



Tithe an  
Oireachtais  
Houses of the  
Oireachtas

## Forum on a Family Friendly and Inclusive Parliament

The Forum on a Family Friendly and Inclusive Parliament is seeking submissions from relevant organisations and members of the public.

### Background

The Forum was established by the Ceann Comhairle of Dáil Éireann on 23 March 2021. The principal focus of the Forum's work will be to look at the Houses of the Oireachtas and how it is organised. The aim of the Forum is to:

- make practical recommendations on how to make the Houses of the Oireachtas a more inclusive, family friendly, and gender-sensitive workplace for the parliamentary community;
- ensure that the Houses of the Oireachtas are supported and resourced to take account of gender and equality issues when legislating; and
- improve the diversity of the parliamentary community to better reflect society in Ireland.

While the Forum is aware of the role of the National Parliament in the wider policy and legislative context, for this work, the Forum is particularly interested in *practical* and *achievable* recommendations that the Houses can themselves implement. While the Forum is conscious that much work has been done by many organisations to support people from various backgrounds, the Forum's focus is now on family friendly and inclusive supports and measures required for elected members, their staff and for staff working for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service. Many organisations and individuals have expertise in this area or have considered similar changes; the Forum would appreciate all those willing to share their expertise and knowledge with it, as the National Parliament seeks to make improvements. The Forum will consider any suitable written submissions received as evidence and may also decide to invite a number of contributors to virtual meetings.

It is hoped that any improvements recommended by the Forum will benefit members of the parliamentary community, by which the Forum understands to include elected representatives, staff of elected representatives, staff of political parties/groups and staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.

Please see the appendix which sets out Dáil sitting hours on a regular sitting week.

### Closing date

The Forum is tasked with bringing forward recommendations to the Ceann Comhairle by **31 October 2021**. It would, however, be particularly useful for the Forum to receive submissions at the beginning of its work, ideally by **Thursday 7 May**. However, the Forum may accept submissions received after that date.

### How to send your submission

Please email an electronic document (searchable PDF or equivalent) to [forum@oireachtas.ie](mailto:forum@oireachtas.ie). There is no need to send hard copies of your submission, as this may cause confusion and duplication.

Please do not send your submission to individual committee members. The Secretary to the Forum will ensure all members receive copies of all submissions.

### **What to include in your submission**

Your submission should comprise the **submission document** with a separate covering letter or the body of your email constituting a **separate covering letter**. For information on which information to include, please see the draft template on page 4. This will allow the Forum to publish your submission without your contact details. Do not include any personal contact details in your submission document, as the Forum may publish it.

### **In the submission document, please include:**

- a brief introduction, for example, explaining your area of expertise
- any factual information that you have to offer from which the Forum might be able to draw conclusions, or which could be put to other parties for their reactions
- links to any publications you refer to; there is no need to send such publications as attachments
- any recommendations to the Forum with a focus on the questions asked on Page 5 below; be as specific as possible and summarise your recommendations at the end of the document
- if your document is more than 10 pages long, an executive summary of the main points made in the submission

Please remember to number your pages.

### **Tips on writing your submission and important information**

- Keep your submission **concise** and to the point. Please do not include any unnecessary or superfluous material that does not relate directly to the topic.
- If you would like more detailed guidance on writing your submission, please contact the Secretary to the Forum, Breda Burke, by email at [forum@oireachtas.ie](mailto:forum@oireachtas.ie).
- The Forum cannot consider submissions which deal with matters outside its remit.
- The Forum cannot consider submissions which deal with individual cases.
- Submissions sent to any other email address may not be accepted.
- Anonymous submissions cannot be accepted and will be rejected.
- Petitions and form letters may not be accepted or published.
- Submissions made to the Forum may be published as received, either as part of a Committee report or separately, if the Forum decides to do so.

### **Making a submission is a public process**

The Forum is not obliged to accept your document once it has been submitted, nor is it obliged to publish any or all of your submission if it has been accepted. However, the operations of a parliament are a public process, and you should be aware that any submissions made to the Forum, including your identity, may be published either as part of a Forum report, or separately, if the Forum decides to do so.

## **Usáid Gaeilge**

Is beartas de chuid Sheirbhís Thithe an Oireachtais é fáilte a chur roimh úsáid na Gaeilge agus éascaíonn an tSeirbhís úsáid na Gaeilge leis an tSeirbhís.

## **Privacy**

Before making your submission, please read the [Houses of the Oireachtas' Privacy Statement](#).

