

# Electoral Registration Modernisation

Petra Woods – Principal Officer, Electoral Registration Modernisation Project

AILG Webinar - 4 November 2022

### Electoral Reform Act 2022



## Significant programme of reform in line with the Programme for Government – Our Shared Future

- Establishment of a statutory, independent Electoral Commission An Coimisúin Toghcháin
- Modernisation of our electoral registration process to deliver greater accessibility and greater integrity
- Regulation of online political advertising
- Provisions to protect the integrity of our electoral processes to guard against manipulative or inauthentic behaviour during electoral campaigns
- Provisions to enable advance polling in pandemic or Covid-19 situations
- Strengthening of our regulatory regime in respect of political donations and accounts
- Provision for voting on the islands will take place on the same day as for the rest of the country
- Clarifying that political parties can hold lotteries for fund raising purposes

### Commencement – SI 512 of 2022



#### Commenced with effect from 13 October:

- Certain provisions of Part 1 which includes preliminary and general provisions.
- Part 2 Electoral Commission provisions to facilitate the appointment of ordinary members and the Chief Executive for An Coimisiún Toghcháin.
- Part 3 Franchise and Registration of electors All of this Part is now commenced with effect from 13 October 2022 with the exception of section 98 – this will be commenced with the other provisions establishing An Coimisiún.
- Part 6 This Part amends the Electoral Acts to facilitate the provision of advance polling during a pandemic or Covid-19, allowing flexibility for polling to take place at electoral events over more than one day to facilitate social distancing at polling stations.
- Part 8 Polling on Islands This Part provides that voting at electoral events will take place on islands on the same day as the rest of the country.

### Part 3 - Background and Context



#### Wider context

- Previous reports and recommendations including 2016 Oireachtas Joint Committee on an Electoral Commission
- LA franchise teams consultation
- Public consultation
- Voter.ie development in Dublin

Part 3 of the Electoral Reform Act 2022 is amending legislation – mainly amends the Electoral Act 1992

### Electoral Registration: Key proposals



#### Rolling registration

A single live and responsive register; process the same all year round Register to close in advance of electoral event, reopen the day after and so on

#### Simplified process – all applications to LA in first instance

Majority of engagement can be via a single, simple form Online registration/updating of details

Individual registration – no more household forms
Identity data cross-check via PPSN, data sharing provisions
Single database for all LAs ensuring shared standards and improved data quality

#### Greater accessibility, New cohorts:

Anonymous registration

Pre-registration for 16/17 year olds

Standardised reference to people with no fixed address

#### Reporting and oversight provided for the first time

### Implications for LAs and the public



#### One process, all year round

- All applications made to LA in first instance (online an option)
- PPSNs must be provided for all entries/amendments (cross-check)
- Appeals to County Registrar

#### One register, continuously updated

- -Extracts to be drawn as needed
- -Process at backend will remain largely as now

#### Introduction of oversight and reporting arrangements

- -Reporting to the Electoral Commission by Registration Authorities
- -Electoral Commission to report on the register annually

### Duties of Registration Authorities



# Section 20 of the Act, sets out overall duties of registration authorities:

Maintaining the register:

- Adding people entitled to be registered
- Removing people not entitled to be registered
- Updating
- Correcting
  - "to ensure a complete and accurate register"
- Making the register available for inspection (excl AE)

In general preparing and publishing has been replaced by maintaining and publishing

### Reporting by Registration Authorities



Section 20A requires each registration authority annually to report to An Coimisiún Toghcháin on:

- Activities undertaken to ensure the maintenance of a complete and accurate register for its registration area;
- Activities undertaken to evaluate whether and how those activities have contributed to a complete and accurate register for its area; and
- Such other matters as may be directed by An Coimisiún

