

IRELAND
Elections to the European Parliament : 11 June 2004
Electoral Procedure

	TOTAL	WOMEN	MEN
No. of inhabitants	3 917 203		
of which, resident EU citizens			
No. of potential voters (18+)			
No. of young people (18-23) *			
No. of seats	13		
No. of inhabitants per seat	261 147		

Source: Constituency Commission report 2003.

* Age group voting for the first time in EP elections (last EP elections: June 1999).

1. LEGAL BASIS

The Electoral Act 1992, the European Parliament Elections Acts 1997, the Electoral Act 1997, the Electoral (Amendment) Act 1998, the European Parliament Elections (Forms) Regulations 1998, the Electoral (Amendment) Act 2002.

2. ELECTORAL SYSTEM

- Ireland is currently divided into **four constituencies**: Dublin, 4 seats; Munster, 4 seats; Leinster, 4 seats; Connacht/Ulster, 3 seats.

The number of Irish MEPs will drop to 13 next year. A Constituency Commission was set up to examine how the European constituencies should be changed to take this into account. The Commission, which published its report in October 2003, has recommended the reduction of a seat in each of the Leinster and Munster constituencies and the transfer of the population of County Clare from the Munster constituency to the Connacht-Ulster constituency.

The Commission also recommended that the constituencies be renamed as follows:

Dublin (the city and county of Dublin) - 4 seats

East (all Leinster counties except Dublin) - 3 seats

South (all Munster counties except Clare) - 3 seats

North-West (Clare, all Connacht counties and the three Ulster counties in the Republic) - 3 seats

These recommendations have not yet been formally adopted by statute. It is anticipated that an amending Act, expected to be published this year and enacted by February 2004, will finalise and give legal effect to the new constituency boundaries as proposed by the Constituency Commission

- **The Single Transferable Vote (STV)** method is used. This system is quasi-proportional:

votes cast + 1 = quota
seats+1

Candidates are listed on the ballot paper in alphabetical order. Each voter casts his/her vote for one candidate and in addition indicates in order of preference the candidate(s) to whom his/her vote is to be transferred if the candidate of his/her first or subsequent choice has already reached the quota or has obtained too few votes and has thus been eliminated.

- **Allocation of seats:**

A candidate is elected once he or she has reached the quota. Any votes accruing to a candidate in excess of the quota are redistributed on a proportional basis among the remaining candidates in accordance with the preferences expressed by the voters.

3.	REGISTRATION OF CANDIDATES
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- **Deadline for registration:** not yet known.
- **Deposit:** none.
- **Conditions:** Candidates of a political party must be nominated by their party. Independent candidates may nominate themselves but their nomination must be supported by 60 signatures (of persons on the electoral register in the same constituency). No-one may stand in more than one constituency.
- **Incompatibilities:** Those laid down in the 1976 Act on Elections to the European Parliament. [eg member of the police force or army] In addition, membership of the European Parliament is not compatible with the office of Judge or Comptroller and Auditor General, not with the office of European Ombudsman or member of the board of the European Investment Bank. Persons who are elected to the European Parliament while holding the office of Attorney General, Chairman or Deputy Chairman of the Dáil or Seanad or Minister of State shall, on election to the Parliament, cease to hold that other office. Otherwise, Membership of the European Parliament is compatible with membership of the Dáil or Seanad.
- **Dual mandate:** Up to now TDs or senators have been allowed by their parties to stand for the EP and, if elected, to hold a dual national/European mandate until the next national election at which point they were required by their party to relinquish their national mandate. An amending Act, expected to be published this year and enacted by February 2004, will finalise and give legal effect to these hitherto informal rules.

4.	POLLING DAY : 11 JUNE 2004 (from 7 to 21)
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- **Polling day:** not yet known. The date will be fixed by Ministerial order at least 30 days before the election Opening hours of polling stations: not yet known.
- **Declaration of results:** since Ireland will vote electronically, the results should be available as soon as the final polls close on Sunday 13 June.

5.	VOTING / STANDING FOR ELECTION
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- **Right to vote :**

- All EU citizens aged 18 or over who are resident in Ireland and in full possession of their voting rights in their Member State of origin are entitled to vote.

- Irish citizens resident abroad, whether in the EU or outside it, are not entitled to a postal vote.

- **Right to stand for election**

Any EU citizen aged 21 or over who is resident in Ireland and in full possession of his/her right to stand as a candidate in his/her Member State of origin may stand for election.

6.	ELECTION CAMPAIGN
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- **Funding:** There are legal limits on electoral expenditure, which includes both the candidate's own expenditure as well as any expenditure on his or her behalf by his or her party and/or any other organisation or person). The 1999 limit was IR £ 150,000 (€ 190,461). The spending limit may be raised at the discretion of the Minister for the Environment. It is not yet known whether he will do so for the 2004 elections.
- **Official campaign starting date:** None.
- **Media access:** RTE [the state broadcaster] strictly ensures equitable access for all candidates and parties.
- Each candidate may send one message by post to all voters in his or her constituency.
- **Opinion polls:** Permitted up to polling day.