## **Contact**

Breda Burke, Secretary to the Forum, can be contacted at [forum@oireachtas.ie](mailto:forum@oireachtas.ie)

**Suggested Template - Cover Information**

<b>Name of person/organisation making the submission</b>
<b>If the submission is for an organisation, name and position of contact person</b>
<b>Address, email and contact phone number</b>
<b>Brief outline of why you are making the submission (maximum of 200 words)</b>
<b>If the Forum organises information sessions with expert groups, would you/your organisation be willing to appear?</b>
Yes/No

## Consultation Questions

In order to help the Forum make practical recommendations, some questions are set out here. Please note that when you are preparing your submission you do not have to comment on every question. If there are areas where you have particular expertise, or that you would like to focus on, please do. **What do you think we should do?**

<b>Goal 1 - Making the Houses of the Oireachtas a more inclusive, family friendly, and gender-sensitive workplace for the parliamentary community</b>
1. What practical steps do you believe could be taken to deliver on this goal?
2. Have you any recommendations to improve the working arrangements of the Houses and organisational changes that could help deliver on this goal?
3. Do you believe that any changes need to be made to the Constitution, existing legislation or Standing Orders, in order to deliver on this goal?

<b>Goal 2 – ensuring that the Houses of the Oireachtas are supported and resourced to take account of gender and equality issues when legislating</b>
1. What practical steps do you believe could be taken to deliver on this goal?
2. Have you any recommendations to improve the working arrangements of the Houses and organisational changes that could help deliver on this goal?
3. Do you believe that any changes need to be made to the Constitution, existing legislation or Standing Orders, in order to deliver this goal?

<b>Goal 3 – improving the diversity of the parliamentary community to better reflect society in Ireland</b>
1. What practical steps do you believe could be taken to deliver on this goal?
2. Have you any recommendations to improve the working arrangements of the Houses and organisational changes that could help deliver on this goal?
3. Do you believe that any changes need to be made to the Constitution, existing legislation or Standing Order, in order to deliver this goal?

<b>Additional Questions</b>
4. Are there related areas, which the Forum’s Terms of Reference do not touch upon, which the Forum should consider?
5. Imagine the Houses of the Oireachtas one, five and ten years down the line, are there changes that you would expect to have happened in order for us to judge the work of the Forum as having been successful?
6. Are there any publications (published by you or your organisation) that you believe would be useful to the Forum in its work?

## Appendix: Schedule for Dáil sitting week\*

<b>TUES [Leinster House]</b>	<b>Start 2 p.m.</b>
Leaders' Questions	2.00 p.m. – 2.34 p.m.
Order of Business	2.34 p.m. – 3.04 p.m.
PQs - Oral Taoiseach	3.04 p.m. – 3.49 p.m.
Sanitisation SOS	3.49 p.m. – 4.09 p.m.
Government Business	4.09 p.m. – 5.09 p.m.
PQs – Oral Minister (1)	5.09 p.m. – 6.39 p.m.
Private Members' Business	6.39 p.m. – 8.39 p.m.
Sanitisation SOS	8.39 p.m. – 8.59 p.m.
Topical issues	8.59 p.m. – 9.47 p.m.
	<b>Dáil adjourns 9.47 p.m.</b>
<b>WED [Convention Centre Dublin]</b>	<b>Start 10 a.m.</b>
Private Members' Business	10 a.m. to 12 noon
Leaders' Questions	12 noon – 12.34 p.m.
Questions on Promised Legislation	12.34 p.m. – 1.04 p.m.
PQs - Oral Taoiseach	1.04 p.m. – 1.49 p.m.
SOS	1.49 p.m. – 2.49 p.m.
Topical Issues	2.49 p.m. – 3.37 p.m.
Government Business	3.37 p.m. – 9.30 p.m.
Voting Block	9.30 p.m. – 10.15 p.m.
	<b>Dáil adjourns 10.15 p.m.</b>
<b>THURS [Leinster House]</b>	<b>Start 9 a.m.</b>
PQs – Oral Minister (2)	9 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.
PQs – Oral Minister (3)	10.30 a.m. – 12 noon
Leaders' Questions	12 noon – 12.34 p.m.
Questions on Promised Legislation	12.34 p.m. – 1.04 p.m.
Sanitisation SOS	1.04 p.m. – 1.24 p.m.
Government Business	1.24 p.m. – 5.12 p.m.
Sanitisation SOS	5.12 p.m. – 5.32 p.m.
Topical Issues	5.32 p.m. – 6.20 p.m.
Second Stage of Private Member's Bill or Committee report (alternating weekly)	6.20 p.m. – 7.35 p.m.
	<b>Dáil adjourns 7.35 p.m.</b>

\*Except when Level 5 Covid-19 restrictions apply