Section 20A also provides for joint reporting by registration authorities

### Oversight by An Coimisiún



#### Section 69 – the Commission:

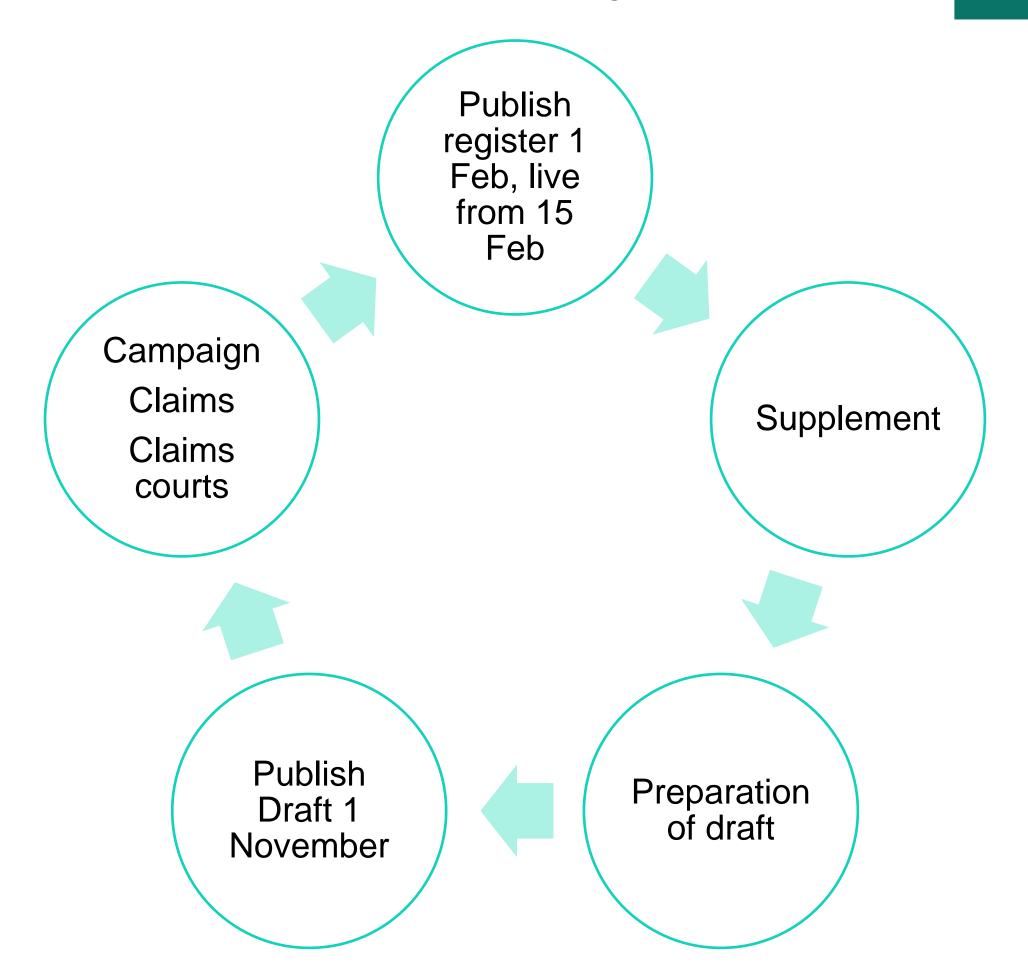
- May undertake or commission research in relation to:
  - The accuracy and completeness of the register
  - The activities undertaken by a registration authority
  - The processes relating to the register
  - Any other matter considered relevant
- Shall, on the basis of reports received, report annually on:
  - Any such research;
  - Its overall assessment of the status and functioning of the register
- Can make recommendations to registration authorities or to the Minister

