progress on this matter, as Ireland still lags behind other European states regarding a systematic procedure for constituency review, whose most harmful consequence is the lack of readiness in case a snap election is called before the electoral map is updated on the basis of the newest Census of population. This already occurred in 1989, and the ruling in O'Malley v An Taoiseach [1990] pointed out that certain constituencies could not be properly reapportioned in spite of a substantial population growth. This caused malapportionment to affect Dublin South-West, which kept its four Teachtaí Dála representing 106,848 inhabitants, while less populated Cavan-Monaghan had five TDs representing 106,344 inhabitants, according to the 1986 Census. Avoiding an unrevised constituency scheme to be in force, even transitionally, and conducting research on faster, more effective constituency revision procedures is essential to ensure compliance with constitutional provisions regarding equal representation.

Population growth directly affects electoral institutions. Recent trends have shown that Dáil Éireann is expanding its size considerably due to the constitutional range of 20,000-to-30,000 inhabitants per TD. An oversized Dáil might not be operative. The current constitutional range follows a linear function, which is more sensitive to slight population changes. Instead, a logarithmic function would keep Dáil size more stable in time. In either case, reapportionment is unavoidable if population shifts show substantial differences between constituencies. Low magnitudes force constituencies to be split more frequently. Besides, there is quantitative evidence

that lower district magnitudes are more prone to cause higher inhabitants-per-TD ratio divergences between constituencies.

A further issue should be pointed out: Irish citizens' rights when they live abroad. We are aware that Ireland does not allow postal voting as a general right, but rather as an exception. In contrast, Spain has a long postal voting tradition. Its usefulness and reliability has led to almost 2.5 million voters cast their ballot by these means in the latest general election, which was held in late July 2023. A case study on its regulation would permit An Coimisiún set a proposal for postal voting extension, which is core to reinforced enfranchisement. Had not postal voting been a general right in Spain, one in ten voters could not have cast their vote in a decisive election because of their holiday arrangements (as the election was called for midsummer). The effect of postal voting is not irrelevant, as it caused a shift in the preliminary election results in Madrid constituency, where conservative PP gained one seat at the expense of progressive PSOE. This had a further consequence, as the left block could not rely on centrist Catalan nationalists' abstention, but on their affirmative vote, to retain the Government majority in the lower chamber.

## 1.2. Integrity of electoral events

The integrity of electoral events is a fundamental requirement for the functioning of democracy and the respect for human rights. Electoral processes must ensure that citizens can freely express their political will, that the results accurately reflect voter preference, and that political actors accept and abide by the results. However, in the current context, electoral events may face various challenges and threats that jeopardize their integrity, such as foreign interference, disinformation, manipulation, fraud, violence, or polarization.

Ireland is a well-established democracy that has held free and fair elections since its independence in 1922. The country has demonstrated great resilience in the face of internal and external conflicts, as well as economic and social crises. The Irish electoral system fosters pluralism, representativeness, and political stability by allowing voters to express their preferences among multiple candidates and parties. Additionally, the system has control and transparency mechanisms that

ensure the integrity of the electoral processes, such as the supervision of the Independent Electoral Commission/An Coimisiún Toghcháin, national and international observation, manual vote counting, and the possibility of judicial challenge.

The integrity of electoral events is crucial for democracy and human rights. Ireland serves as an excellent example of a country that has successfully maintained and strengthened the integrity of its electoral processes despite the challenges and threats it has faced. However, we must remain vigilant against new challenges and threats that may arise in the future. We should not be swayed by regulatory or fundamental rights-curtailing currents that respond to opportunism linked to fortuitous and supervening events, particularly in the field of digital communication. To ensure citizens can exercise their right to vote freely and without manipulation, it is necessary to adopt long-term preventive measures that focus on training, impermeability, resilience, and education. These measures should be based on freedom of opinion and expression. It is important to avoid any malicious manipulation from any source.

