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One page Overview

This initiative wants to put a new mechanism called Citizen Initiatives inside the political system. This mechanism would enable citizens to directly participate in political decision-making on all matters that impact Irish society.

What are Citizen Initiatives?

Putting Citizen Initiatives into the political system would enable citizens to directly:

1) Veto/block new legislation, 2) Propose new legislation, 3) Amend existing legislation, 4) Initiate a referendum to amend the Constitution without prior approval from Government

The process to start a Citizen Initiative and take action to do any of the above would require a pre determined number of citizens to be in favour of the action. This would be achieved by using a formal process for gathering signatures from citizens in favour of the Citizen Initiative.

What is the One Year Initiative?

The One Year Initiative is the name for a two-step plan to put the Citizen Initiatives mechanism into the Constitution in one year (hence the name One Year Initiative). The two steps are as follows:

1) A Government sponsored Citizens’ Assembly would be launched and meet for the period of ‘one year’ Its sole purpose is to design the mechanism for Citizen Initiatives within one year. (They would discuss and agree how many signatures would be required for Citizen Initiatives in Ireland)

2) After the year and the Citizen Initiatives mechanism for Ireland has been agreed by the Citizens’ Assembly, a national referendum would be held. The Irish people would review the new mechanism and decide if they want to put it into the Constitution.

Support for Citizen Initiatives

- Citizen Initiatives have been discussed at the Constitutional Convention in 2013 and the Citizens’ Assembly in 2018. The citizens voted overwhelming in support of Citizen Initiatives on both occasions.
- A co signed motion to implement the One Year Initiative has been on the Order of Business in both the Dáil and Seanad. The motion has cross political support however the motion has not yet been heard.

What Next

There is a real need to generate public awareness and support for Citizen Initiatives. The political will to implement the One Year Initiative will only occur when the public demand from our politicians is overwhelming. If you support Citizen Initiatives and would like to help build public awareness, then please become an advocate for Citizen Initiatives and use the Citizen Initiatives logo in the branding of your company, charity, organisation, group and/or social media pages.

For more information: www.CitizenInitiatives.ie or search for Citizen Initiatives on Facebook and Twitter.
The Vision

We, the Irish people, will have the final say on national policy whenever we feel it is necessary to do so, in the interests of the common good. We will do so using Citizen Initiatives.

The Mission

This is a non partisan initiative with no connection to any political party or organisation. It does not receive funding from any organisation. Our aim is to bring together the Irish people, irrespective of their political views and allegiances, in support of a two-step process to improve the Irish political system. We want to see Citizen Initiatives (modern versions of Articles 47 & 48 of the 1922 Constitution) put back into the Constitution. We will do so using the One Year Initiative.

STEP ONE: The Irish Government will launch a new Citizens’ Assembly. The assembly will meet for a period of one year to specifically design the mechanism for Citizen Initiatives by using Articles 47 & 48 that were in the 1922 Irish Constitution as the starting point. As it stands, politicians decide legislation. Politicians also decide when a referendum can be initiated. The Citizens’ Assembly will redesign the Citizen Initiatives mechanism so that the Irish people can veto legislation, initiate new legislation, constitutional amendments and therefore initiate referenda themselves.

STEP TWO: After the period of one year and the assembly has designed the new mechanism for Citizen Initiatives, the Government will subsequently hold a
referendum. The purpose of this referendum is to enable the Irish people to vote and decide if they want to put the newly designed mechanism for Citizen Initiatives into the Irish Constitution.

What Is The Problem?

There is total reliance on a political system that is no longer fit for purpose.

Why Is It a Problem?

There are three major reasons why our political system is failing:

1 Misrepresentation

The political system used in Ireland today means the power and decision-making process is entirely in the hands of representatives who are elected by the people once every five (5) years. However, this system also allows governments to make decisions against the will of the same people who elected and entrusted them to manage the country on their behalf. Promises are made to constituents and then, when elected, governments renege and implement policies and laws irrespective of the views and against the will of the people of Ireland. The problem is further exacerbated by a whip system that requires an elected representative to vote according to the party of which they are members. They do this regardless of the will of the constituency they were elected to represent.
2 Accountability

The Irish political system allows politicians to make decisions knowing they won’t be held accountable for their actions. For example, during the previous Government term, sixty-four percent (64%) of all new legislation was guillotined - pushed through the system without opposition or a method to stop it. Basically, the political system enables the political parties in government to introduce legislation irrespective as to what opposition says never mind what the public thinks. This means they can introduce legislation that could have serious implications in the future but no one can be held accountable because the political system gives the power to politicians to do so.