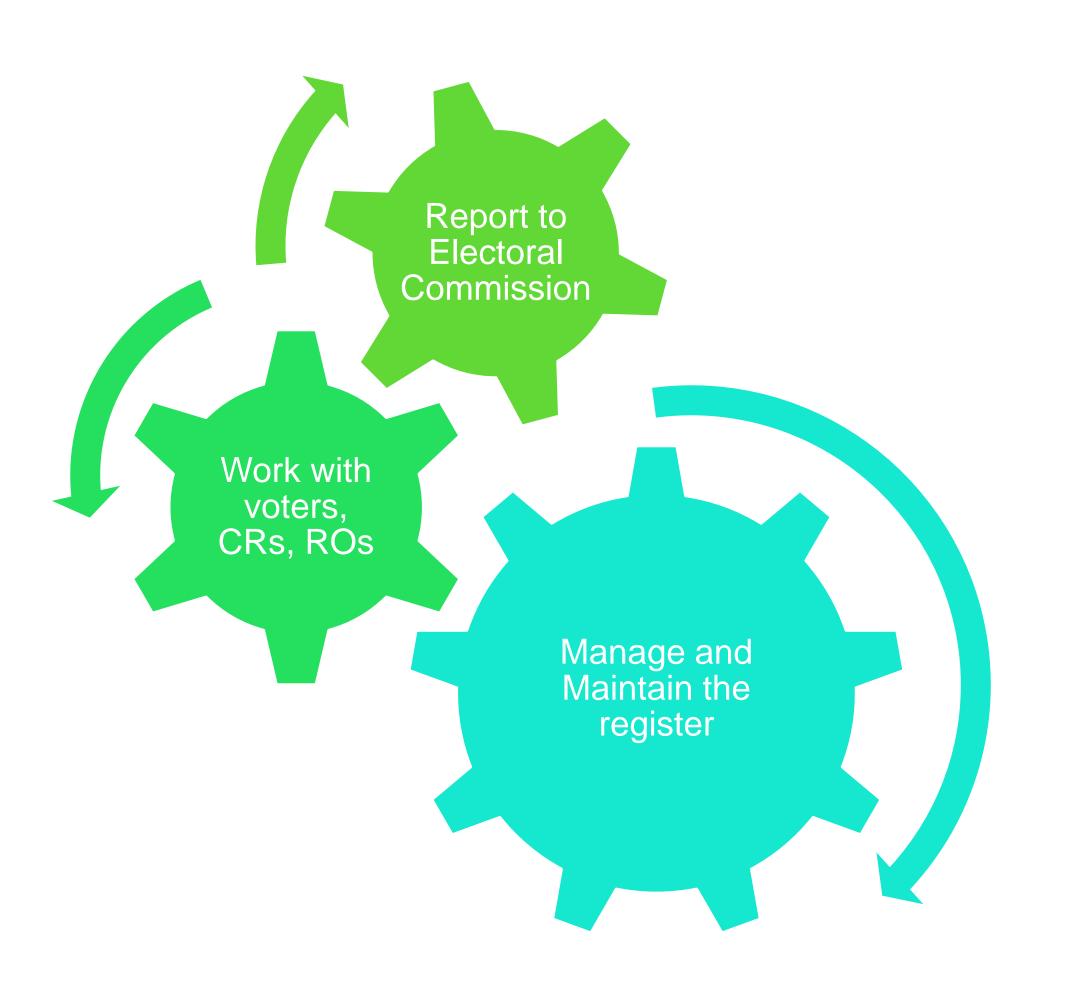
### What is the process from here on?



Inflexible statutory deadlines

Ongoing learning, improving





### Role of the individual



- Register and keep registration up to date
  - Provide registration authority with any information it needs
  - In respect of own registration provide PPSN, Eircode and DOB
- Contact registration authority if needed but updates to own records can be done via checktheregister.ie or by submitting a form
- Notify registration authority if there are reasonable grounds for change in respect of another entry

### Checktheregister.ie Seiceáilanclár.ie

- Register to vote
- Confirm details add
   PPSN, DOB and Eircode
- Update name and address
- Download forms
- More functionality over time



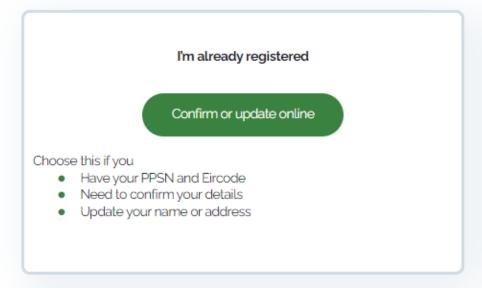


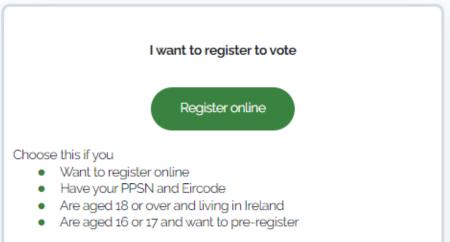
CheckTheRegister > Request Options

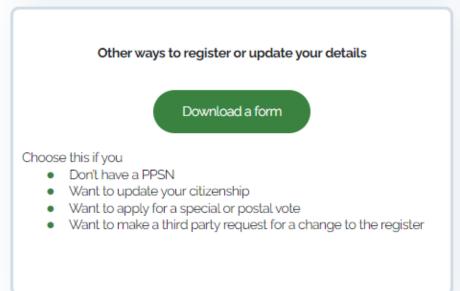
#### Welcome to check the register- the easy way to secure your say.