### 1.3. Education, public engagement and inclusion

In the current context, it is essential to consider measures that could encourage electoral participation, particularly among youth, women, and underrepresented groups. To prevent disengagement and disaffection with public institutions, it is vital to strengthen minority representation and develop mutually beneficial relationships between institutions, individuals, and collectives.

In our opinion, the focus of minority inclusion should be on socially determining minorities and distinguishing among those that have the capacity to impact social strata broad enough to represent a significant movement to claim space in political life and on political agendas. The '3.5% rule' has been shown to be an effective scale for determining the weight of minorities and allocating resources to promote their inclusion. We recommend its application in all circumstances.

To develop this statement, we can examine how the integration of groups and the political decision-making process relate to the 3.5% rule<sup>1</sup>.

For instance, the People Power Revolution in the Philippines in 1986 was a nonviolent movement that overthrew the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos and reinstated democracy in the country. The mobilization involved around 10% of the population, with millions of people participating in mass demonstrations, boycotts, strikes, and civil disobedience. The movement successfully forced Marcos to flee the country and resulted in the installation of Corazon Aquino as the new president.

Another example is the Arab Spring in Tunisia in 2010-2011, which was a series of protests and civil resistance that triggered a wave of uprisings across the Arab world. The movement began with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor who was harassed by the police. This event sparked public outrage and sympathy, leading to the involvement of hundreds of thousands of people, estimated to be around 5% of the population. They demanded an end to the authoritarian regime of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and the establishment of a democratic system. The movement received support from trade unions, lawyers, journalists, and human rights activists. They challenged the repression and censorship of the regime. The movement successfully ousted Ben Ali and initiated a transition to democracy.

These examples demonstrate how the integration of groups into the political decision-making process can be influenced by the 3.5% rule. Nonviolent movements can achieve their goals by mobilising a large and diverse segment of the population, while also weakening the loyalty and power of the security forces and economic elites. The 3.5% rule is best viewed as a guideline rather than a formula for nonviolent resistance. Political actors must actively identify and empower these groups to encourage participation and foster a sense of belonging among the population.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Harvard Kennedy School - "The '3.5% rule': How a small minority can change the world" (2020) <https://carrcenter.hks.harvard.edu/publications/35-rule-how-small-minority-can-change-world>

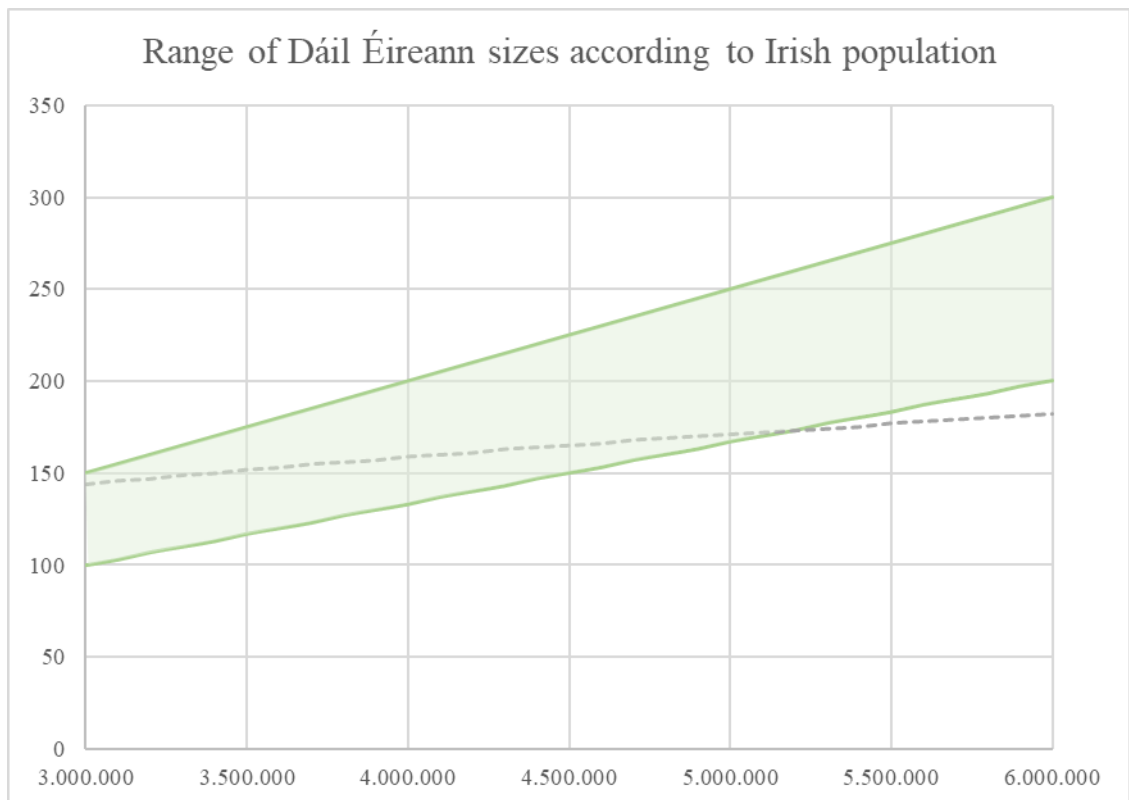
To strengthen electoral participation in Ireland, a comprehensive and creative approach is required. This involves approaching democratic education from new and innovative perspectives that are relevant to both current and future society. It is important to ensure simultaneous and harmonious public engagement and inclusion. Our proposals aim to revitalize Irish democracy by encouraging active, increased, and representative participation by all citizens.

