Public Consultation on the Constitutional Future of the Island of Ireland

This year we mark the centenary of Seanad Éireann and this year as we glance back over the last 100 years we will also be looking forward. The Public Consultation would look at the constitutional future of the island of Ireland given the ongoing public policy debate on the issue, the safeguarding of the peace process and the future we would like to have for generations to come.

The purpose of this public consultation is to invite submissions from all the people and interested groups and organisations to consider the constitutional future of the Island of Ireland, listening to the voice of all people on the island and people of all traditions and opinions.

In particular we wish to hear the voices of the Unionist Community and their vision for the future.

The Seanad Public Consultation Committee will acknowledge the ongoing work of the Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement on this matter. The Seanad Public Consultation Committee would also look at the recommendations of the Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement rapporteurs reports on the topic of constitutional change and other reports by the committee and members of the Committee.

1. **Committee’s Objectives**

All or general opinions on this issue from the general public, organisations or any interested parties would be welcomed, although for the sake of clarity please consider addressing these indicative questions in responses:

1. Views of young people from throughout the island on this issue should be listened to including the voice of all Communities and Traditions in Northern Ireland on their vision for the future.

2. The criteria for a referendum and lessons from other referendums here and in other jurisdictions.
3. What are the societal and economic opportunities and challenges that should be considered, such as: All Island Health Care, Housing, Education, Economy, Climate Change, Biodiversity, Culture and Language, Reconciliation, etc including issues such as the question of the subvention to Northern Ireland.

2. Context

Since the Brexit referendum in 2016 the public conversation on the constitutional future of Northern Ireland has been growing, including but not exclusively within academia such as the ARINS Project with the Royal Irish Academy research on constitutional, institutional and policy options for Ireland, north and south, in a post-Brexit context and the work being undertaken by Professors in DCU and in UCD, under the institute of British Irish Studies and other third level institutions on the island and beyond.

The ESRI has also greatly contributed to and increased debate on public policy in relation to the future of a shared island. The Government’s Shared Island initiative aims to harness the full potential of the Good Friday Agreement to enhance cooperation, connection and mutual understanding on the island and engage with all communities and traditions to build understanding around a shared future.

3. The process

Interested organisations and individuals are invited to send written submissions to the Committee on this issue.

All submissions received will be brought to the attention of all members of the Committee. Members of the public and the experts who make written submissions on the topics around all factors regarding the opportunities and challenges surrounding our constitutional future and the potential significant public policy needed, may be invited by the Committee to attend its public consultation meetings which will be held in the Seanad Chamber at Leinster House.

Dates for hearing Witnesses and Topics

There will be 3 days of hearings in the Seanad Chamber.
Each day will have 2 parts.

Morning Sessions 11am -1pm

Listening to the voices of young people and experts expressing their views on the constitutional future and how public policy can protect their future and safeguard the Good Friday Agreement. Logistical assistance from Foróige, second level schools and other youth organisations.

Afternoon Sessions 2pm- 5pm
Session 1 - Friday the 30th of September 2pm - 5pm
The voices of all the communities throughout the island in relation to the constitutional future and their vision for their future.

Session 2 - Friday the 7th of October 2pm-5pm
The public policy and economic opportunities and challenges such as All Island Health Care, Housing, Education, Economy, Climate Change, Biodiversity, Culture and Language, Reconciliation, etc including the question of the subvention to Northern Ireland.

Session 3 - Friday 4th of November 2pm-5pm
The criteria for a referendum and lessons from other referendums here and in other jurisdictions and Government Departments’ analysis of this challenge.

The Committee is particularly interested in hearing and may seek the attendance and the views and/or experiences of–

1. Private citizens, Public bodies, Government departments (particularly those charged with identifying challenges) and the media.
2. Experts involved in the area of the constitutional future.
3. Organisations, Educational Institutions working on the issues.
4. Second and Third-level institutions, youth organisations such as Foróige.
5. Public Representatives from the Island.

The rapporteur will draft and the Committee will publish a report in which it will make findings and recommendations. When its report has been published, the Committee will seek a debate with the Minister in the Seanad.

Submissions

Submissions should not exceed five pages and should contain the following information:

1. The name, postal address, e-mail address and telephone number of the organisation or person making the submission.
2. A brief introduction indicating any experience, expertise or background you may have in this area.
3. Factual information, observations or opinions that you believe will assist the Committee in drawing conclusions.
4. Changes that you believe need to be made to legislation or public policy.
Submissions will be circulated to all members of the Committee and may be published, in whole or in part, in the Committee’s report and/or on the Committee’s webpage. If you prefer not to have your submission published in the report or on the Committee’s website, please indicate this clearly.

The Committee’s Terms of Reference contain a number of conditions, set out below, which govern the content of submissions. Contributors are asked to bear these in mind:

“A submission is admissible unless it –

(a) requests the Seanad to do anything other than the Seanad has power to do;

(b) does not comply with Standing Orders or is otherwise not in proper form;

(c) contains any matter which is sub judice within the meaning of Standing Order 47;

(d) comments on, criticises or makes charges against a person outside the House or an official, in a manner which is not consistent with the Standing Orders and practices of the Seanad;

(e) contains language which is offensive or defamatory;

(f) is the same as, or in substantially similar terms to, a submission made by or on behalf of the same person or body during the lifetime of the Committee.”

Submissions must be received by the Clerk to the Committee not later than 4 pm on Monday 5th September, 2022.

Receipt of submissions by e-mail, and in Microsoft Word format, is preferred. The e-mail address for submissions is: Seanadpublicconsult@Oireachtas.ie

Submissions may also be sent by post to:
The Clerk,
Seanad Public Consultation Committee,
Seanad Office,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

The Clerk may be contacted by telephone at 01 618 4477.

Members of the Seanad Public Consultation Committee

Senator Mark Daly, Chairperson (Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann)
Senator Joe O’Reilly, Vice-Chairperson (Leas-Chathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann)
Senator Frances Black
Senator Victor Boyhan
Senator Pat Casey
Senator Emer Currie
Senator Vincent P. Martin
Senator Niall Ó Donnghaile.
Senator Mark Wall

Senator Mark Daly has been appointed as Rapporteur for the purpose of the Report.