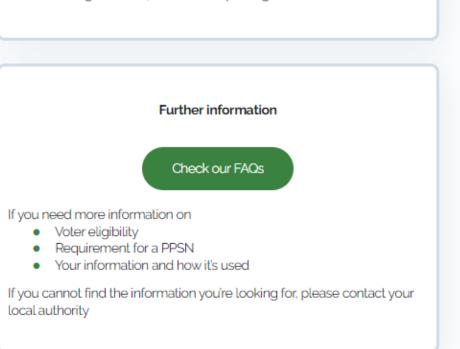
The electoral registration process has changed. Even if you are already registered, you now need to add your PPSN, date of birth and Eircode. This will allow your local authority to confirm your details and help to ensure the accuracy of the electoral register. You can now use this site to:

- Register to vote
- Confirm or update your details
- Download forms
- Find more information









### Data cross-check



Local authority has facility to cross-check data provided by an applicant:

- PPSN DOB Name
- Data is checked against data held by the Department of Social Protection via secure link
- If these are coherent and match an existing record, data is confirmed; date of death can be returned if applicable;
- If no match nothing is returned LA will need to contact the person for more information/paper form/ID check.

### Forms



### Key forms

- ERF1 "the paper form"
- Third party requests
- 11(7) no address
- Anonymous electors
- Postal (illness or disability)
- Special Vote

#### Other PV forms

- PV work/study
- Prisoners
- Defence forces
- Diplomats
- An Garda Síochána
- Electoral staff (S.99)

### ERF1

Most people will only ever need this form:

- Register to vote 16/17/18+
- Update name, address, nationality\*
- With PPSN one page
- Without two pages add certification

\*nationality change requires supporting documentation

#### **Register of Electors**

Register to vote or update details.

#### It's easier online!

The easiest way
for you to register
to vote or update
your details is online.



www.checktheregister.ie

To process your application, we need to gather some personal information about you. We tell you how and why we use your personal information on pages 3 and 4. Please read this information to help you fill out this form.

#### Please complete this form in BLOCK CAPITALS

O	Your details				
	First name				
	Surname				
V	Previous name (if this applies)		If you were registered before but have since changed your name.		
Š	PPSN		If no PPSN, complete page 2.		
×	Date of birth	D D M M Y Y Y Y	You can complete this form from the age of 16 but you		
V	Phone number		must be 18 to vote.		
Š	Email address		If updating your nationality, please write in your previous nationality and include a photocopy		
V	Nationality		of your new passport (photo page) or a copy		
V	Previous nationality (if this applies)		of your certificate of naturalisation.		
Ĭ	Address				
V			Where you live now.		
**		Eircode Lill			
Ÿ	Previous address		✓ If you were registered		
Ž	(if this applies)		before but have since changed your address.		
V		Eircode			
٧					
Ų	Sign here and post to your local authority				
	I believe that to the best of my knowledge the information I have provided:  > is truthful, and > complete.				
Š	I understand that it is a legal offence under electoral law to knowingly give false or misleading				
	information to a local authority.				
<b>&gt;&gt;&gt;&gt;</b>	Signature	Date	M M Y Y Y Y		
•	checktheregister.ie	Page 1 of 4	Form ERF1		

# Third party claims/requests

Similar to previous process but some important changes:

- Introduction of "reasonable grounds"
- Submit to the registration authority
- RA may "make such inquiries as it considers necessary to satisfy itself as to the correctness of the information in the claim" and "determine what action, if any, it should take in respect of the claim
- Requirement to inform the claimant and any person who may be affected by any proposed action
- Only affected person has right of appeal.