## 2. Which of the research questions under section 4 would you consider most important and why?

### 2.1. Electoral law, electoral systems and electoral infrastructure

#### 2.1.1. Representation

The current constitutional limit on the Dáil size was set when around three million inhabitants were registered in Ireland. In 2022, two extra million inhabitants have been ascertained by the latest Census. The most tangible consequence of a steady, substantial population increase in every consecutive intercensal period is a bigger Dáil, which is expected to raise up to 174 members, the highest number ever. This fact requires a thorough revision of current constitutional provisions to ensure that an excessive Dáil size is not reached but, at the same time, no substantial deviation from the current rule is achieved in case Ireland returns to former figures. Roughly speaking, Irish population has been around 3 million people until the 1970s. Later, around 3.5 million people have been ascertained by the CSO until the early 2000s, when around 4 million people were registered in Ireland. In the 2010s, around 4.5 million people lived in the State, having exceeded 5 million in the current decade. Considering a projection for an extra million people, the following figure depicts all constitutionally feasible Dáil sizes:



What the dotted line stands for is a trend that has been observed throughout all the Dáil size revisions (excluding University constituencies during the first years after independence): the total number of representatives for every Dáil has been around the cube root of the State population. Hence, the dotted line is the cube root of the population range comprising from early 20<sup>th</sup> century figures to projected 6 million people. As we can see, every population figure ascertained up to date would have led a Dáil size within the constitutional range had the cube root rule been followed. However, future increases in population would lead to a higher constitutional ratio ( $\pm 33,000$  inhabitants per TD), which does not fall far from unrevised ratios in the latest Censuses. The introduction of such a cube rule in the 1937 Constitution has two potential consequences on representation:

- (a) Up to  $\pm 5.1$  million people, the current constitutional ratio would be achieved, even though it would not be explicitly mentioned. This way, if a fresh Census verifies a population decrease, a quantitative loss in representation is avoided.
- (b) From  $\pm 5.1$  people, an oversized Dáil is avoided, as the current statutory upper limit set by Section 57(2)(a) of the Electoral Reform Act 2022 would be kept implicitly for short-term population increases (as 181 is roughly the cube root of 6,000,000 people). If the current constitutional limit is kept, the outcoming

Dáil would have 200 TDs for 6 million inhabitants, while this figure can only be achieved by the cube root rule for 8 million inhabitants, less likely to occur.

