

Referendum Commission launches Register to Vote Campaign

Thursday 27th August 2009. The Referendum Commission has today launched a campaign urging people who are not on the register of voters to claim their vote before the October 2nd referendum on the Lisbon Treaty.

The Commission wants people to check the electoral register to see if they are on it, and if not, to use the late registration facility which is available up to September 15th. Details on how to do this can be obtained at www.lisbontreaty2009.ie

The Referendum Commission began an intensive online advertising campaign today urging people to check the register and to take any steps necessary to secure their vote. The campaign involves over 8 million page impressions on eight different websites including Bebo, Facebook, entertainment.ie, daft.ie and rent.ie. The advertising is targeted at younger voters who are the cohort most likely not to be registered or to be registered at the wrong address.

The Commission also launched its website today, giving an explanation of the Lisbon Treaty and other information of interest to voters. This website www.lisbontreaty2009.ie also explains how to check the register, become registered, or register a change of address before the referendum vote.

The Commission began distributing a short summary of the Treaty to 1.9 million homes this week. The Commission will launch its full public information campaign in a week's time.

The Chairman of the Referendum Commission Mr Justice Frank Clarke said "Many thousands of people who are eligible to vote in this referendum are currently prevented from doing so simply because they are not registered, or are registered at the wrong address. There is a simple process available for people to put this right.

"You are entitled to vote in the referendum on the Lisbon Treaty if you are an Irish citizen, you are aged 18 or over, you are living in Ireland and you are on the electoral register."

There are just over 3 million people registered to vote. You can check to see if you are registered by following the link from www.lisbontreaty2009.ie. If you are not on the register, or are registered at an old address, you can download a form, fill it in, sign it and have this witnessed at a Garda station and post it to your local authority. This completed form must be with your local authority on or before September 15th. As well as being available online, these forms can be obtained at garda stations, public libraries, local authority offices and post offices.

Some 72,000 people availed of facility to add their names to the register between January 1st this year and the local and European Parliament elections. Around 18,000 did so in advance of the Lisbon Treaty Referendum of June 2008.

Ends

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Note to Editors:

On Tuesday 7th July 2009 the Minister for the Environment John Gormley made an order setting up the Referendum Commission. Mr Justice Frank Clarke was appointed as chairperson of the Referendum Commission on the nomination of the Chief Justice John Murray. The other members are the Clerk of the Dáil Kieran Coughlan; the Clerk of the Seanad Deirdre Lane, the Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly and the Comptroller and Auditor General John Buckley.

Role of the Referendum Commission

The Referendum Commission is an independent body, set up by the Referendum Act 1998 as amended by the Referendum Act 2001. The role of the Referendum Commission is to explain the subject matter of referendum proposals, to promote public awareness of the referendum and to encourage the electorate to vote at the poll.

The Act of 1998 provides that the Chairman of the Commission shall be a former judge of the Supreme Court or the High Court or a judge of the High Court. The other members of the Commission shall be the Clerk of the Dáil, the Clerk of the Seanad, the Ombudsman and the Comptroller and Auditor General. The Referendum Commission is independent in its actions.

Under the Referendum Act 1998, on each occasion that a referendum falls to be held the establishment of a Referendum Commission is at the discretion of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

The Referendum Commission is therefore not a standing body, but is established for the purposes of a specific referendum. Once its functions are completed, it prepares a report for the Minister within six months on the carrying out of its functions, and the Commission dissolves one month after the submission of this report.

Under the 1998 Act, Commissions were required to outline arguments for and against specific referendum proposals, and to foster debate on the proposals. The Referendum Act 2001 changed the Commission's role, and it no longer has the role of outlining the arguments for and against referendum proposals or of fostering and promoting debate and discussion on referendum proposals.

Referendum Commissions have previously been established in connection with the following referendums:

- Amsterdam Treaty and the Northern Ireland Agreements which were held on 22 May 1998;
- Constitutional Recognition for Local Government which was held on 11 June 1999;
- Abolition of the Death Penalty, the Acceptance of the Jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court and the Treaty of Nice which were held on 7 June 2001;
- Abortion referendum which was held on 6 March 2002;
- Treaty of Nice which was held on 19 October 2002;
- Citizenship Referendum, which was held on 11 June 2004;
- Lisbon Treaty Referendum which was held on Thursday June 12th 2008.