#### Register of Electors

#### Third party request to amend the register

#### It's easier online!

The easiest way for you to register to vote or update your details is online.



www.checktheregister.ie

Use this form if you have reasonable grounds to believe that an entry in the register about another person



	Please complete this form in BLOCK	CAPITALS		
Your details				
First name				
Surname				
Phone number				
Address				
	Eircode			
Details relevant	to your request			
Use this this section to provide details in relation to your request. For example if you are				
	thority about a person who has died, yo their date of birth or PPSN, providing it			
	vith An t'Árd Chláraitheoir, the General R			
Name of person (if this applies)				
Address				
(if this applies)				
	Eircode			
Reason for request and any other relevant information the local authority might need.				
Clara bases				
Sign here:	pest of my knowledge the information I h	nave provided:		
) is truthful, and	best of my knowledge the information i	lave provided.		
complete. I understand that it i	s a legal offence under electoral law to k	nowingly give false or misleading		
information to a local authority.				
Signature		Date DID MIM YIYIY		
checktheregister.ie	Page 1 of 2	Form TPC1		

is inaccurate. The local authority will consider your request and decide what, if any, action to take.

# Third party requests – how will it work?



- Claims can be submitted by any person with reasonable grounds to believe an amendment is required.
- Local authority will consider the request and take such action, if any, it considers appropriate

Removals

- If deceased action
- If not 3 attempts

Additions

- Contact individuals
- Provide forms, information

Amendment

- Substantive
- Non-substantive

### Removing people from register



- Rule 10 Corrections by the registration authority– as before can be non-substantive or substantive;
- In the case of removal of a name other than a person who has died, requires three documented attempts at contact
- Attempts at contact should include information on how to engage
  - Third attempt will include the date on which the deletion will take effect
  - This is the same date as expiry of appeal option (4 weeks)

### Transparency



- Register still to be available for inspection for purposes to do with the registration of electors
- Register still available to elected representatives and agents for electoral purposes
- Any provision of the register to be accompanied by information on its appropriate use and offences for misuse
- Changes will be needed given point in time version
- Local authorities have flexibility to agree practice a common sense and pragmatic approach is needed

### Deadlines to register



### Overall deadlines have not changed

- Applications received on or after the 14<sup>th</sup> day before polling day (DED) will have no effect for that election or referendum
- Postal/Special voting deadlines also haven't changed

### Pre-election



- Greater flexibility for registration authorities to work with their returning officers
- Key point is the register published after the closing date is the register in force for that electoral event
- County Registrar to publish latest date for appeal in respect of that specific election or referendum
- The register will reopen the day after polling day

# How will the new process improve integrity?



- Over time. Not a big bang approach but a systematic one
- The legislation seeks to balance easier access and personal responsibility with registration authority activity.
- Every year registration authorities:
  - can undertake any activities they consider appropriate to update and maintain the register includes door-to-door canvas but also schools programmes; supermarket drives; local post office engagement etc
  - Annually Report to Electoral Commission on those activities and the steps taken to determine the effectiveness of those activities
- The Electoral Commission will report annually on the status of the register
  - can make recommendations to registration authorities in relation to their functions and to the Minister in respect of legislative change

### Further improvements - systems



Checktheregister.ie; iReg and Voter.ie

Data quality improvement work

Migration of all data to national electoral registration system (ERS)

### ERS – A national system



### There are two broad phases to this project:

- 1. Process change and data quality focus
- 2. Development of new national ERS
  - A single high level of security and data protection
  - —Culmination and completion of data quality improvements
  - —A greater level of self-service available to the public
  - —Improved features

#### ERS current state of play:

- Project is in development;
- LG led project board in place;
- DCC is the lead authority building on Voter.ie

### Communications campaign



- Large scale national campaign will start on 7 November
- TV, Radio, including local radio, Social media and digital advertising; limited national newspaper

- Your voice matters and your vote is important.
- Long time voter?
- First time voter?
- Checktheregister.ie
- The easy way to secure your say