A constitutional change would be required, but that could be more stable than any mere revision of the constitutional lower and upper limits. Besides, no provisions would be necessary to be made by the Electoral Reform Act 2022, as the number of TDs would be automatically returned after a new Census is published. In order to allow An Coimisiún adjust the final figure to reduce ratio divergences between constituencies or to deliver an even number, it would be advisable to set a margin of one (or even two) seats above or below the cube root. This rule would not pose many wording difficulties within the 1937 Constitution, as it is not an excessively complex formula (which would be undesirable in terms of simplicity of the rules).

#### 2.1.2. Constituency magnitude

Arrangements for larger Dáil constituency sizes have been proposed in several submissions regarding the latest review. Nevertheless, we consider the reasons to support them are different to the general statement that the larger the magnitude is, the more proportional the electoral result is.

First, it should be pointed out that relationship between constituency magnitude and proportionality is not that direct as in other Proportional Representation (PR) systems, which are based on a certain apportionment formula applied to party lists. It is well-known that virtually every Irish election is conducted by the means of a Single Transferable Vote (STV), and hence the final outcome does not depend on how proportional the final result is in comparison to the first preferences. Instead, transfers are decisive, and we cannot judge a PR-STV system's proportionality by following the same standards as in mainland Europe.

Second, arguments against larger constituencies which state that they can turn the counting process into a more complex process do not persuade us. Every electoral system has a set of more or less complex rules, and it does not determine how good or bad the system is. From a mainland European perspective, PR-STV is generally seen as a rather complex system, but so is the German electoral system (which includes much higher magnitudes for regional constituencies) or the Italian



parallel voting system (where the PR apportionment part involves a set of complex rules whose efficiency is questioned by political scientists)<sup>2</sup>.

Instead, our approach to justify larger constituency magnitudes overcomes reasons for and against which are wrongly or partially-wrongly founded on rather simple reasons which ignore the mechanics of the PR-STV systems. First, every PR-STV method currently in force (except the Meek's method) use the Droop quota, which equals  $1 + [\text{valid votes} : (\text{seats} + 1)]$ . Roughly speaking, a seat is obtained at around that value (there might be cases of election under the quota in the last counts), and hence the theoretical amount of represented valid votes in a given constituency is  $n$  times (being  $n$  the number of seats) the quota. This leads us to ascertain that the theoretical representation percentage is close to  $n : (n + 1)$ . Slightly higher or lower values might be reached in practice if some seats are gained under the quota, or if an elected candidate's surplus is not transferred (and, consequently, retained), but it gives us a general rule to determine that, the higher the constituency magnitude is, the larger the percentage of represented votes is. This is different to stating that a larger magnitude makes the electoral system more proportional. Proportionality and representativity are not the same. We can check it in the 2019 regional election in the Spanish region of Castilla-La Mancha, whose average district magnitude is similar to that in Irish local elections. The apportionment formula (D'Hont) which is applied to constituency party lists is deemed proportional, but no party below a two-digit vote share obtained a seat. As a result, parties representing nearly a 16% of the regional vote share could not enter the 33-seat regional parliament<sup>3</sup>. In that year's local election in County Kerry (whose Council has the same size), less than a 5% of the first preference votes were not represented (besides, we should check which of these votes were effectively represented due to transfers). Higher district magnitudes in Castilla-La Mancha did not result in much higher representation rates: if we check the 1983 regional election, where both the parliament size (44 seats instead of 33) and the average constituency magnitude (8.8 instead of 6.6), we see that parties representing around a 12% of the valid poll obtained no seats<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtrend.it/2018/01/27/rosatellum-effetto-flipper-come-funziona-assegnazione-seggi-proporzionale-camera-senato/>

<sup>3</sup> A full statement of the electoral results can be checked in the following resource [in Spanish]: [https://www.juntaelectoralcentral.es/cs/jec/documentos/CASTILLA%20LA%20MANCHA\\_2019\\_Resultado.pdf](https://www.juntaelectoralcentral.es/cs/jec/documentos/CASTILLA%20LA%20MANCHA_2019_Resultado.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cortesclm.es/web2/paginas/elecciones/eleccionI.php>

In contrast, 2014 local election held in Fingal (with an average district magnitude of 8, and returning 40 councillors) resulted in every party contesting the election obtaining a seat due to the transfers, being an extreme case that of AAA candidate Annette Hughes, who started the count with less than a 2% of the first-preference votes but reached the quota (roughly an 11.1% of the valid poll) on the tenth count in LEA Mulhuddart. Her election could not have been possible under a PR-list system.