3 Lack of Citizen Empowerment

Ireland is a modern society with an educated population who are capable of making decisions in regards to matters that affect them and the Irish people as a whole. Unfortunately the political system only provides the people an opportunity to make decisions approximately once every five years. As a result, the issues impacting society are aggregated at General Elections and therefore many individual issues do not receive the necessary discussion and attention they require. Subsequently, a Government can be elected, begin implementing policy that ignores or contradicts the wishes of the people and the people of Ireland have no way to stop Government. Ultimately, the current system only provides an opportunity for the people to hold the politicians in Government to account in another five years.
Who Can Fix This Problem?

You can! This is an opportunity for anyone who wants change to come together and support something that can improve Irish society and politics. Individuals can continue supporting their political party or politician if they wish. It doesn’t matter what your political, social, economic or environmental views and opinions are. This solution allows every person to get involved in pursuit of enhancing democracy in Ireland. This initiative will focus on uniting people in support of one objective: a referendum and constitutional amendment that will provide the people with more power to hold politicians / Government to account.

How Can This Problem Be Fixed?

In order to achieve the fairest and most inclusive political system and therefore a more just and equal society, some key improvements are required:

1 Empower The People

Enhance our political system to ensure any member of the public has an opportunity to intervene and contribute to national decisions about the country whenever they feel it necessary to do so. It would provide a democracy that strives to create opportunities for all members of a population to make meaningful contributions to decision-making, and seeks to broaden the range of people who have access to such opportunities. This is not the case with the current political paradigm.
2 Citizen Initiatives / People Initiated Referenda

Other countries around the world enjoy a tried and tested system that ensures power ultimately remains with the people rather than elected representatives. A key element of the system are Citizen Initiatives / People Initiated Referenda. These enable any citizen to veto legislation, initiative legislation and a referendum without the consent of elected representatives and even in opposition to government decisions.

Having Citizen Initiatives included in the Irish Constitution would complement our political system. It would provide a safeguard for legislation made by any government against the will of the people. Ireland is a modern, educated nation. Citizen Initiatives would not weaken our democracy. On the contrary, it would begin a shift towards a democracy where government worked with the people rather than working for the people.

Introducing this mechanism would significantly enhance political decision-making and democracy in Ireland. It would allow Irish citizens to engage and participate in the decision-making of the country if they wish to do so.

a) Citizen Initiatives to Veto legislation

As outlined, the introduction of Citizen Initiatives would provide citizens with the power to VETO government legislation.
Currently, in Ireland, political parties use the party whip to ensure its members do what they are told by the party irrespective of the wishes of the people. If the introduction of Citizen Initiatives were implemented in Ireland, it would create accountability from elected representatives. Instead of having no say between elections, the people become the whip for all elected political parties and politicians.

Ultimately it means that if politicians tried to introduce legislation against the will of the people, the people can constitutionally trigger a mechanism that will prevent government from doing so without approval from the people via a referendum if necessary.

Simply put, if the people had Citizen Initiatives to complement the current political system, it would mean elected representatives would manage the country’s affairs with the approval of the people. If, however, elected politicians tried to force through legislation against the will of its citizens, there would be a process that allowed those citizens to legally stop them.

The process to VETO legislation would not be complicated. A citizen would gather signatures from X% of the voting population who support the citizen’s request. When the signatures are gathered, the government will be compelled under law to stop / suspend the implementation of the legislation. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be established between those who initiated the veto (who are against the legislation) and the Government, then the Government will be compelled to bring the legislation to the people to decide the outcome by voting in a referendum.
2b) Citizen Initiatives to propose and amend legislation and the Constitution

As outlined, the introduction of Citizen Initiatives would provide citizens with the power to INITIATE new legislation and Constitutional amendments.

It is likely that at some point you have been dissatisfied with some aspect of Irish society and thought to yourself “Why hasn’t someone done something about that”. The power to initiate new legislation and constitutional amendments would provide you as a citizen with a process to do something that is subsequently written into law.

3 Revision of the current Referendum process

If Ireland introduced Citizen Initiatives to the Irish Constitution, the referendum process should also be revised and improved. For example:

• Enhance and improve measures that would ensure the media always report equally both sides of the referendum.