### TV campaign

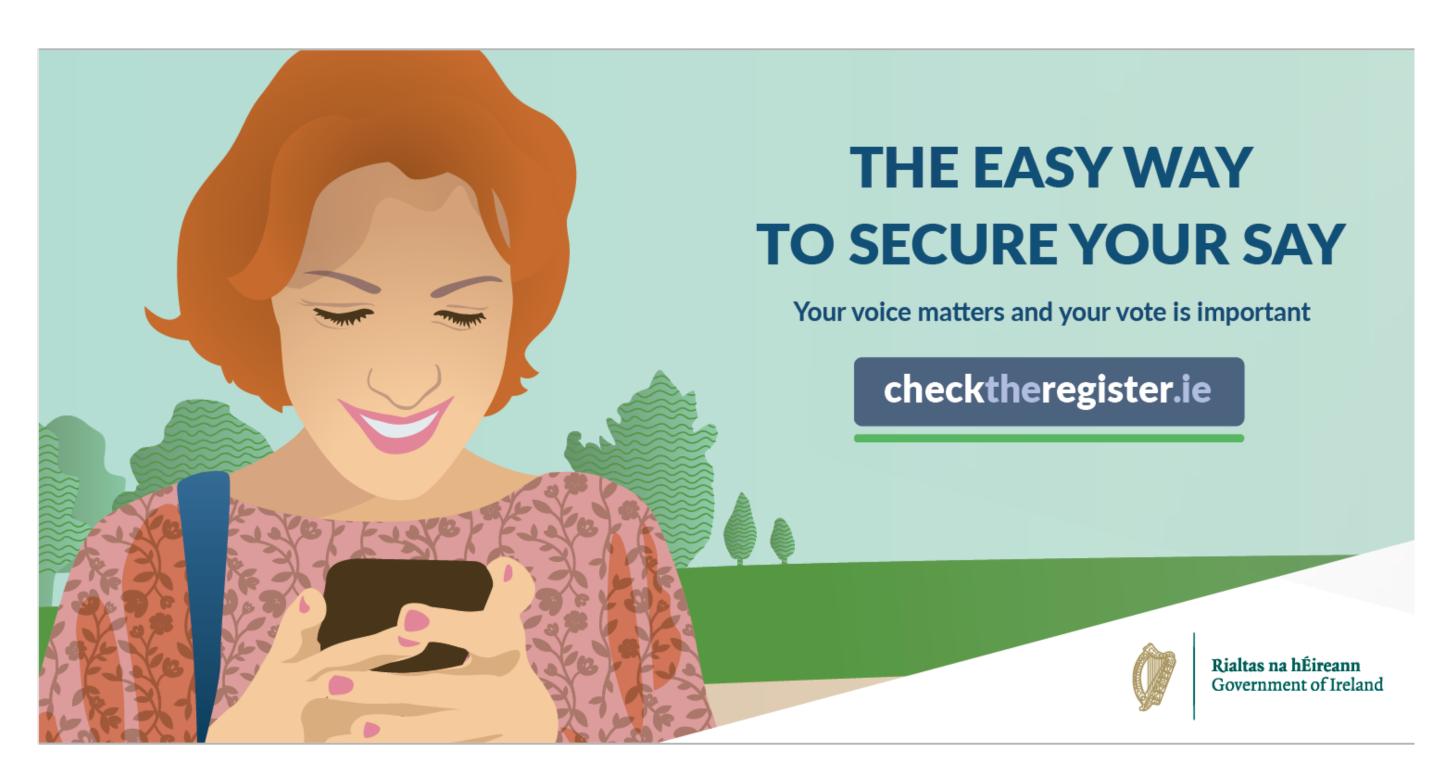


- Check the register the easy way to secure your say
- The way we register to vote has changed and we're asking everyone to visit checktheregister.ie.
- Long time voter? First time voter?

Check the register.ie
The easy way to secure your say

### Awareness campaign

















### What does the future look like?



- Local Government providing a service that works better for everyone – easier to access, easier to administer and delivering integrity
- National ERS will further support that change
- New opportunities will arise for efficiencies and improvements over time

### Next steps



2022

- Gaining familiarity with the new process
- Media campaign November/December

2023

- Further awareness campaign in H1 2023
- Ongoing data quality work by registration authorities
- Beginning reporting cycle with An Coimisiún Toghcháin

2024

- European and Local Elections
- Ongoing data quality work by registration authorities
- Second reporting cycle



### Thank you

For more information please contact your local authority franchise team; or contact us at registerreform@housing.gov.ie