

Directorate-General for the Presidency
 Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments

Factsheet: Seanad Éireann (Irish Senate)



Leinster House in Dublin, the seat of the Irish Parliament

1. At a glance

Ireland is a parliamentary democracy. The Irish Parliament (Oireachtas) consists of the President and two Houses: Dáil Éireann (House of Representatives) and Seanad Éireann (the Senate).

Seanad Éireann consists of 60 Members, referred to as Senators. 11 of these Members are appointed by the Prime Minister (Taoiseach). The remaining 49 Members are elected by other elected politicians and the graduates of two universities:

- 43 Senators are elected by five "vocational panels", composed of Members of Dáil Éireann, the outgoing Senators and elected local councillors. These five panels are intended to represent the following vocational interests: Culture and Education, Agriculture, Labour, Industry and Commerce and Public Administration.
- 3 Senators are elected by the graduates of the National University of Ireland,
- 3 Senators are elected by the graduates of the University of Dublin (Trinity College).





Elections to the Seanad must take place within 90 days after Dáil elections.

Seanad Éireann can initiate and revise legislation, but its legislative role is restricted: It cannot initiate financial legislation or constitutional amendments, and it cannot veto or delay indefinitely legislation which has already been passed by Dáil Éireann.



In a constitutional referendum held on 4 October 2013, Irish citizens rejected the proposed abolition of Seanad Éireann by a margin of 51,7% to 48,3%.

2. Composition

In theory, Seanad Éireann does not recognise party affiliations. But as the electorate for the panels consists of other politicians, its composition tends to reflect party strengths in the Dáil.

Current composition			
	Party	EP affiliation	Number of seats
	Fine Gael		19
	Fianna Fáil		14
	Sinn Féin		7
	Labour Party		5
	Green Party		1
	Independents	Not affiliated	14
			60
The next Seanad elections must take place 90 days after the next Dáil elections, which must be held in spring 2021 at the latest.			

3. Officeholders

Cathaoirleach (Chairperson) of Seanad Éireann  Senator Denis O'Donovan (Fianna Fáil/ALDE), since 8 June 2016	Chairperson of the Joint Committee on EU Affairs (composed of Members of both Chambers)  Michael Healy-Rae (Independent)
Secretary General of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service: Peter Finnegan Clerk of Seanad Éireann: Ms Deirdre Lane	

4. Relations with Members of the European Parliament

Participation rights for Irish MEPs in plenary sittings	No
Participation rights for Irish MEPs in committee meetings	Partially (Irish MEPs may attend meetings of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and of the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs and may take part in their proceedings without having a right to vote or to move motions and amendments; other MEPs may attend upon invitation.)
Availability of videoconferencing system in Seanad Éireann	Yes

5. Information links

- Official website: <http://www.oireachtas.ie>
- [Standing Orders \(rules of procedure\) of Seanad Éireann](#)
- [List of committees](#)
- [Recent documents submitted by the Irish Parliament to the Interparliamentary EU Information Exchange \(IPEX\)](#)
- [European Parliament Information Office in Dublin](#)

6. Contacts

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