



Motions on Political Reform

Introduction, Eric Keane, President.

This generation of young Irish people is facing the toughest economic conditions experienced in this country's history. Despite this our young people are determined to create a future for ourselves, here, at home, in Ireland.

While the primary focus must be on creating jobs, attracting investment, eliminating the budget, fixing our banks and banishing the Troika from our land, Young Fine Gael believes it is also critical to change our system of governance and politics so that that such an economic catastrophe can be prevented in the future. Fine Gael has recognised this fact and the Programme for Government contains many positive reforms of our political system. The commitment to establish a Citizens Assembly to investigate what parts of our constitution needs to be amended is also positive.

Young Fine Gael sees the necessity for political reform because our country's democratic systems have not evolved in any significant way since the State was established or in many cases for hundreds of years. Our political system has failed to recognise the economic storm created by the reckless policies of the last government, the change in demographics and in many cases it is not capable of dealing with the functions and needs of a modern 21st century state.

Many branches submitted motions on political reform for discussion at Summer School so there will be a session dedicated to this subject where a selection of the motions will be debated (see motions for discussion below).

Note: Motions passed at Summer School will not become YFG policy unless they are subsequently accepted by the National Executive.

Town Councils

Abolishing Town Councils

The existence of town councils in rural urban areas does not reflect current population patterns and areas covered by town councils. Town and Borough Council areas are also represented on County Councils leading to double representation for all these areas. The National Executive believes that the functions currently performed by Town and Borough Councils can be carried out by County Councils and that this would lead to less duplication in the provision of services.

Statistics:

	Number of Councils	Number of Councillors
Town Councils	73	657
Borough Councils	8	96
County and Councils	34	883

Motion 1: Young Fine Gael believes that Town and Borough Councils should be abolished.

Proposed: National Executive
Related motions from UCC YFG and Clare YFG.

General Local Government

Keeping national politicians focused on national issues

At present, TDs and Senators have the right to be treated in the same manner as county councillors in making representations on behalf of constituents, whether it relates to roads, general maintenance or planning. This leaves councillors competing with TDs in what should be their specific role. We believe that national politicians should focus on national issues.

Motion 2: YFG believes legislation should be brought forward to outlaw members of the Oireachtas making official representations at council level on behalf of individual constituents.

Proposed: National Executive.

The voting age

Motion 3: YFG calls for the voting age for local elections to be lowered to 16.

Proposed by WIT YFG.

Presidency

All Irish citizens to vote in the Presidential elections

The president should represent the Irish nation, whether resident here or across the world. Extending voting rights to all citizens would reflect the spirit of Article 2 of the Constitution:

It is the entitlement and birthright of every person born in the island of Ireland, which includes its islands and seas, to be part of the Irish Nation. That is also the entitlement of all persons otherwise qualified in accordance with law to be citizens of Ireland. Furthermore, the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage.

Motion 4: YFG calls for the electorate to the presidency to be extended to all Irish citizens, with voting in embassies and by postal vote across the world.

Proposed: National Executive, Kilkenny, Cork South-Central.

Age discrimination on running for President

The Constitution currently discriminates by age in eligibility to be elected as President. The age of 35 is an arbitrary age. The argument for keeping this is that only a %wise and mature+citizen should hold the office of President. We believe that the question of maturity would remain in any case a criteria but one which the people should judge through casting their ballot in the election. This principle should equally apply to running for Dáil Eireann and the European Parliament.

Motion 5: YFG calls for a universal age of 18 for eligibility to serve in political office.

Proposed: National Executive, Tipp South, UCC, Laois.

Dáil: Elections, composition and work

“Gender Quotas”

Motion 6: YFG opposes the Governments position on the introduction of gender quotas whereupon a political party will have its funding reduced if it does not have a minimum number of female candidates.

Proposed: National Executive.

Contrary Motion: DCU

The above motion refers to the proposed change in the law whereby a political party will lose 50% of its State funding if it does not run 30% female candidates and 30% male candidates in the next General Election (rising to 40% in the election after that).

“The Whip!”

The strong whip system means that the Dáil does not adequately serve its function as a debating chamber, if dissent, concern or disagreement is at the risk of losing a place in the parliamentary party. Where the result of every vote is a foregone conclusion, it is natural that deputies on all sides of the house would resort to reading prepared speeches, rather than engaging with all deputies. A change in this would strengthen the role of the Dáil, which is a comparatively weak legislature, with our executive equally one of the strongest in comparative terms.

Motion 7: YFG calls for the whip system to be relaxed in the case of non-budgetary votes.