What we want to state is that a higher magnitude does not ensure proportionality, but representativity. Theoretical ranges of representativity are between a 75% (for three-seaters) to roughly 83.3% (for five-seaters). In local elections, allowance for six and seven-seaters rise this range upper limit to 87.5% (and it was even higher up to 2019 elections, as ten-seaters increased it to 90.9% of the valid poll). Hence, a slight increase in Dáil constituency magnitude would increase representativity.

Second, we have found out that, for a given constituency magnitude, it is possible to determine the maximum population-per-representative ratio deviation between constituencies regardless of the average national ratio. If, e.g., we consider 30,000 inhabitants per TD and a natural rounding rule (by which we mean the rounding up of every entire whose decimal part equals or exceeds 0.5), the range for three-seaters comprises 75,000 to 104,999 inhabitants, so the possible ratios range from  $75,000/3=25,000$  to  $104,999/3=35,000$ . In the case of four-seaters, the population ranges comprises 105,000 to 134,999, so the possible ratios range from  $105,000/4=26,250$  to  $134,999/4=33,750$ . We can observe two consequences of these results:

- (a) That the range of possible ratios tightens around the average when the district magnitude rises, so the highest divergences will occur in the lowest magnitude (which, for Dáil elections, is three seats). Hence, the lower the average district magnitude is, the more likely arrangements for three and four-seaters is, so the ratio divergences for unrevised constituencies from one Census to another will theoretically be higher. By this, we mean that it does not matter how precise the constituency delimitation is to achieve a lower ratio divergence, as future population shifts could rise divergences between constituencies with the same magnitude.
- (b) That this range of theoretical divergence can be expressed as a function based on two variables: constituency magnitude ( $n$ ) and rounding-up rule ( $\beta$ , which

is 0.5 in our example). For three-seaters, that maximum divergence is  $35,000/25,000 = 1.4 = 3.5/2.5$ . For four-seaters, it is  $33,750/26,250 = 1.2857 = 4.5/3.5$ , so the general form for any given  $n$  and  $\beta$  is  $(n + \beta) : [(n - 1) + \beta]$ . Besides, an extension of this finding is that we can also set a theoretical deviation from the average for individual constituencies: for three-seaters it would be 5,000 (the maximum ratio absolute deviation from 30,000) between 30,000 (one-sixth); and, for four-seaters it would be 3,750 between 30,000 (one-eighth). This is to say that the maximum absolute deviation from the average is  $(\beta : n)$ , and it can be easily written in either the Constitution or the statutes, as it can be expressed as a fractional part of the national average.

As a consequence, higher constituency magnitudes that avoid recurring to creating three and four-seaters to divide potential six, seven or eight-seaters, is desirable in terms of a better ratio equality between constituencies. We find this is a stronger reason to justify a slight increase in maximum Dáil constituency magnitude.

### 2.1.3. Constituency review methodology

Dáil constituencies are rather volatile, being the 1923 scheme the only one with substantially matched administrative county boundaries and local electoral areas. All later revisions up to 2023 have systematically detached themselves from territorially-coherent criteria, having them been casuistic and based on thorough division criteria. Constituency boundaries adjustments have been historically used as a means to achieve lower ratio divergences, although it is rather useless if lower constituency magnitudes are the norm, as the former paragraph has shown. More stable constituency schemes ensure a greater legal certainty, candidates' territorial platforms stability and a better alignment of national and local policies, matching electoral demarcations at both levels. O'Donovan did certainly not recognise any rights to territorial nor sectorial representation, but it did not oppose territorial coherence either. A later case, Murphy v Minister for Environment [2007] admitted some ratio variance if it ensured adherence to recognisable constituency boundaries. This does not contravene the current electoral legislation statement that the breaching of county boundaries shall be avoided as far as practicable. This

rule has been flagrantly infringed in practice, although a more respectful approach has been taken by the 2023 Constituency Review Report.