• All official documentation should include the Pro’s and Con’s on voting both “Yes” and “No” prior to voting on the referendum. (These pro’s and con’s should be reviewed and agreed upon by a larger subset of the population rather than a government body.)

• There should be an introduction of a minimum time period before a second referendum could be held on the same question.
Is it Possible?

Do you know that all the political parties / alliances in Ireland know the political system is broken? Here are some extracts from the main political party manifestos:

**Fine Gael**

“Behind the wreckage of our banking system, our health service, our public finances and the jobs market, lies a cosy culture of cronyism and low standards that infiltrated the top of our political and public service systems under recent Governments. It is a culture that abandoned the principles underpinning the Republic that Fine Gael founded in 1949 by distorting the power and resources of the State for the benefit of the few, not the many. It allowed special interests to crowd out the public interest. It pushed the interests of citizens behind those of powerful elites.”

“….What are also needed are fundamental changes in the structures and systems of the State itself to improve the quality of governance experienced by the country. It is these fundamental changes that form the basis of this manifesto, all linked together by a 5-Point Plan that will overhaul the way our political system works to stamp out cronyism and low standards….“ [Page 2 Fine Gael Manifesto 2011]

**Labour**

“Labour’s pledge is that Ireland will never again be vulnerable to the kinds of abuses of corporate and political power that have risked our country's sovereignty. To restore confidence at home and abroad in public governance, Ireland must make significant changes to the culture and framework within which business is conducted. That applies both to the formal rules of corporate governance and to the relationship between money and politics. Labour will rid Ireland of its ‘Crony Capitalism’ image, and restore trust in our democracy.” [Page 42 Labour Manifesto 2011]

**Fianna Fail**

“It is absolutely clear that no significant programme of political reform which involves amending the constitution can succeed without a real engagement with citizens during the process of drafting proposals. There are many ideas for how this can be achieved but none have yet been proven. It is important to avoid a situation where expert advisers become disproportionately influential in framing debate and drafting
Sinn Fein

“The political system has failed the people of Ireland…..

“The political system is dominated and corrupted by the privileged, paralysed by clientelism and dynastic politics, and resistant to change.”

“The Oireachtas has consistently failed to exert sufficient scrutiny over the Government and public bodies. Sinn Féin believes that it is time for fundamental political reform. The current system is not fit for purpose.” [Page 33 Sinn Fein Manifesto 2011]

The Implementation Plan Exists

If you support this way forward and would like to see these changes introduced in Ireland, the good news is: you can! This solution is totally achievable. Please don’t consider this change far-fetched. All the main political parties recognise the need for change so much so, they all talk about it in their General Election manifestos. This however does not happen because our political system is structured so that there are no consequences for reneging on election promises.

The other good news is the process to change the political system already exists and has both public support and cross political support. A cross party / Independents motion to implement the One Year Initiative is already on the Order of business in the Dáil and Seanad. The One Year Initiative has a clearly defined two step plan that politicians can follow so that a referendum to vote on the constitutional amendment can take place. The plan ensures citizens participate in designing this new mechanism for Citizen Initiatives. It just needs the public to inform their political representatives that they require them to support the motion.
One very important point to note is that Citizen Initiatives have also been discussed at both of the Citizens’ Assemblies in 2013 & 2018. Unsurprisingly, the members of both assemblies voted overwhelming in favour of Citizen Initiatives.

What Next?

It is clear that people are tired and disillusioned with the level of corruption, deceit, and cronyism within Irish politics. The people have become educated and can think for themselves. The people want change and are ready for change. This is clearly evident by the levels of public unrest and protests on a variety of issues. It’s also one of the reasons why a number of new political parties are being announced. Whilst new political parties introduce fresh political ideas, the fact remains that the people have no means to hold the elected politicians accountable.

The One Year Initiative is different.

This initiative has one specific purpose. It does not discriminate against any Political Party or Independent politician. The purpose of the initiative is to ensure that all future governments truly represent the people, become accountable to the people, and give the power back to the people.

If you want to be part of One Year Initiative, there are only three things left to do:
1 Tell Others
Start talking about the initiative and sharing it with your family, friends and acquaintances. Let’s make this a red-line issue. Let’s make Citizen Initiatives the number one condition to support any politician.