The importance of counties in Ireland is sacrosanct, as they are a natural local government unit, as well as the territorial base for community identity. Recently-introduced municipal districts (which comprise one or several LEAs) are idoneous to constitute basic territorial units for electoral map redesign in case a given county needs to be split into several constituencies. However, there is no such a division in both cities of Cork and Galway and the four administrative counties in County Dublin, lacking all of them a proper municipal scheme. This might not pose any difficulties if LEAs remain territorially stable over time. Other natural features, as rivers (namely a North-South split in both cities of Cork and Dublin) or loughs (as the East-West split in the city of Galway) can eventually complete administrative criteria. By following such a proposal, constituencies would get rid of their quasi-permanent volatility, reducing abuse of redistricting; and establishing a coherent, more stable and more recognisable Dáil constituencies, instead of the current ones. Current microunit-based adjustments are rather long and unnecessary if a flexible approach is taken regarding constituency magnitudes and ratio divergences. In my 2023 Constituency Review public submission<sup>5</sup>, I attached a figure on the last page, which depicts a set of counties (or grouped counties which have long shared either constituency or territorial bounds) and their correlative number of TDs for every statutory possible Dáil size, plus the lowest possible deviation rate (underlined) if a precise division into constituencies is carried out. For a 174-member Dáil, as An Coimisiún has recommended in its Report, Galway City and County are entitled to nine TDs, being 4.32% the minimum absolute ratio deviation. Having checked that a division into a five-seater and a four-seater is possible, several divisions can be proposed, e.g., (a) Galway West, comprising Conamara MD and Galway City; and Galway East, comprising the remaining Galway County MDs; or (b) Galway West, comprising Conamara MD and Western Galway City LEAs, physically split from the Eastern ones by Lough Corrib). In case additional territorial adjustments had to be made (namely attaching parts of other counties if no MD-based divisions can achieve a reasonably low deviation rate), it would be preferable that full MDs would be attached to minimise territorial incoherence between existing LEAs and

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.electoralcommission.ie/cr-submissions/iulen-tazueco-manrique/>

Dáil Éireann constituencies. In other words, whenever in-county divisions cannot achieve reasonable ratio deviations from the national average; exceptional, MD-based county boundary breaching would be territorially more coherent than ED-based divisions. If a neighbouring county's part is to be added, it should constitute, at least, a separate Municipal District, and not a portion of land comprising a few EDs, which might alienate affected electorates in a greater manner than if they are moved into a new national constituency within its MD, where candidates can also co-ordinate canvassing and other electoral campaign actions more easily, allowing parties to better resource management.

#### 2.1.4. The extension of postal voting

Ireland has severely limited postal voting. In a sharp contrast, our home country (Spain) offers it on demand, so almost every citizen can apply for it to cast his/her ballot before the general election is held. There are two main electoral registers in Spain: CER (Residents' Register) and CERA (Absent Residents' Register), being the General Electoral Regime Act 1985<sup>6</sup> the main regulation for voters registered in the former; and the Statutory Instrument n°. 1621/2007<sup>7</sup>, for those registered in the latter. Registered electors who live in Spain can cast their ballot by post if they wish so. In order to do so, they have to follow an easy procedure at any post office. No justified reasons have to be provided, but there is one strict limit: if a voter has opted for a postal voting, he or she cannot reverse it to vote at a polling station. In the case of Spanish people temporally or permanently living abroad, they can vote by post or personally at consular premises. Postal ballots cast by CER voters are added to the ones cast on the election day, and are counted altogether to release the provisional results. Later on, ballots cast by CERA voters are added to release the final results.