2 Show Your Support
This is the most important aspect. We need your support. If you support the One Year Initiative, please request and only support a politician who declares their support to give more power to the people. If they will not declare their support, it clearly means they DO NOT want change. The people have been taken for fools for too long. It’s time to upgrade the political system that supports everyone instead of the few.
Also, start using the Citizen Initiatives symbol - it’s yours! The symbol belongs to anyone who supports the One Year Initiative as a two step plan to put Citizen Initiatives into the Irish Constitution. Use the symbol on profiles or alongside your own photos, brands and logos on social media. Or add it your leaflets and organisation websites. Make badges or tee-shirts. Building public awareness is the most important goal at this point in time.

3 Implementation Plan
We want the Government to establish an independent Citizens’ Assembly to begin the process of managing the referendum. The People’s Assembly would be made up of approximately one hundred members of the public from across each county in Ireland. The assembly will be a random selection of those who wish to participate. Ideally, it will be a cross section of Irish society and include stay-at-home-moms,
farmers, community workers, public servants, unemployed, the private sector, small business owners, public representatives, as well as project managers. Too often, government projects do not progress quickly due to politics, lack of skills and lack of management. This project must become one of the most successful projects in Irish history.

A Summary of Our Plan

1. Raise public awareness and demand support from all the politicians.
2. The elected representatives support a joint Dáil motion calling for the government to establish a new Citizens’ Assembly. The Citizens’ Assembly will devise the mechanism to support Citizen Initiatives (Public Veto and Public Initiatives).
3. The Citizens’ Assembly will be a representation of Irish society. It would be made up of approximately one hundred members of the public from across each county in Ireland.
4. A position on the Citizens’ Assembly will have no preconditions. Anyone who wishes to participate will have the opportunity to do so if they have been randomly selected. The names will be drawn randomly from the electoral register in each county in Ireland and in proportion to the population. (A minimum of two delegates per county)
5. The Citizens’ Assembly will have responsibility for devising a process outlining how Citizen Initiatives / People Initiated Referenda will work in practice. This will include details from the moment a citizen feels it necessary to initiate a referendum right through to the point in time when the referendum will take
place. The assembly will invite the appropriate political and legal experts to present and advise on the various aspects prior to the assembly agreeing what is best for Ireland. Guests should include International experts from Switzerland, Italy and representation of the six counties.

6. There will be a completely independent chairperson for the assembly and the minutes of each forum will be made available after each meeting. Ideally, the meetings will be streamed live for those who wish to watch meetings in real-time.

7. The legal experts will formulate the Constitutional amendments based upon the mechanism agreed by the assembly.

8. The public representatives will take the appropriate action to ensure the Bill passes through each of the legislative process to initiate the referendum on the constitutional amendments.

9. The referendum will be held with citizens knowing the exact mechanism if the majority of people in Ireland vote and decide to introduce Citizen Initiatives / People Initiated Referenda into the Irish Constitution.

A referendum like no other could be held in Ireland. The referendum will present a change to the Irish Constitution. An upgrade to the political system will be presented to the people of Ireland from the people of Ireland. Every Irish citizen will have the privilege to vote and secure Ireland’s future forever.

We ask you to please consider all of the above and particularly the benefits to you, your family and our future generations.

For more information: www.CitizenInitiatives.ie or search for Citizen Initiatives on Facebook and Twitter.
# Spot the Pattern?

## 2013 Citizens' Assembly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Recommendations</th>
<th>% of Delegate Vote</th>
<th>Political Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A referendum on Same sex marriage</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>REFERENDUM HELD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A referendum for more direct democracy using Citizen Initiatives</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>IGNORED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 2018 Citizens' Assembly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Recommendations</th>
<th>% of Delegate Vote</th>
<th>Political Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A referendum to allow the Oireachtas to legislate on termination of pregnancy</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>REFERENDUM HELD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A referendum for more direct democracy using Citizen Initiatives</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>IGNORED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Support the One Year Initiative
1) Convention of the Constitution 2013

**Recommendation No' 21**: Citizen-initiatives should be introduced both for influencing the parliamentary agenda and for the calling of referendums. (83%)

2) Citizens' Assembly 2018

**Recommendation No' 10**: In respect of which, if any, specified types of citizens’ initiatives should be provided for-

a) 69% voted in favour of a citizens' initiative to put a constitutional referendum proposal to the people (Question 11a);

b) 69% voted in favour of a citizens’ initiative to put a legislative change proposal to the people (including enacting, changing or repealing legislation) (Question 11b);

c) 83% voted in favour of a citizens’ initiative to put an item on the agenda for decision by the Oireachtas (Question 11c).

**Support the One Year Initiative**