Spanish postal voting regulations could be considered by An Coimisiún to extend franchise to all Irish voters to make the exertion of their political rights easier. The announcement of a general election date which might interfere with arrangements

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<sup>6</sup> Ley Orgánica 5/1985, de 19 de junio, del Régimen Electoral General.

<sup>7</sup> Real Decreto 1621/2007, de 7 de diciembre, por el que se regula un procedimiento de votación para los ciudadanos españoles que se encuentran temporalmente en el extranjero.

made by voters (namely holidays, surgery appointments, events held abroad, etc.) is a burden for representation, as voters have to decide between voting or attending their scheduled plans. Besides, citizens living abroad due to interchange schemes, (namely Erasmus) or to work-related reasons, who keep in touch with their home country and wish to have a say on its politics, have to give up the exertion of their right to vote, which is inherent to their citizenship rights. Postal voting and voting from abroad cannot be considered as a privilege or as an exceptional arrangement, but as a general right for Irish citizens.

## 2.2. Integrity of electoral events

Although many Western democracies are taking assertive approaches in this matter, we believe that developed democracies should not be swayed by potentially totalitarian policies. To protect democracy and human rights, it is necessary to adopt preventive measures that focus on training and educating the population to prevent interference in electoral processes. These measures should be based on the respect and promotion of freedom of opinion and expression, a fundamental right enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, as well as in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Freedom of opinion and expression is essential to the functioning of democracy, as it allows for the exchange of ideas, the formation of public opinion, the control of public authorities, and citizen participation.

Likewise, prevention measures should focus on training and educating the population against manipulation. This is understood as the ability of citizens to access, analyze, evaluate, and create information in a critical and responsible manner. The education and training of the population to resist manipulation involves developing media and information literacy, as well as civic and democratic values. This enables citizens to exercise their right to vote freely and with informed judgment, without being influenced by interference, disinformation, or manipulation.

To implement these prevention approaches, it is recommended to strengthen the legal and regulatory framework that guarantees the freedom, independence,

pluralism, and accountability of the media, both traditional and digital. Additionally, it is important to protect citizens' personal data and privacy while ensuring their right to access public information.

Establish cooperation and coordination mechanisms among national and European authorities, media, online platforms, political actors, civil society, and academia to prevent and combat interference, disinformation, and manipulation. Additionally, promote transparency, verification, and diversity of information sources. This model should strive for greater objectivity than fact-checking agencies, which have been shown to be insufficiently transparent, efficient, and susceptible to internal interests.

Promoting awareness and sensitization campaigns on the importance of electoral event integrity, the value of freedom of opinion and expression, and the risks of interference, disinformation, and manipulation is crucial. These campaigns should target the entire population, with a special focus on the most vulnerable or disadvantaged groups.

Include training and education in educational plans and programs, from primary to higher education, as well as in non-formal and informal education, to help the population develop skills, attitudes, and knowledge that foster critical thinking, active participation, and respect for diversity. This will help to prevent manipulation.

Support research and innovation in the field of electoral integrity, freedom of opinion and expression, and population education to combat manipulation. This will generate knowledge, evidence, and best practices to improve policies and actions in this area.

## 2.3. Education, public engagement and inclusion

### 2.3.1. Democratic Education

Democratic Education should be strengthened from the earliest stages. Curricular programs that highlight the importance of the electoral process, the democratic

history of Ireland, and the human and constitutional rights of citizens should be implemented. Collaborations with educational institutions and civil organizations should be established to provide interactive workshops. These workshops should complement those focused on preventing electoral manipulation, fake news, and disinformation. They could cover topics such as basic education on the Irish electoral system, the role of European institutions, and the rights and duties of citizens. The workshops should be interactive, consisting of debates, role-playing, and visits to polling stations. Encouraging active participation, tolerance, and the development of individuals as political actors with their own identity is important for instilling active participation in society.

Civic and voter education aims to promote citizen participation in electoral processes by enhancing voters' knowledge, skills, and democratic attitudes. Sweden provides a good example of how civic and voter education has improved participation in electoral processes.

Since 1994, the Swedish government has implemented the Demokrati i skolan (Democracy at School) programme, which encourages students' active participation in school life and society. The programme comprises debates, simulations, visits, projects, and school elections. These activities enable students to learn about democratic principles and values, express their opinions, and exert their influence. The programme has contributed to improving young people's interest and confidence in politics, as well as increasing their participation in national and local elections.

In Sweden, participation in turnout has steadily increased from 80.11% in 2002 to 87.18% in 2018, an increase of 7.07 percentage points. It is important to note that the effects of these initiatives may take several generations to take effect. The impact of this initiative is evident even in the electoral processes that Sweden joined later. Throughout the European Parliament Elections, the participation of Swedish citizens has progressively increased, from 41.63% in 1995, 38.84% in 1999, 37.85% in 2004, 45.53% in 2009, 51.07% in 2014, to 55.27% in 2019.

### 2.3.2. Public Engagement



The use of digital platforms and social networks is essential for increasing public engagement. To achieve this, we propose the creation of interactive multimedia campaigns that inform citizens about the candidates, their platforms, and electoral procedures. Additionally, we suggest organizing public debates where citizens can directly interact with the candidates and express their concerns.

Interactive multimedia campaigns could include videos, infographics, questionnaires, and other engaging content. Public debates can be held in public spaces with the participation of the media and social organizations.

### 2.3.3. Inclusion of Underrepresented Groups

To address the underrepresentation of women and other marginalized groups, We propose investigating cases of independent candidates who could run under a joint ticket, rather than as a party, to avoid gender quotas.

Remote e-voting could increase voter turnout, especially among youth, overseas residents, and people with disabilities. Voting by ordinary mail in a system of semi-rigid constituencies could increase electoral participation and reduce costs, errors, and environmental impact. However, this method also poses risks that have yet to be adequately addressed. By allowing for greater accessibility and a wider time frame for exercising the right to vote, this approach may encourage participation among underrepresented groups.

To correct historical and structural inequalities affecting women and other marginalized groups, affirmative measures are necessary. The effectiveness of these measures can be measured by indicators such as the number and proportion of candidates and representatives from these groups, as well as the level of voter satisfaction and confidence.

The results and conclusions of the Making All Voices Count program and its publications<sup>8</sup> demonstrate that the use of new technologies is crucial in attracting and bringing institutions closer to citizens. This not only improves electoral participation and the perception of institutions but also aligns with the principles

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<sup>8</sup> Source: Making All Voices Count - A grand challenge for development – (2013-2017)

of transparency and public service. Ainhoa Sorrosal (UOC) proposes the implementation of institutional norms, rules, and practices that are inclusive and citizen-centric to ensure democratic accountability in the era of data-driven governance.

#### 2.3.4. Youth Involvement

We recognize the importance of engaging young people in the electoral process. To achieve this, we suggest implementing student participation programs, such as the formation of student councils, to discuss political issues and promote understanding of democratic systems. Additionally, we propose developing interactive applications that facilitate youth voter registration and provide accessible information about electoral processes.

Young people often feel disenchanting or apathetic about politics due to factors such as lack of representation, distrust of institutions, and lack of information. The UNDP publication on youth participation<sup>9</sup> emphasizes the importance of involving young people in decision-making on all issue areas, not just youth-specific matters. Measures that create specific spaces for youth but do not involve them in matters of real importance are not effective. The partial text provided is already well-written and adheres to the desired characteristics. Therefore, no changes are necessary.

Therefore, it is possible to extend the influence of the young population on decision-making processes to other areas of politics. This is already happening to a great extent through the system of elected senators in universities. It is important to ensure a recommended quota of young students in as many levels of public life as possible.

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<sup>9</sup> Source: UNDP - "Enhancing Youth Political Participation throughout the Electoral Cycle" (2015-2023) <https://www.undp.org/publications/enhancing-youth-political-participation-throughout-electoral-cycle>